

MeckInstitute

Advent

PRAYER GUIDE





Introduction

Advent is not a word that we use in everyday conversation. For most, "advent"- if it comes up at all – only comes up around Christmastime. Advent calendars filled with chocolate. Advent wreaths. Advent drawers. If you grew up in a secular home, you probably think of Advent in terms of counting down the days until Santa's arrival, tearing open Christmas gifts, and gorging yourself into a sugar coma.

But the Christian celebration of Advent is so much more.

The word "advent" means "coming" and originates from the Latin word *adventus* and the Greek word *parousia*. The season of Advent lasts the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, so while **this year it begins on November 29**, that is not always the case. The traditions of Advent that are most akin to our modern tradition are thought to have developed as early as the 6th century. The focus, however, was not originally on the coming of Jesus as a baby, but rather the coming of Jesus at the end of time. It wasn't until the Middle Ages that the celebration of His birth was also added to the tradition. To incorporate both focuses, the first two weeks of Advent look forward to the second coming of Christ, while the second two weeks look back to His first coming.

To prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christmas and the second coming of Jesus, we invite you to use this prayer journal to interact with God each day of Advent.

Each week, you'll find an Advent devotional followed by daily journal prompts. We encourage you to write down your prayers, not only so that you can organize your thoughts and spend time reflecting on your prayers, but also so that you can refer back to them as you see God moving in your life.

Week 1

NOVEMBER 29 – DECEMBER 5

"O come, o come, Emmanuel
To free your captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear"
("O Come, O Come, Emmanuel")

Our story as recorded by the Bible has been one characterized by rebellion and rescue. We do the rebelling; God does the rescuing. Over and over again, we see this cycle within the Israelite people – the very people whom God chose to represent Him to the rest of the world. Despite God's attempts to lead them into His perfect will for their lives, they repeatedly broke His heart in pursuit of a "better" way that always turned out to disappoint them. At one point, God decided to let His children have their way and to turn their back on Him without immediately coming to their rescue. As a result, they were overtaken by enemy armies and forced into exile – ejected from their beloved Promised Land into foreign territory where they were at the mercy of the captors. And when they shouted out to God for rescue, they were dismayed by His silence.

When we sing "Silent Night" at Christmastime, we tend to associate silence with rest and calm as the song suggests. We think of the silence that often accompanies awe. The silence characterized by hopefulness and anticipation.

But there's also another type of silence, isn't there? The kind of silence that results from the absence of an awaited response. The silence that follows an unanswered plea for help. The silence that paralyzes you when you're afraid.



The Israelites knew this heavy silence. As sung in "O Come, O Come Emmanuel", they repeatedly called out to God for rescue during their time of exile, but silence was the only response they were given. It was an unwanted silence. A hopeless silence. A seemingly abandoned silence. We experience this type of silence when we call out to God and don't hear Him reply. When we look around the world at the injustice and pain, and yet do not see a Rescuer. When we look within at the brokenness and evil of our own hearts, and yet cannot find a cure. Sometimes we resent this silence and the God who authors it.

When we cry out to God and hear no reply, we assume that He has abandoned us or turned His back on us. We can feel like the Israelites – exiled and forgotten.

But the reality is startlingly different. God's silence is not stained by evil, corruption or disappointment. Instead, God's silence is always an extension of His goodness. Though God might be silent, He is never distant. In fact, God's silence is often the soundtrack by which He does His mighty work of redeeming each one of us and redeeming the world that we have broken.

Are you experiencing a silent night that is calm and bright or one that feels more like the silence of the Israelite captives? An unwanted silence. A "where are you, God?" silence. If it's the latter, take hold of the truth that this silence is temporary. One day, Jesus will loudly return, and we will hear God's voice out loud. We will no longer have to wonder where He is because we will be enveloped by His presence.

Until then, God speaks silently to us through the Holy Spirit that resides within every believer. Sometimes the Spirit provides answers to our longings, but sometimes He simply provides hope and peace when we are asked to wait. Either way, He is always present.

November 29

Take time to consider when you've experienced God's silence. In what way are you waiting for God in this present moment? Use the space below to journal what comes to mind.



Pray the following prayer.

Father, I know that your silence does not indicate your absence, but it can so often feel that way. As I wait for your direction, help me to have confidence in your presence with me. Help me to remember that your timing is always good and right, even when it doesn't align with the timing I'd prefer. God, if you just want me to use this season of waiting to grow in trust, then help me to do that. But if there is anything else you are waiting on me to do, or if there are other areas you're wanting me to mature, would you please show me and help me to follow your lead? You are good, and I trust you. Amen.



