



Advent

PROMISE

FULLFILLMENT

RESPONSE

A STUDY GUIDE FOR FAMILIES,
GROUPS, and INDIVIDUALS



-- From Steve --

As we enter this season of Advent, it is our hope for all of us to grow in our faith and knowledge of God through this time of preparation. Advent historically served as a time of preparation not just for Christmas but for Christ's promised return. Promises were made and fulfilled in Christ's first coming. The participants in the story were called to respond. In the same way, promises have been made to us about Christ's second coming and we are waiting for them to be fulfilled. We are left with the choice of how to respond to those promises - with faith or with doubt.

In worship, we will be looking at how God came near to us in the birth narratives of Jesus. This is the story of His "incarnation" - becoming human. God came near to real people in real times and places, into the real situations and circumstances of their lives, and brought good news of great joy. Each was left with a choice of how to respond. While we wait for "restoration" - the fulfillment of God's promises - God still comes to us in the midst of real life with good news of great joy that leaves us with a choice of how we respond. We pray that our worship and study of the world together will be nourishment to head and heart. May it aid you in your Advent season to prepare for Christ's coming into your heart.

About Advent Adventure

Children of all ages can experience the Advent season through story, questions, activities, and service.

If you participated in our December 1 “Advent Adventure” event, you received a bag of supplies to help in each week’s activities. If you were not able to come, please feel free to use these instructions, gather the listed supplies, and do the activity anyway!

Feel free to contact us with questions or even to send us pictures of your ***Adventure***-ous fun! Email children@wpcspartanburg.org.

Inside this guide, you’ll find:

- The Bible passage for each Advent Sunday
- Conversation questions for kids, youth, and families
- Advent Adventure activity and service ideas
- Study questions for adults/groups

Luke 1:5-25

⁵ In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

⁸ Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, ⁹ according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering. ¹¹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. ¹² Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. ¹⁴ You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵ For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ It is he

who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

¹⁸ Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." ¹⁹ The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰ And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

²¹ The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. ²² But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute. ²³ When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home.

²⁴ After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, ²⁵ "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men."

Questions for Kids & Families

- What does it mean to keep a promise?
- What's an example of a promise you have made?
- How can we know that God keeps his promises to us?

Activity - Time Capsule Ornament

Supplies provided at Advent Adventure or to gather: Clear plastic ornament, scrapbook paper cut into strips, hooks

Supplies to gather: Pen

- As a family, think back on the last year. What are some amazing things that happened in your family?
- Write these things on the white side of the strips of paper.
- Gently take off the top of the ornament by squeezing the metal prongs.
- As you place the strips of paper in the ornament take time and thank God for each memory.
- Put the top back on the ornament, add a hook, and hang on your Christmas tree or someplace you can see it every day. This week, focus on these amazing things God has done!

Service Ideas:

- As a family, go to a store (Walmart, grocery store, etc.) and buy several gift cards. Then hand them out to people in the store. You can always give one to the cashier too! Don't forget to wish everyone a **Merry Christmas!**
- Sit next to/eat with someone you don't normally have lunch with. Ask them what their favorite Christmas tradition or memory is.

Questions for Adults

- What is a promise you have made that you take seriously? How were the people of God waiting for God to "show up"?
- Childlessness was often understood to be symbolic of God's judgment or lack of favor. One's faith was tested by enduring a lifetime with no children. What is the significance of Jesus' forerunner coming to a family who had endured such disappointment and waiting?
- An angel (Greek *aggelos*) was a heavenly messenger. The arrival of this messenger meant that God had ended centuries of silence to break through to his people. If God were to "break through" and give you/us a message today, what do you think he would say?
- What does it mean to you that God kept his promise to send a deliverer to Israel?

Luke 1:26-38

(read through verse 56 for context)

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³

and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

³⁴ “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

³⁵ The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called[a] the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.”

³⁸ “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

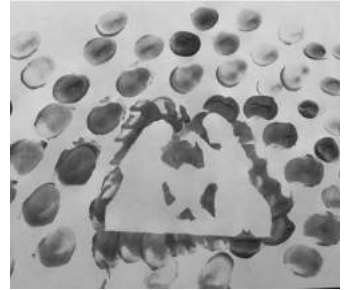
Questions for Kids & Families

- When was a time you were very excited about something?
- Mary was just a young woman who received an extraordinary message. What was this message?
- Using your imagination, what do you think the angel looked like? How would you feel if you saw an angel?
- What kinds of messages do angels bring?
- How can you be a messenger of God’s presence and love for others?

