

A lit candle is the central focus, surrounded by pinecones and winter decorations. The scene is set in a window, with a soft, warm glow from the candle illuminating the surrounding objects. The background is a light, textured surface, possibly a window pane or a wall. The overall mood is cozy and festive.

2019

Advent Devotional

FOR FAMILIES

2019 *Advent Devotional* FOR FAMILIES

This devotional is designed to be a helpful tool for your family to use during the Advent season. We hope that as you read it together, it engages your hearts, minds, spirits and actions around the true spirit and meaning of this special season. The Advent word for the week matches the word that each Sunday's sermon will be based around. We encourage you to use the devotional as a family each week to reflect on the meaning of Advent and prepare your hearts and minds for the gift of Immanuel, God with us.

Each devotional is structured as follows:

Advent Word: A word for the week that corresponds with a key theme of the Advent season.

Scripture: A passage from Scripture that highlights with the Advent word of the week and engages our spirit with the weeks theme/message.

Hymn/Song: A Hymn/Song to engage with together and helps us connect emotionally to the weeks message/theme. Sing the songs together or at least listen and reflect on the lyrics. Each of the suggested songs can be found on the 2019 Advent Devotional Playlist on our YouTube channel: FirstUMCAuburn or the Advent Resources link on our website under the Connect tab.

Reflection: A reflection on the passage of Scripture, that helps us go deeper and challenge us to engage our mind in the key theme/message of the week.

Activity: A family activity to help engage and be intentional about practicing the theme for that week.

Prayer: A simple prayer to close out the devotional time.

We hope you enjoy this devotional as a family and really use this time to be together in the Word and challenge each other to embrace the spirit of this season. God's blessing to you all!

Week 1

Advent Word:

PREPARE



SCRIPTURE:

1 Peter 1:13-16 (MSG)

So roll up your sleeves, put your mind in gear, be totally ready to receive the gift that's coming when Jesus arrives. Don't lazily slip back into those old grooves of evil, doing just what you feel like doing. You didn't know any better then; you do now. As obedient children, let yourselves be pulled into a way of life shaped by God's life, a life energetic and blazing with holiness. God said, "I am holy; you be holy."

HYMN/SONG:

Prepare Him Room

*O behold, the mystery now unfolds
See the star shine on the virgin
foretold*

*Angels sing and light up the sky
Hope rings out in a newborn's cry
Swing wide, you ancient gates for
Christ is born today!*

*Prepare Him room, prepare Him
room*

Let the King of Glory enter in

*God with us, the promise has come
to be*

*This, the one the prophets were
longing to see*

*In the darkness a blazing light, to
the hungry the words of life
His kingdom now is near for those
with ears to hear*

*Oh, our hearts, as busy as
Bethlehem*

*Hear Him knock, don't say there's
no room in the inn*

*Through the cradle, cross, and
grave*

*See the love of God displayed
Now He's risen and he reigns*

Praise the Name above all names!

REFLECTION:

As we begin our advent season, this is a time of preparation. A time to put our minds in gear and really focus on the beauty and the power of what this season represents. It is all too easy to become distracted during this time of year. We become blinded by the need to buy gifts, attend gatherings, travel and so on. So, in the midst of all of it, instead of preparing ourselves for the miracle of Christ among us, we lose sight of what is important and get distracted in earthly busyness.

So the challenge and calling this Sunday is to prepare your hearts and minds for the gift of God with us. Take time to intentionally set your mind on God, on the incarnation, on the Kingdom of God. Lose yourself not in the busyness of the world around you, but in the presence of Christ within you. As the Scripture says, we know better than to be lazy and slip into the habits of distraction during this season, but it's too easy to do.

We have to be intentional about keeping focused on what we are really celebrating this season.

ACTIVITY:

As a family talk about something that you do regularly throughout your day such as turning on/off lights, eating, brushing your teeth as a few examples. Agree that whenever you do that activity throughout the day, you will take a few moments to reflect or say a quick prayer reminding yourself that God is with us.

PRAYER:

God, some of us may be distracted by busyness, anxiety, frustration, and hurt. This is not a distraction we like, but it is one we have become used to. We surrender our hurt feelings, our panicked selves, and our anxious minds to you.

Immanuel, prepare our hearts and minds with your peaceful presence. Quiet our souls so that we can dwell in the richness of your presence and love. Help us surrender our time and our hearts to you, so that we may be shaped by you and prepared for your will to be done in our lives.

Amen

Week 2

Advent Word:

LOVE



SCRIPTURE:

1 John 4:7-11 (CEB)

Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love. This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him. This is love: it is not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as the sacrifice that deals with our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us this way, we also ought to love each other.