November 30

Reflect on the question you answered yesterday. Take a couple of minutes to consider how you feel about your season of waiting. Write down what emotions are coming up for you.

Use the following prayer as a guide to take those emotions to God.

God, as I find myself in this season of waiting on you for _____*, I'm feeling* _____ *(anxious, fearful, vulnerable, etc.). You already know my heart, so I won't pretend to be feeling* _____ *(excited, hopeful, etc.). I also know that you love me and want what's best for me in all things. I think that* _____ *is best for me, but I trust that you know better than I do. So, if that is not what's best or if the timing I'm hoping for isn't best, then would you speak to me through your Spirit and give me your peace as I continue to trust? I trust you, Lord. Help me to trust you deeper and better. Amen.*

December 1

Remembering how God has been faithful in the past can help us to trust Him with our present and future circumstances. Take time to prayerfully reflect on how God has been faithful to you in the past.



What characteristics about God can you see evidenced in those experiences? His protection? His provision? His love? Use what you learned to pray the following prayer.

Lord, I saw your _____ (love, patience, faithfulness, grace, etc.) on display when _____ (describe when you saw God at work). I know that is who you are. I need your _____ again in this situation. I need you, God. I'm waiting to see what you're going to do. Help me to trust you in the silence. I'm bringing you all of my doubt and impatience and anxiety. Let who you have been and what you have done in the past speak into the present. You are the God who never changes, and that is so comforting. Help me to remember, Lord. Amen.



December 2

Read through Psalm 62:1-8. Put that psalm into your own words, and adapt it to your own circumstances. For instance, instead of "So many enemies against one man – all of them trying to kill me," you might write, "My job is feeling like more than one person can handle – I'm surrounded by obstacles."

December 3

Throughout the Bible, we see that there are a variety of reasons why God allows His people to experience periods of waiting. For example, God allowed His people to wait in their Egyptian slavery for the sake of showing mercy to another group of people. Later on, the people of God experienced 400 years of His silence as the result of their *ongoing disobedience*.

Ask God to reveal His reason for allowing you to wait. It could be that your waiting is because of what God is doing elsewhere and the timing simply is not yet aligned, or it could be that there is something God is waiting on you to do (such as repent or obey) before He will act. Spend time in silence listening for God to give you an answer. If no answer seems forthcoming, then pray that God would help you to trust and wait even in the unknown.





December 4

Read the following verse from the book of Isaiah:

But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength.
They will soar high on wings like eagles.
They will run and not grow weary.
They will walk and not faint. **|| Isaiah 40:31, NLT**

Waiting on God is often wearying because waiting on God often wears on our trust. The waiting is where we find out just how deeply our trust is rooted. If you're feeling weary, take that to God. Don't try to willpower yourself into strength, but go instead to the source of all strength. Pray that God would reveal places where your trust is feeling strained, and ask Him to renew your trust so that your strength could, likewise, be renewed.

December 5

It can be hard to praise God in the midst of waiting. Our understandable tendency is to beg God to bring our waiting to an end. But God is worthy to be praised in all seasons – including difficult ones.

1 Thessalonians instructs us:

Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. **|| 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NLT**

Spend time in prayer thanking God in your present circumstances. What can you praise Him for today?



Week 2

DECEMBER 6-12

"I'm gonna shine my light both far and near,
I'm gonna shine mine light bright and clear,
where there's a dark corner in this land
I'm gonna let my little light shine."
("This Little Light of Mine")

In one of our Meck Institute classes, the question was raised: "After we become Christians, why doesn't God just transport us to Heaven? Why does He leave us here to wait?"

As we look around at the corruption, scandal and abuse that often characterize our world, it's easy to feel this same sentiment. Why does God force us to live through all of this when He has already prepared a place for us in Heaven? Throw in the increasing anti-Christian sentiment in our culture, and our desire for Heaven grows all the more insatiable. We know that when Jesus comes again, He will put an end to all of the evil and suffering, so we suppose that we must just sit around and wait for that to happen. As we experience difficulty, we take hope in the fact that we someday will not.

But how does that help us to live today? How does a future hope overflow into a present reality?