Activity and Service Idea – Christmas Announcement Cards

- Supplies provided at Advent Adventure or to gather: blank card, nativity silhouette, envelope
- Supplies to gather: scissors, paint, tape
- As a family, think about people you know that would enjoy getting a Christmas Card (family, friends, neighbors, teachers, school receptionist, etc.).
- Cut out the nativity silhouette and tape it on the outside of the blank card.

- Dip one finger into the paint and start making fingerprints. Be sure to do fingerprints all along the edge of the shape first. This will help the nativity silhouette to show up well in the end.
- After making fingerprints along the edge of the shape, start making scattered fingerprints all around the paper. Feel free to use different colors and make it your own!
- After you're finished making fingerprints all around the paper, it's time to peel up the silhouette! Slowly peel it up, being careful not to tear the paper (you can use it again to make more cards).
- After the paint dries, write about the Good News that we celebrate on Christmas on the inside of the card.
- Send or give these cards to people you know.
- You can also bring a card to church and put them in the basket in Miss Becky's office. Mr. Dale (our Outreach Minister) will then deliver the cards to shut-ins and residence at the nursing homes.



Questions for Adults

- The angel's visit to Mary revealed a miraculous plan. How does Mary respond?
- What does it mean to be blessed?
- In verse 45, Elizabeth reveals the reason behind Mary's blessedness. What does it mean that Mary believed in God's promises?
- How does Mary's song declare what she believes about God? About herself? About the people of Israel?
- The scriptures and church history (i.e. the Apostle's Creed) proclaims the significance of the fact that Mary was a virgin. Why is the virgin birth of Jesus still worth believing?
- What do we learn about God in the way he chose to use a young woman like Mary?
- Reflect: Consider those in your life who need a reminder that God has and will forever "show up" for us. He is forever-faithful, always-present, and eager to reveal himself.

Luke 1:57-80

⁵⁷ When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

⁵⁹ On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, ⁶⁰ but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.”

⁶¹ They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.”

⁶² Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. ⁶³ He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.” ⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵ All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. ⁶⁶ Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord’s hand was with him.

⁶⁷ His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

⁶⁸ *“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.*

⁶⁹ *He has raised up a horn of salvation for us*

in the house of his servant David

⁷⁰ *(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),*

⁷¹ *salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—*

⁷² *to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant,*

⁷³ *the oath he swore to our father Abraham:*

⁷⁴ *to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear*

⁷⁵ *in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

⁷⁶ *And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;*

for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

⁷⁷ *to give his people the knowledge of salvation*

through the forgiveness of their sins,

⁷⁸ *because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven*

⁷⁹ *to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death,*

to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

⁸⁰ And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Questions for Kids & Families

- Think of a time when you went on a trip and had a “guide”. What did he or she do? How did they help you experience your trip?
- When we find ourselves in the dark, how does having a light or flashlight help us feel better?
- How does God keep a promise to his people by sending them John?

Activity - Hot Chocolate and Song of Praise

Supplies provided at Advent Adventure or to gather: hot chocolate packets (1 per family member), card stock paper

Supplies to gather: mug, water, microwave, pen, scrap paper

- As a family, make hot chocolate.
- Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and sang praises to God. As you drink your hot chocolate together think about all that God does and write a song of praise to God! You can write it on the scrap paper first. When you have it finished, write it on the card stock (paper) and place it somewhere you can see every day (you can even frame it). Don't forget to sing it this week as a family glorifying God!

Service Ideas:

- Write an anonymous note to someone telling them thank you for all they do.
- In our Bible verses for this week, we read Zechariah's song. This week sing Christmas Carols to your neighbors. To make it even more fun, invite some friends to go with you!

Questions for Adults

- In verse 65, the community witnessed something powerful in Zechariah's speech when he named John. They asked "Who is this child going to be?" Who and what did John become to the people of Israel? (See Matthew 3; 11:11; Mark 1; Luke 3)
- Who are the people named in Zechariah's prophecy and why are they important to the story of the Messiah?
- In verse 76, Zechariah blesses his son by declaring the fulfillment of prophecy (Malachi 3:1). How does God use John to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry?
- What is the significance of the people having "knowledge of their salvation through the forgiveness of sin?" (v.77)
- Imagine having your whole life mapped out to prepare the world to meet someone else. What would one have to do to endure in this calling?

Luke 2:1-20

² In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ 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. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ 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.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great

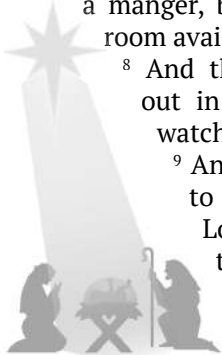
joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ 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.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.