HYMN/SONG:

Love Came Down at Christmas

*Love came down at Christmas
Love all lovely Love divine
Love was born at Christmas
star and angels gave the sign*

*Worship we the Godhead
Love incarnate Love divine
worship we our Jesus
but wherewith for sacred sign*

*Love shall be our token
love be yours and love be mine
love to God and all men
love for plea and gift and sign*

REFLECTION:

Love is at the heart of the gospel. It is the core of what it means to be Christian and it is what unites us with Christ. Love is not always easy though. Love requires, as the Scripture shows, an element of sacrifice. Love gives, even to the point of enduring some pain and hardship.

Sometimes we have to really take an honest inventory about what we love and how we love. Does our love match the love that Jesus showed us? Does our love reach out to those we do not always agree with? Does our love extend to those who have less than we do? Does our love focus on relationship or possession?

During this season and this week reflect on what you love and how you love? Are your actions of love about what is in the best interest of the other person? Or do we sometimes disguise actions that serve our own interests as acts of "love"? Is there anything you think you need to change?

ACTIVITY:

As a family talk about one thing you can do this week that will spread your love a little farther. You could decide to adopt a family/child for Christmas. Or maybe you will invite someone over for dinner one day this week that might need that hospitality and fellowship. Whatever it is, just make sure it is something new that stretches you

to love a little differently than you have in the past!

PRAYER:

God of Love and Grace, forgive us for the times when we have harmed those who you love. Forgive us for our acts of injustice and the harm that we have done. Bring to use a hearts that love as your love and eyes that see as you see. Let us be merciful as you are merciful and forgive as you forgive us.

*Thank you for the gift of your love that is not earned and so cannot be lost. It is simply given. May we take it and give to others in the same way.
Amen*

Week 3
Advent Word:

JOY



SCRIPTURE:

Romans 15:13 (NIV)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

HYMN/SONG:

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

*Joyful joyful we adore thee
God of glory Lord of love
hearts unfold like flowers before thee
opening to the sun above*

*Melt the clouds of sin and sadness
drive the dark of doubt away
Giver of immortal gladness
fill us with the light of day*

*All thy works with joy surround thee
earth and heaven reflect thy rays
stars and angels sing around thee
center of unbroken praise*

*Field and forest
vale and mountain
flowery meadow flashing sea
chanting bird and flowing fountain*

call us to rejoice in thee

*Thou art giving and forgiving
ever blessing ever blest
well-spring of the joy of living
ocean depth of happy rest*

*Thou our Father
Christ our brother
all who live in love are thine
teach us how to love each other
lift us to the joy divine*

*Mortals join the mighty chorus
which the morning stars began
love divine is reigning o'er us
binding all within its span*

*Ever singing march we onward
victors in the midst of strife
joyful music leads us sunward
in the triumph song of life*

REFLECTION:

What a beautiful verse of Scripture! How inspiring are Paul's words, when asks that the readers of Roman's be filled with all Joy and Peace. May it be so for all of us during this season of advent. Joy is something that Paul regularly spoke of and that he was able to find even in some of the worst circumstances.

Paul knew that joy was not something that was influenced by the world around him, but by the power within him. Our happiness can be greatly influenced by what happens to us, but Joy is about putting on a different lens. Joy comes from viewing life's situations, even the bad ones from the perspective that we are not alone. As Paul says, we can be filled with hope and joy as we trust in Christ. We have to trust that no matter the situation God is with us. In Christ we are connected not only to Him, but to the body of all believers.

So, even in times of great stress and difficulty we might find some measure of joy, knowing that we never walk alone.

ACTIVITY:

As a family take moment for each person to make a list of 5 simple things that bring them joy. Review your lists together and see if there is anything on the lists that you can be intentional about doing this week, maybe pick one thing from each person's list.

Also think about one way you could bring joy to someone else outside your family. Maybe bring the neighbor a nice treat or snack, or shovel the snow off someone's stairs or walkway. It doesn't have to be big or flashy, just something that might bring a smile and some joy to a neighbor.

PRAYER:

*Gracious Lord, only you know the heaviness of the human heart, and only through you can we live fully and freely again. Help us sense a deep holy joy within, hovering on the margins of our days, always readily available in your presence.
Amen*

Week 4
Advent Word:

HOPE



SCRIPTURE:

Romans 8:24-25 (NRSV)

For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

HYMN/SONG:

Hope Was Born This Night

*Tonight I can see a star shine
And its splendor fills up the sky
It's the same that appeared and
the wise men revered
When hope was born this night*

*Out upon the snowy fields
There's a silent peace that heals
And it echoes the grace of our
Savior's embrace
Because hope was born this night*

*Glory to God in the highest
Peace on Earth
good will to all men
Let all of the world sing the chorus
of joy
Because hope was born this night
I can hear the Christmas bells ring*

*As softly as a church choir sings
It's the song used to praise the
ancient of days
When hope was born this night
There are angels in this place
And my heart resounds with the
praise*

*Like a shepherd so scared
I'll rejoice and declare
That hope was born this night*