The truth is that God has not saved us simply for Heaven. His ultimate goal is for His presence to be lived out in the life of every one of His children. We aren't supposed to wait around passively for Heaven. While God will have the final word about pain and evil, He does not have the only word.



No, he has left Christians on the earth to live out the hope that we have in Heaven. As we roll up our sleeves and enter into the suffering of this world, we can bring a light into darkness and give an unbelieving world a taste of a different reality.

While we may not be able to absolve this world of the pain that we have all unleashed into it, we can certainly provide glimpses of Heaven as we live out God's ministry of healing. When we provide a meal to a family in need, we remind them that there's still a source of good in this world. When we stay up all night with a grieving friend, we can be a physical reminder of God's constant presence. When we stand firm in biblical convictions against the onslaught of postmodern abstractness, we remind the world that there is something, or rather Someone, much greater than ourselves and that there is Truth that gives definition to reality.

When we receive God's salvation, we are not saved only for Heaven, but also for our time on Earth. As Christians, God asks us to be His ambassadors – His hands that grab hold of our neighbor's hands as we walk them toward Him, and His feet that lead others to His truth.

Yes, we look forward to the advent of Jesus at the end of time, but today we are called to demonstrate His presence in the way we live our lives.

December 6

Waiting carries the notion of passivity – but it's not meant to be passive. Rather, as we wait, we are meant to be faithfully active as agents of God's hope, healing, and restoration in the world. Take time to pray through your role as an agent of God in your world.

Father, waiting can be so difficult, but I don't want my waiting to go to waste. Taking into account my relationships, my personality, my gifts and abilities, how do you want me to serve as your representative in the world? How am I doing at bringing your grace and truth into my relationships? How am I doing with using all that you've given me to serve others? God, would you show me where I'm not representing you well? In what areas do I need to grow and mature, and where do I just need to repent and obey? Thank you, Lord, for letting me be part of your work in the world. It's a privilege, and I am so grateful. Amen.



Now listen for God's response, and then journal anything that was prompted within you.



December 7

If we are to represent the heart and character of God to the world, we should probably know what that looks like! There are many places in the Bible that lay it out for us, but the book of Galatians provides a concise list of what God intends to produce in us.

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! **|| Galatians 5:22-23, NLT**

Spend time prayerfully reflecting on each characteristic of a Spirit-led life. Ask God to reveal how you've grown in each of these areas and where there is still growing to be done. Journal what comes to mind. Consider committing this passage to memory so you can pray it throughout the day.

December 8

Our families often get the best and the worst of us. They can be both the easiest and hardest people to express the love of God to. Reflect on those relationships as you consider how you can represent the heart and character of God in each.

Lord, you've entrusted me with representing you to _____. *I love* _____ *so much, but I'm finding it difficult to* _____ *right now (be patient, forgive, demonstrate grace, and so forth). I want to love this person as you have loved me. The next time I* _____. *(love my patience, hold a grudge, speak harshly, and so forth), would you please stop me in my tracks? Convict me right in that moment and help me to change course. I know I'll try to justify myself, but your love is entirely undeserved and yet you've given it so freely. Give me your heart, God. Thank you for loving me. You are so good. Amen.*





December 9

Our calling to serve as God's representatives begins in our homes but then stretches out into our neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and social circles. We're called to represent the heart and character of God to everyone, but especially to those who do not yet have a relationship with God. The Bible describes that calling in the book of 1 Peter.

You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.
|| 1 Peter 2:9, NLT

Journal a list of people below who don't yet know Jesus. Pray that God would call them out of the darkness and into His light. Ask Him to give you the opportunity and the boldness to tell others about the forgiveness and mercy offered in Jesus.

December 10

This time of year is undoubtedly a time of celebration. But it is Jesus that we are celebrating, and Jesus came to serve. If we are to be representatives of God, then we, too, are called to serve. Take time to prayerfully reflect on different ways of serving, and ask God to provide you with opportunities to serve accordingly.

Serving with your money

For example, is there a single mother you know who can't afford to buy Christmas presents this year? "God, how would you have me help her?"

Serving with your time

For example, are any of our local Missions partners in need of additional help this holiday season? "Father, where would you like me to give my time?"



Serving with your gifts and abilities

For example, are there needs at church as we prepare to welcome so many people who don't yet know Jesus? "Lord, where would you like me to use my gifts and abilities?"