Questions for Kids & Families

- What promise is God keeping in this story?
- Allow your imagination to take you to the manger scene. What senses are you aware of? What do you hear? What do you smell?
- Why do we sing in worship services at church? How is that similar or different to what the angels do?
- How can we be like the shepherds in this story? How can we be like the angels?

Activity – I Spy Ornament

Supplies provided at Advent Adventure or to gather: clear plastic center-splitting ornament, plastic filler pellets, Nativity beads (we got ours from Oriental Trading), Ribbon, I Spy tag (a list of the items in the ornament)

- Open the clear plastic center-splitting ornament and fill one side with the plastic filler pellets.
- Fill the other side of the ornament with the Nativity beads. Take turns telling the Christmas story as you place each bead in the ornament.
- Close your ornament and give it a shake to mix everything up.
- Slide your I Spy tag onto your ribbon and put the ribbon through the ornament top.
- See if you can spy all the items on the tag.

Service Ideas:

- Make a point to smile this week, no matter the circumstances. If you are at the store, waiting in a long line, at a family member's house, or even at your house, wherever you are, spread the Joy of Jesus' birth.
- Donate food to a local food bank and thank them for their work in the community.

Christmas Day (Dec 25) Activity: Birthday Party for Jesus

Supplies provided at Advent Adventure or to gather: cake mix, icing, and candle

Supplies to gather: egg, water, cake pan, oven, lighter

- Bake and ice a cake to celebrate Jesus' birthday!
- Light the candle and sing Happy Birthday to Jesus!
- Thank God for the birth of Jesus and enjoy the party!



Questions for Adults

- How can it be helpful to add wonder and imagination into our meditation and worship?
- Allow your imagination to take you to the manger scene. What senses are you aware of? What do you hear...smell...touch?
- How does the appearance of an angel (and an additional army of angels) to the lowly shepherds of Bethlehem reveal God's heart to us?
- The angels' song and message was "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." What do we learn of heaven's joy for this sacred and extraordinary event?
- How does Jesus' arrival bring "peace to those on whom his favor rests"?
- Why is it important for Christians to continue to remember and celebrate Jesus' arrival?

Luke 2:21-38

²¹ And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

²² And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “EVERY firstborn MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD”), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, “A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS.”

²⁵ And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, ²⁸ then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

²⁹ “Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,

According to Your word;

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

³¹ Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³² A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES,

And the glory of Your people Israel.”

³³ And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. ³⁴ And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed— ³⁵ and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

³⁶ And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. ³⁸ At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Questions for Kids & Families

- In this story, Simeon is overjoyed to meet Jesus. Why do you think that is?
- He speaks of “salvation” to God’s people, which is another word for “rescue”. What does it mean to be rescued? From what do you think God’s people needed rescuing?
- Who is someone you can speak words of blessing to right now?

- *Idea for this week:* Take time to speak a blessing to each other throughout the week, every morning, or at bedtime.

Service Ideas:

- We have been so blessed with gifts, so let's bless others! Go through your old toys and pick some out to donate to others. Take them to one of our local charities.
- Make blessing bags to hand out when you see a homeless person or someone in need. Talk as a family about what items might be helpful to someone who doesn't have a home, especially in winter. Some suggestions are socks, hand warmers, water, crackers, Slim Jims, Vienna Sausages, fruit cocktail, chapstick, deodorant, toothbrush, and toothpaste. Gather these items and put them all in a gallon size baggie. Don't forget to include scripture verses (Psalm 46:1, Psalm 55:22, 1 Peter 5:7, John 14:27, or some of your favorite verses) and pray for the people who will receive these bags! Then keep them in your car and hand them out when you see someone in need.

Questions for Adults

- What does it mean to "bless" someone? Do you remember a time when you received a blessing?
- Who are the people in your life that need a blessing - a declaration of one's true identity?
- Who are the people who prophesy and affirm Jesus' identity? How do you think the Jewish community viewed these people?
- The public nature of both of these encounters speak of affirmation of Jesus' identity before his teaching ministry began. Why might it be important for Mary and Joseph to receive this prophetic truth - even after everything they had already witnessed?
- Simeon's declaration of Jesus' and Mary's identity foreshadowed the cost that salvation would require of God's Son. Why is it important to celebrate Jesus' arrival, while acknowledging the tragedy of the cross?
- Verses 36-28 tell an almost parenthetical account of Anna, a prophet. Without a speech or any dialogue, what can we learn from Anna's story? Why do you think Luke included this story for us?



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