*Glory to God in the highest
Peace on Earth
good will to all men*

*Let all of the world sing the chorus
of joy
Because hope was born this night*

*Gloria Gloria
Gloria Gloria
Oh Gloria*

*Gloria Gloria
Oh Gloria
Gloria Gloria*

*Glory to God in the highest
Peace on Earth
good will to all men*

*Let all the world sing the chorus of
joy
Because hope was born this night*

*Glory to God in the highest
Peace on Earth
good will to all men*

*Let all the world sing the chorus of
joy
Because hope was born this night*

*I know hope was born this night
Because Christ was born this night*

REFLECTION:

As Christians we find ourselves in a unique position. In this passage, Paul reminds us that we eagerly wait and hope for the completion of what began on Christmas day. Christ came to redeem the world,

to restore our relationship with God and while that work was started, it has yet to be finished. So we have a Hope that drives us forward as Christians, this unseen promise of a world that will be restored, whole and filled with love.

So, we wait patiently for the fulfillment of this promise. We wait for peace on earth, good will toward others. We wait for the end of war, strife and suffering. We wait and we hope, but our hope is not just grounded in the future and what is yet to come. It is also a living hope that dwells with us daily through the presence of the Holy Spirit and the reality of Christ's love that lives in and through us all.

Hope is something that should motivate us to keep moving forward in our mission for Christ. Hope that does not motivate someone to action is useless.

ACTIVITY:

We all have things that we hope to see happen in our future. Just like our spiritual hope, if we just wait for things to happen without taking action it is a stale hope. So, take a moment as a family to write down and then share what each person's personal hope is for their future. After everyone takes a moment to talk about some of their future hopes, have everyone share something they can start doing today to make their future hope an eventual reality.

For example: if someone hopes to one day go to Disney World, something they could start doing today is putting a little money back every so often for the trip, or start to make a travel plan.

PRAYER:

*God,
Thank you that in a world of
despair, You are our Hope.
In a world of darkness, You are our
Light.
In a world of sorrow, You are our
joy.*

*Help us to share the Hope of our
hearts with one another.
Enable us to give Hope to others
through Your work amongst us.
In Jesus Name,*

Amen.

**Christmas Eve
Advent Word:**

PEACE



SCRIPTURE:

Colossians 3:15 (NIV)

Let the Peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

HYMN/SONG:

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

*I heard the bells
on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play
And mild and sweet
their songs repeat
Of peace on earth
good will to men*

*And the bells are ringing
(Peace on Earth)
Like a choir they're singing
(Peace on Earth)
In my heart I hear them
Peace on earth
good will to men*

*And in despair
I bowed my head
There is no peace
on earth I said
For hate is strong*

*and mocks the song
Of peace on earth
good will to men*

*But the bells are ringing
(Peace on Earth)
Like a choir singing
(Peace on Earth)
Does anybody hear them
Peace on earth
good will to men*

*Then rang the bells
more loud and deep
God is not dead
nor doth He sleep
(Peace on Earth
peace on Earth)
The wrong shall fail
the right prevail
With peace on earth
good will to men*

*Then ringing singing on its way
The world revolved
from night to day
A voice a chime
a chant sublime
Of peace on earth
good will to men*

*And the bells they're ringing
(Peace on Earth)
Like a choir they're singing
(Peace on Earth)
And with our hearts
we'll hear them
Peace on earth
good will to men*

*Do you hear the bells
they're ringing
(Peace on Earth)
The life the angels singing
(Peace on Earth)
Open up your heart
and hear them
(Peace on Earth)*

*Peace on earth
good will to men
Peace on earth*

Peace on earth
Peace on earth
Good will to men

REFLECTION:

The Scripture in Colossians reminds us that we are called to be a people of peace. Peace, or in the Hebrew, Shalom, is more than just a sense of stillness or calm. Shalom is an idea of fullness and completion. It is a resting and lack of anxiety that comes because all things are made right again. That is what the presence of Christ in the world has done for us. Christ brings fullness and completion to the world. We can find rest and stillness knowing that in Christ the work has been done, we have been restored to right relationship with God and with others.

When we live in Christ and allow his Peace to rule in our hearts, we are allowing the fullness of God to dwell within us. We are allowing ourselves to let go of the weight of this world by understanding that what brings contentment is not what we have, or what we do, but who we are and who we love.

ACTIVITY:

Take 2 minutes today to sit in silence as a family. We are very used to noise and distraction in our society. After the 2 minutes discuss as a family what each person was thinking about in that 2 minutes. Were you bored? Did it feel awkward? Where did your mind wander? Talk about why it seems so hard for us to just be still and disengaged for only 2 minutes.

After you do this, have another 2 minute moment of silence, but this

time use that 2 minutes to think about what a peaceful world might look like. What would it be like for there to be no divisions, wars, hatred, fighting, anxiety, or suffering. Is there anything you can do as a family to make the world a little more peaceful?

PRAYER:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow charity;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is error, the truth;
Where there is doubt, the faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light; and
Where there is sadness, joy.*
*O, Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying to ourselves that we are born to eternal life.
Amen*

-Saint Francis of Assisi-