December 11

Let's be honest. The joy and celebration of Christmas can so easily be marred by relational tension. There may be complicated family dynamics that make loving one another as Jesus would have us love one another difficult. Take time to pray through any anxiety you may have going into this season. Pray for peace. Pray for the ability to forgive, and seek forgiveness when necessary. Journal your prayers below, and be as specific as you can about whatever is weighing on your heart.

December 12

Just as the joy of Christmas can be tainted by relational stress, so also it can be marked by deep grief over a loved one who isn't present anymore. Listen, though, to the promise of Psalm 34.

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted;
he rescues those whose spirits are crushed. **|| Psalm 34:18, NLT**

Spend time expressing your grief to God. Pour out your heart to Him. Then, prayerfully consider who else you could talk to about your grief. Allow God to comfort you through their presence and love rather than trying to carry the weight of your grief alone.



Week 3

DECEMBER 13-19

"Life in a prison cell may well be compared to Advent; one waits, hopes, and does this, that, or the other- things that are of no real consequence- the door is shut, and can be opened only from the outside."
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters from Prison)

For us, Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas. But in reality, the spirit of Advent has been felt since the very beginning of time.

It all started when the original man and woman believed a lie about God that led them to disobey Him. "At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness." (Genesis 3:7, NLT). At the very first act of rebellion, the entire trajectory of God's original plan for humankind was forced off course. Instead of enjoying constant communion with God, Adam and Eve's sin erected a hedge between them and their Father, a hedge that no human being has been able to hurdle.

From that moment, Adam and Eve realized that there was nothing they could do on their own to undo the unleashing of sin. There was no stuffing it back into Pandora's box. Their only hope was a Rescuer. Thus, their spirit of Advent – their desire for a coming Rescuer – has been passed onto every one of us. Our souls have been in a constant posture of Advent since before we uttered our first word.

The story of the Old Testament is a story of Advent – of generation after generation living in the reality of a broken world, all the while crying out for a Messiah – a Savior.



Despite the prophecies that pointed to the arrival of the Savior, many had (and still have) their own idea of what the Rescuer would be like and how He would come.

Many pictured a powerful king who would mercilessly slaughter the enemies of God's people. Others pictured a charismatic leader with the ability to persuade the whole world into obedience. But God has always known that the rescue we all need is not a physical rescue but rather a spiritual one. We need rescue from our sin.

So while most of humankind was looking up to Heaven for the majestic arrival of an Almighty King, Jesus quietly and humbly came to offer His life to become a door within the insurmountable hedge. He became the Way to forgiveness and salvation. All we must do is believe Him and walk through the door, back into our Father's arms, leaving the ways of the world behind us as we return to the original path God planned for our lives.

This sounds neat, tidy and easy, and though the easy part is definitely true, we often come to the door that Jesus opened with a lot of doubt and baggage. In fact, millions of people around us feel like they have too much baggage upon their shoulders to fit through the door. The spirit of Advent is burning within them with as much vigor as the spirit of shame. As Christians, we have good news to share with these sojourners, and the season of Advent allows us many opportunities to share that news. We can encourage those we love to lay their baggage down at the feet of Jesus and to walk through the door with trust. They may still have questions or deep-engrained patterns of sin, but we have a God who is big enough and loving enough to handle that. The important first step is a relational one, and we can help begin that relationship by introducing our friends to the person of Jesus Christ. Once they get to know the real Him, walking through the door won't be the issue. Getting there fast enough will.

December 13

As we anticipate the coming of Jesus this Christmas, let's take time to prayerfully reflect on why He came. Think back to your own decision to follow Jesus, and then spend a moment in gratitude and praise.

God, I am so grateful that you saved me. I know I didn't – and still don't – deserve to be loved so deeply and so extensively. I was _____ *(describe what it was like before you met Jesus). I couldn't rescue myself, but I didn't have to because you rescued me by sending your Son to take everything I deserved upon Himself. Now* _____*. (describe what it has been like since knowing Jesus). I am forever grateful. I praise you for your incredible grace towards me. You are good. Amen.*



If you don't yet follow Jesus, consider praying this prayer (or whatever parts of it you can pray honestly).

God, I'm still not sure what to make of you. I'm still not sure I believe in you or that Jesus can save me. I'm not sure I'm convinced that I even need saving. But I'm open to finding out. I want to be humble enough to consider the possibility that I need saving and that you loved me enough to provide the way. Help me, God, to understand. Help me to know and believe the truth. If you are who you say you are and have done what you say you've done, help me. Thank you. Amen.



