

SCRIPTURE FROM THE GOSPELS AND THE PROPHETS

THE Christmas Story

*For a child will be born
to us, a son will be given
to us; And the government
will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be
called Wonderful, Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting
Father, Prince of Peace.*



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What is Advent?

ADVENT IS a season of four Sundays that mark the beginning of a new church year. The ancient Christian church celebrated Advent as a kind of fresh start to faith and worship. Advent is a time to anticipate and spiritually prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior: God's gift of love to us. At the same time, Advent anticipates and hopes for Jesus' glorious return at the end of the age.

THE WORD "advent" comes from the Latin *advenio* meaning "coming" or "arrival."

THE TRADITIONAL Bible readings for Advent teach how the prophets, kings, and forerunners prepared the way for the coming Messiah.

MANY CHRISTIANS celebrate Advent with a special time of devotions including Bible reading, prayer, singing, and lighting candles on an Advent wreath.

Advent Colors

PURPLE HAS traditionally been the main Advent color, symbolizing repentance and fasting. A royal color, purple looks forward to reception of the coming King who is celebrated during Advent. Today, however, many churches use blue instead of purple.

PINK OR rose is used during the third Sunday. It represents joy, anticipating the coming celebration.

WHITE IS the color of the center candle, representing Christ as the sinless, pure Savior.



The Advent Wreath

THE ADVENT Wreath was developed in the 1500s as a way to mark the season of Advent, preparing for the coming of Jesus Christ, the light of the world. The wreath is made of evergreens, and is usually placed on a table with spaces for four candles around the wreath and one in the center. Candles are often purple or blue (three), rose (one), and white (one). One candle is lit on each succeeding Sunday during Advent, with the fifth candle in the center (the white Christ candle) also lit on Christmas Eve.

As a symbol of light, the Advent wreath reminds us of Jesus' words: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).



Prayer

YOU ARE our eternal salvation,
The unfailing light of the world.
Light everlasting,
You are truly our redemption.
Grieving that the human race was perishing
through the tempter's power,
without leaving the heights
You came to the depths in your loving kindness.
Readily taking our humanity by Your gracious will,
You saved all earthly creatures, long since lost,
Restoring joy to the world.
Redeem our souls and bodies, O Christ,
and so possess us as Your shining dwellings.
By Your first coming, make us righteous;
At Your second coming, set us free:
that we may serve You and all Your creations in full confidence
and when the world is filled with light
and You judge all things,
may we be clad in spotless robes
and follow in Your steps, O King,
Into the heavenly hall.

WE LIGHT these candles of hope, peace and joy,
and await Your advent with us. ❀

Suggestions for Celebrating Advent

First Sunday in Advent: HOPE	Second Sunday in Advent: PEACE	Third Sunday in Advent: JOY	Fourth Sunday in Advent: LOVE	CHRISTMAS EVE <i>or</i> CHRISTMAS DAY
Light the first Advent candle.	Light the first and second Advent candles.	Light the first, second, and third Advent candles.	Light the first, second, third, and fourth Advent candles.	Light all the candles on the Advent wreath, including the Christ candle.
Read: Isaiah 11:1-10 Luke 1:26-38 Isaiah 7:10-14 Matthew 1:18-24	Read: Micah 5:2 Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11 Isaiah 2:1-5 Matthew 3:1-6	Read: Isaiah 9:6-7 John 1:19-34 Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 Philippians 2:1-11	Read: Malachi 3:1-5 Romans 8:18-25 Isaiah 52:7-10 Revelation 21:1-4	Read: Isaiah 9:1-6 Luke 2:1-20 John 1:1-18 Titus 2:11-14
Sing: <i>O Come, O Come Emmanuel</i>	Sing: <i>O Little Town of Bethlehem</i>	Sing: <i>Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus</i>	Sing: <i>Savior of the Nations, Come</i>	Sing: <i>Joy to the World</i>

ADVENT OR CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

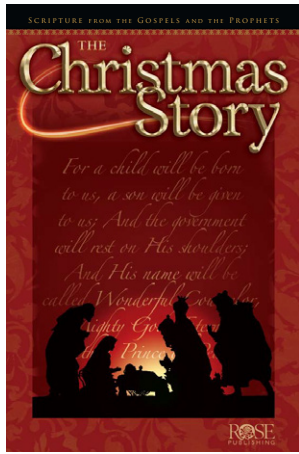
For an Advent or Christmas program, use panels 1-11 as a dramatic reading. See suggestions below for using only a few or several performers.

LOW PREPARATION:

- ♦ Three readers (narrator, Old Testament reader, New Testament reader)
- ♦ Congregation sings carols where marked

HIGH PREPARATION:

- ♦ Any number of readers (narrator, plus several Old & New Testament readers)
- ♦ Place Old Testament readers on one side of stage or one balcony; place New Testament readers opposite
- ♦ Children or adults may perform a silent pageant or tableau of the actions during the readings
- ♦ Carols may be performed by a soloist, choir or children's group

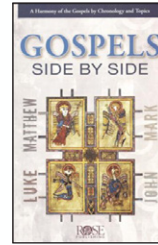


The Christmas Story, Pamphlet

This beautiful pamphlet tells the story of Jesus' birth and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Perfect for a Bible Study during Advent or a church handout at Christmas, it uses the traditional wording from Matthew and Luke's Gospels, starting with the angelic announcement of John the Baptist's birth and culminating with the Gospel story and a forward look toward Christ's second coming. Treasured for its beautiful artwork and convenient size, it fits neatly inside a Bible cover and can be folded out to reveal the story within 14 panels.

Book9781596364202 \$3.99

Also available as a PDF Download.

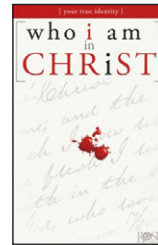


Gospels Side by Side, Pamphlet

See Jesus from four different points of view and learn how their views unite to flesh out a portrait of God. Consult this concise chart to find out where there are four Gospels instead of just one, and why three Gospels are similar, but the fourth is very different.

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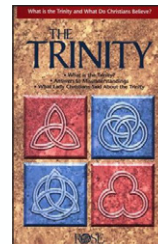


Who I Am in Christ, Pamphlet

With many Scriptures references for further reflections, this pamphlet makes an encouraging handout for new and not so new Christians. Each of the 30 traits has a Bible reference. Be reminded and reassured of the many qualities and characteristics you possess as a believer.

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Also available as a PDF Download.



The Trinity, Pamphlet

The Trinity is one of the most important doctrines in Christianity—one of the key doctrines that separates Christianity from other religions. This pamphlet explains that Christians believe in One God in Three Persons—not three gods and not one God with three personalities.

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