

The background of the page is a photograph of a misty, forested mountain landscape. The foreground is dominated by the dark, silhouetted branches of evergreen trees. In the middle ground, a dense forest of evergreens is visible, partially obscured by a thick layer of white mist or fog that fills the valleys and lower slopes of the mountains. The background shows more distant, hazy mountain peaks under a pale, overcast sky. A solid white horizontal banner runs across the bottom of the image, containing the title text.

**I AM**

ADVENT SCRIPTURE  
READING GUIDE



# Welcome

This guide will lead you through a scripture reading experience meant to supplement the sermon series, *I AM*.

**The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,"**

The language God uses to share who He is to His people is repeated throughout the Bible, but is first found as He is speaking with Moses in Exodus 34:6.

Over the season of Advent, this guide will dive a bit deeper into the words God uses to describe Himself and will help us focus on these attributes found throughout scripture.

We hope you'll find this helpful to keeping God at the center of the holiday season.

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# Advent: Hope

Week One - Sunday, November 27 -  
Saturday, December 3

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## Merciful & Gracious

"The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God **merciful and gracious**, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

**EXODUS 34.6 (ESV)**

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive **mercy** and find **grace** to help us in our time of need.

**HEBREWS 4.14-16 (NIV)**

## Background

The word *advent* comes from the Latin *adventus* meaning *arrival* or *coming*. On the Christian church calendar this time of preparation begins four Sundays before Christmas Day. It is a time to look toward the celebration of the birth of Jesus at the end of the month. It is also a time to look ahead to Jesus' Second Coming – foretold in the Gospels, as well as the Book of Revelation.

Some Christians light candles on each of the four Sundays as a marker of the time throughout the season. Others use daily calendars that have treats or readings from the Biblical story of God redeeming humanity through His son.

Traditionally, the first week of Advent focuses on hope. Hope is like a light burning in the middle of the darkness.

It is not just a feeling of expectation, but also the desire or longing that something will happen.

We can place our hope in Jesus because of His great mercy and graciousness.

We receive His mercy by not being separated from Him in death – even though we deserve it.

We receive His grace by being given eternal life with Him – even though we don't deserve it.

So, His mercy and grace directly correlates to our hope. It means we have the confident expectation of and the deep desire for the promise of eternity with God – despite our imperfections.

"Hope itself is like a star- not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity."

-Charles Spurgeon

## Activity

Praise God for the hope we have in Him! Reflect this week on how His mercy and grace have overflowed in your life. Maybe that looks like a list of unexpected blessings you received throughout this year. Maybe that looks like how He drew you in close through a season of trials. Maybe it is BOTH! Name those things aloud and praise God for how He has been merciful and gracious to you.

If you have an advent wreath (or any set of four candles) – light the first one this Sunday as a picture of hope – our light in the darkness.

## Listen

Listen to the Christmas carol ***O Holy Night***, and focus on the lyrical themes of hope and light.

## Other Reading

More scripture readings about God's mercy & grace:

2 Chronicles 30.9

Titus 2.11-14

Romans 6.14

# Advent: Peace

Week Two- Sunday, December 4 -  
Saturday, December 10

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## Slow To Anger

"The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, **slow to anger**, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

**EXODUS 34.6 (ESV)**

For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you warned them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you gave them into the hands of the neighboring peoples. But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

**NEHEMIAH 9.30-31 (NIV)**

## Background

Exodus 34.6 is the most repeated verse in the Bible. It is referenced in whole or part nearly thirty times throughout the scriptures.

Both the Old and New Testaments are full of stories that highlight God's patience. It's almost impossible to read a story about the Israelites without finding God's *slow to anger* character.

It is obvious throughout the Bible that God desires peace - both with and for His people. Even when we see Him enact His judgment, He's already given many chances and explicit instructions.

What a blessing that He is so slow to anger!

None of us has been a perfect person this week and yet God doesn't look at us in anger, but in love.

This third week of Advent centers on Peace. As we think about God's patient nature this week, let's also dwell on His peace. How great is it that we don't have to be fearful and anxious about God's disposition toward us? How amazing is it that He would forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us?

And we get the aid of the Holy Spirit to help us practice being patient with our circumstances just as God is so patient with us!

For this is what the Lord says: I will  
make peace flow to her like a river,  
and the wealth of nations like a flood

Isaiah 66:12 (CSB)

## Activity

Praise God for the peace He brings to us through the Holy Spirit. True peace comes from the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Above all, the peace of being made right with God comes by Jesus' work of salvation. Because He is slow to anger, God made a way for us to have eternal peace. Think of a time where there should have been no reason for you to have peace in a situation, yet supernaturally you DID. Remind yourself of His perfect peace and how God is not looking at your list of faults, but through the filter of Jesus' sacrifice.

If you have an advent wreath (or any set of four candles) – light the first and second candles this Sunday as a picture of hope and peace.

## Listen

Listen to the Christmas carol ***Hark The Herald Angels Sing*** focusing on Jesus as Prince of Peace.

## Other Reading

More scripture readings about God's being slow to anger and giving peace:

Psalm 103

The Book of Jonah

John 14.26-27 & 16.33

# Advent: Love

Week Three - Sunday, December 11 -  
Saturday, December 17

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## Abounding In Steadfast Love

"The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and **abounding in steadfast love** and faithfulness.