December 14

Jesus wasn't the kind of rescuer most people were expecting. They were expecting a conquering king, but He came as a humble servant. Jesus isn't always the kind of rescuer we expect – or even want – either. Take time to prayerfully consider the expectations you have about God, and ask Him to help you understand and know the truth of who He really is and what He really has done. Journal how the Spirit is responding to you.

Lord, so often I have wanted you to _____ *(do something, be something, etc.). That's the kind of God I want you to be. But I want to know who you really are. I don't want to imagine you to be anything you are not – even if I think what I want is best. I know, if I'm being honest, that your way is always best. Help me to trust and believe that. You are so good, God. I am so grateful that I can come to you with all of my misunderstandings and misconceptions of you. Please correct my heart and my mind. Amen.*

December 15

We all have baggage that needs stripping off when we come to God. That is certainly true when making the decision to follow Jesus in the first place, but it's no less true as we keep on following him over the course of our lives. Journal about what you had to strip off in order to make that decision (or what you currently need to strip off if you haven't yet made that decision), and journal what needs stripping off now as you continue following Him. Pray out of gratitude for those things that have been stripped away, and pray for strength and guidance over those things that still need to be stripped away.

What needed to be stripped off in order for you to follow Jesus?



What in your life right now needs to be stripped off as you continue following Jesus?



December 16

Spending time reflecting with gratitude over our salvation ought to motivate us to share the good news of salvation with others. Make a list below of people you can invite to a service this Christmas. Pray for each person by name, and ask God to open their hearts to hearing about who He is, what He has done, and what following Him could mean for their lives. Then, after you've prayed, take whatever step you need to take to invite them.

December 17

Return to the list you made yesterday, and pray over the names again. This time, pray for any baggage they may need to lay down if they are to come to know Jesus. If you have a sense as to what that baggage may be, pray specifically for those things. If you aren't sure, pray generally for any guilt, shame, past decisions, patterns of sin, and so forth that may be holding them back. Pray that God would help strip them of that baggage however He sees fit.





December 18

Go again to the list of names you've been praying over. If you haven't yet invited them to a service, pray for the boldness to do so. Journal any fears or anxieties you have about inviting them, and let the Spirit speak into those doubts. If you have invited them and they said "yes," thank God for their openness, and pray that they would keep taking steps towards Him. If they said "no," pray for their hearts again. Ask God to remove any barriers in their hearts and minds that would keep them from coming.

December 19

Go once again to your list of names. Pray, as you have been praying, that they would come to know Jesus. Pray also for the Spirit to nudge you towards any conversations He may want you to have. Pray for opportunities to talk about Jesus openly and boldly. Pray for your words to be filled with truth and grace. Pray for the wisdom to know when to speak and when to hold back. Journal anything you sense the Spirit prompting you to do, and pray for the boldness needed to be obedient.



Week 4

DECEMBER 20-25

"All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often." **|| Luke 2:18-19, NLT**

When it comes to Christmas music, people have strong views about when it is appropriate to start listening to it. The beginning of Fall? After Thanksgiving? December 1? The sentiment is that it just doesn't feel right to play Christmas songs in June. If anything, it seems uncomfortable and even sacrilegious.

While Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas Is You" seems most appropriate in the weeks leading up to Christmas, and it seems fitting to sing songs about Jesus near the celebration of His birthday, too often we can treat our entire spiritual life with similar compartmentalization. For many, Christmas is not simply the time we think about the coming of our Savior, but rather, the only time we think about the coming of our Savior.

But does Jesus' coming have implications outside of the month of December? Is His birth something to reflect on during even the sweltering month of July?

Let's take a moment to consider the significance of Jesus' arrival. Don't think yet about His ministry, His death or His resurrection. Rather, let's focus only on His arrival. What is worth reflecting on?



First, Jesus' arrival is a reminder that God is faithful to His promises. All throughout the Old Testament, we read God's promises of a coming Savior. And that promise was not dependent on the behavior of the human race, but rather on the unchanging love of God. In the right time, in the right way, God would send a Savior. And He did. But that's not the only promise God has made. He promises to never leave us or abandon us, to forgive us when we ask, to work for our good, to listen and respond to us when we pray. And that's barely scratching the surface. If God could be faithful in the most costly act of love imaginable, how much more can He be trusted in the everyday realities of life?

Next, Jesus' arrival reminds us that we are not forgotten. Before Jesus' birth, the Jewish community experienced 400 years of silence. That's right – 400 long years. As much as they yearned for a Savior, the majority had given up on that promise centuries earlier. They figured that God must have simply forgotten about them. The truth, though, is that as much as we might forget about God, He never forgets about us.

Even when He is silent, His meditations are on us. As recorded in the Psalms: "How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered!" (Psalm 139:17, NLT) How would it change your next 5 minutes to know that God is thinking about you right now? The all-powerful Creator of all that is – in addition to orchestrating the tides of the ocean and maintaining the gravitational pull of every planet in the universe – is thinking about you.

Last, Jesus' arrival reminds us that God loves us. Jesus did not come simply out of obedience to His Father's promise made centuries early. Nor did He come in order to check off a pending "to-do" item on His divine list. No, He came because He cares. He came because He loves us. We often show up for our friends in the joyous moments of their lives – births, graduations, weddings – as well as during the hard times – sicknesses, tragedies and deaths.



Without saying a word, our very presence can be life-giving and comforting to those we care about. Similarly, God – although He is always with us in Spirit – demonstrated His presence by taking on the flesh of man and dwelling among us. He wanted to make sure that we knew, without a doubt, that He is a constant spectator to our lives. He "showed up" before we were born, and will show up every day of eternity.

So, let's save Christmas carols for Christmas, but like the mother of Jesus, let's think about Jesus often. He certainly thinks often about us.

December 20

The coming of Jesus reminds us that God keeps His promises. Spend time prayerfully reflecting on how God has kept His promises to you. For example, God has promised to never leave us. Consider how God has kept that promise to you. God has also promised to answer our prayers (even if the answer is "no" or "not yet"). Consider when God has kept His promise to answer your prayers. Journal about how you've seen God keep His promises, and spend time thanking Him for being a God who will always do what He says He will do.





December 21

The coming of Jesus reminds us that God has not forgotten about us. He sees us, knows us, and cares for every part of us. Read Psalm 139. Pray through it line by line. If there is a particular part that you struggle to believe, pray about that, too. Ask God to help you trust that this really is the truth about His heart towards you. Journal about what this psalm stirs up in you. Do you feel peace and comfort at being so deeply known? Do you feel anxious and vulnerable at being so deeply known? Take those feelings to God.

December 22

You prayed through Psalm 139 yesterday. There is an incredible line in that psalm that says:

How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! **|| Psalm 139:17, NLT**

Reflect on the truth that God's thoughts about you are precious. They aren't filled with condemnation and judgment. God doesn't overlook our sin or sweep it under the rug, but even when our sin needs to be dealt with, God is motivated by a heart of love towards us. Spend time prayerfully reflecting on God's thoughts concerning you.

God, it is wild that you think of me so often! That fills me with _____ *(your emotional response to that truth). I so long assumed that your thoughts about me were* _____ *(infrequent, disappointed, angry, etc.), but this psalm helped me realize* _____*. Lord, help me to believe the truth about your heart towards me. Help me to see myself the way you see me. Help me see others the way you see them. I want that kind of a heart towards others. Thank you, God, for knowing me so deeply and loving me in spite of all that you know. Amen.*





December 23

The coming of Jesus reminds us that God loves us. Spend time prayerfully reflecting on the lengths you would go to in order to care for those you love most deeply. God went so far as to sacrifice Himself for our sake. There is nothing we could ever do for another that would even compare to the God of the universe taking on humanity and dying a death He didn't deserve so we could have eternal lives that we don't deserve. Journal your reflections, and allow yourself to be awed by that truth.

December 24

As this season of waiting draws to an end, spend a couple of moments quieting your heart and mind before God. Pray the following prayer.

Father, thank you for this season of Advent. It has been _____ *(a joy, difficult, and so forth) to engage in this time of waiting. I have learned* _____ *I have been stretched and grown in* _____*. I still feel like I need to return to* _____ *right now, God, I just come to you with a heart of celebration at the coming of Jesus. Thank you for sending your Son. Thank you for keeping your promises. Thank you for giving us the gift of your presence. Thank you for providing the way of salvation. Thank you for loving me so deeply and completely. Lord, let me not soon forget this journey you've taken me on over the last several weeks. Help me to keep my eyes fixed on you all throughout the year. Help me live as a worthy representative of your heart and character in the world. Help me stay humble and grateful every single day. Help me to follow hard after you. You are good, God. Thank you for loving me. I love you. Amen.*




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