**EXODUS 34.6 (ESV)**

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

**JOHN 3.16 (ESV)**

## Background

Traditionally, the third week of Advent is a focus on the love we have in Christ. In 1 John 4.8 scripture tells us that God IS love. What does that mean? Well, it means a whole lot of things, but one thing it means is that without God's Spirit at work in the world, we would have no love. There is no true love apart from Him. What does love look like? What are some attributes of love?

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 tells us, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."

Now reread that and replace the words love & it with the name God and He.

How does that change the way you view the attribute of love? How does it change the way you view God? There's a reason that when God first spoke to His people that He didn't just say that He loved them, but He proclaimed His STEADFAST love. Look back at the passage in 1 Corinthians. Do you see it? Do you see how love is described as always trusting, hoping, and persevering? God's steadfast love is not only reliable but it is infinite, inexhaustible, and indestructible. What a comforting reminder!

*"God's love is like an ocean; You can see its beginning, but not its end."*

-Rick Warren

## Activity

Praise God for the steadfast love He gives! His love is boundless and endless! Our brains are STRETCHED just to imagine how much that is.

Make a list this week of ways you feel loved and ways you are able to show love to others. As you make your list, remember that you know how to love because He first loved you.

If you have an advent wreath (or any set of four candles) – light the first, second, and third candles this Sunday as a picture of hope, peace, and love.

## Listen

Listen to the Christmas carol ***O Come, O Come Emmanuel***, and focus on the love that brought our Emmanuel – God with us – to redeem humanity.

## Other Reading

More scripture readings about God's abounding in steadfast love:

1 John 4.16–19

Zephaniah 3.17

Romans 5.8 & 8.37–39

Psalms 136

# Advent: Joy

Week Four - Sunday, December 18 -  
Saturday, December 24

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## Faithfulness

"The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and **faithfulness**.

**EXODUS 34.6 (ESV)**

I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

**PSALM 16.8 & 11 (ESV)**

## Background

In this final week of Advent traditionally the focus is Joy. If we really examine what joy means, it is such a fitting overlap with our study in Exodus 34.6. So let's do that for a moment - what does *joy* actually mean? The biblical definition of joy is a feeling of good pleasure and happiness that is dependent on who Jesus is rather than on who we are or what is happening around us.

Okay, so let's go back to what God says of His character in Exodus. God calls Himself abounding in faithfulness. How could that not bring us joy?

Referring to God, Psalm 16 says, "In your presence there is fullness of joy." And if God is faithful to always be present with us then we have the opportunity to steep in the fullness of joy at all times.

Knowing who Jesus is, who God the Father is, and who the Holy Spirit is should give us tremendous joy. Unlike happiness, joy isn't dependent on our circumstances or our bank balance. Joy isn't dependent on the perfectly clean house or the perfect marriage. Joy doesn't depend on a dream career or even on great health. Joy is knowing that God is faithful even when we stumble. Joy is knowing God is making a way for us even when we can't see it. Joy is choosing to rest in the knowledge that He has plans for us to prosper and that He doesn't do harm. Despite how things may look to the world, we have the faithfulness of THE God of the universe. In His presence is fullness of joy.

"Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day."

-Henri JM Nouwen

## Activity

Praise God for the joy we have in Him and His faithfulness! Joy is not just happiness but a much deeper feeling. A joyful heart is good medicine. Spend some time this week naming ways God has been faithful in your life and the lives of those around you. Seek out ways to choose joy this week in spite of difficult circumstances or imperfect realities.

If you have an advent wreath (or any set of four candles) – light all four of them this Sunday as a picture of hope, peace, love, and joy.

## Listen

Listen to the Christmas carol ***Joy To The World***, and focus on the meaning of the word *joy*.

## Other Reading

More scripture readings about God's faithfulness:

Deuteronomy 7.9

Hebrews 10.23

Lamentations 3.22-23

Romans 8.28

1 John 1.9

# Advent: Christmas Day

Sunday, December 25

## The Birth of Jesus

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

**LUKE 2.1-21 (NIV)**

*"Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son. The only requirement is to believe in Him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life."*

-Corrie Ten Boom

## Activity

Praise God for sending His son to come to earth and live as a man. In Him we have been given the perfect gift! Jesus is not only God's Son and our Savior. He is also the earthly example of all of the attributes God spoke of Himself in Exodus 34.6.

Jesus is LORD. (Romans 10.9)

Jesus is God. (John 8.58)

Jesus is merciful. (John 8.1-11)

Jesus is gracious. (1 Corinthians 12.9)

Jesus is slow to anger. (Mark 15.1-20)

Jesus is abounding in steadfast love. (John 15.12-13)

Jesus is faithful. (Hebrews 13.8)

What other names and attributes can you think of for Jesus? Consider using the note page in the back of this guide to write out all the names and attributes you can and then pray through them as you celebrate Him today.

If you have an advent wreath (or any set of four candles) - light all four of them again today as a picture of hope, peace, love, and joy - all of which are found in Jesus Christ.

# Notes & Prayers Advent 2022



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