

Bible Reading Guide

Week 1 He Will Come Again in Glory

Nov. 29	Revelation 1:4-9; 19:11-16; 21:1-5, 22-27; 22:1-5
Nov. 30	Zechariah 9:9-17; Romans 5:3-5; 8:18-30
Dec. 1	John 1:1-5, 14; Revelation 22:12-13, 20
Dec. 2	Mark 13:24-37; Luke 21:25-28
Dec. 3	2 Peter 3:8-15
Dec. 4	1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11
Dec. 5	1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Week 2 God's Presence and His Promises

Dec. 6	Exodus 1:1-3:10
Dec. 7	Psalms 46, 112
Dec. 8	Isaiah 2:1-5
Dec. 9	Isaiah 40:1-11
Dec. 10	Isaiah 64:1-9
Dec. 11	Isaiah 9:2; John 1:4-5, 9
Dec. 12	Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7

Week 3 Immanuel: God with Us

Dec. 13	Matthew 1:1-17
Dec. 14	Luke 1:5-25
Dec. 15	Luke 1:26-38
Dec. 16	Matthew 1:18-24
Dec. 17	Luke 1:39-56
Dec. 18	Isaiah 9:2-7; 40:1-5; Luke 1:57-80; 3:1-6
Dec. 19	Luke 2:1-7

Week 4 A Savior Is Born

Dec. 20	Luke 2:8-20
Dec. 21	Luke 2:22-38
Dec. 22	Matthew 2:1-12
Dec. 23	Matthew 2:1-18; 1 John 3:8
Dec. 24	John 1:1-18
Dec. 25	Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 2:4-7; 1 Peter 1:3-5, 13

WEEK 3 IMMANUEL: GOD WITH US

BIBLE STUDY

1. The familiar characters in our Nativity scenes were real people, a lot like us. In what ways might you relate to Mary, Joseph, Zechariah, or Elizabeth?

2. Step into the stories of Zechariah, Elizabeth, Joseph, and Mary. What might they have wondered as the events leading up to Jesus' birth took place? What would you have thought or felt if you were in their place?

3. Read **Luke 1:5-38**. Compare the experiences of Zechariah and Mary. What similarities and differences do you see in their stories? In their responses to God? How are these similarities or differences significant?

4. Read **Luke 1:46-55, 67-79**. What do Mary's and Zechariah's songs reveal about God? About his plan of salvation? About the hope we can find in him?

5. Read **Luke 2:1-7**. Catherine McNiel points out the significance of the details Luke includes, saying, "Jesus is born into history . . . The true God came near to us physically, tangibly, in a way that we can see with our eyes and touch with our hands." How do these details underscore the nature of God's love for us and our reason to hope in him?

6. How do you experience God's presence with you in your life? How do you desire to grow in intimacy with Immanuel?

**YOU WILL CONCEIVE
AND GIVE BIRTH TO
A SON, AND YOU ARE
TO CALL HIM JESUS.
HE WILL BE GREAT
AND WILL BE CALLED
THE SON OF THE MOST
HIGH. . . . HIS KINGDOM
WILL NEVER END.**

Luke 1:31-33

Week 3

Immanuel: God with Us

This week, we contemplate the miracle of hope breaking through in the First Advent, as God miraculously worked in the lives of ordinary people like Mary, Joseph, Zechariah, and Elizabeth to enter into the world as Immanuel—God with us.

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Luke 1:31–33



12/18 THE LIGHT AND THE KING

BY JAY Y. KIM

Isaiah 9:2-7; 40:1-5
Luke 1:57-80; 3:1-6

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.

Luke 1:76

Zechariah and Elizabeth named their baby John, which means *God is gracious and has shown us favor*. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Zechariah prophesied over his son: “You will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death” (Luke 1:76-79).

When we fast-forward to John the Baptist’s adult life, we see he does exactly that. Luke records,

He went into all the country . . . preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all people will see God’s salvation.’” (3:3-6)

These ideas from Isaiah about reshaping valleys, hills, and roads to prepare the way were, in the ancient world, associated with the arrival of royalty. And, indeed, John’s ministry focused on this one thing: declaring that a king was on the way.

Zechariah’s prophecy over his newborn includes a paraphrase of another passage from Isaiah: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (9:2). The people who heard Zechariah prophesy these words would have known exactly what this Isaiah passage was about: the promise of a coming king. It’s part of the same familiar passage that declares, “For to us a child is born . . . He will reign on David’s throne” (vv. 6-7).

This offers such immense hope for us. As much as we may like to believe that we can create the peace and joy we desire through our own efforts, the story of John the Baptist and the words of Zechariah and Isaiah emphatically declare that the peace and joy every human longs for will not be realized until the king arrives. John the Baptist literally gave his life to proclaim this truth—to help people see that a light was about to break through the darkness.

This article is adapted from a sermon Jay Y. Kim preached on December 9, 2018. Used by permission.

CONSIDER LUKE 1:57-80 ALONGSIDE ISAIAH 9:2-7; 40:1-5; AND LUKE 3:1-6.

Which parts of Zechariah’s prophecy stand out to you? How do these passages convey the hope of Advent?



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ADVENT: LIVING HOPE

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ADVENT **Living Hope**

Ideas For Families

SELECT SOME OF THESE IDEAS TO ENRICH YOUR FAMILY'S JOURNEY THROUGH ADVENT.

Throughout Advent

- With teens or preteens, read and discuss the devotions together each evening. With younger kids, focus on just the Scripture passages and reflection prompts.
- Create a hope-focused “stained-glass window” that you’ll add to throughout Advent. Use a dry-erase marker (or a colored self-adhesive note) to write the word *hope* in the center of a window in your home. Use a thesaurus together to find and add related words that can help us understand biblical hope. Then, throughout Advent, use colored markers or notes to record words, ideas, images, symbols, or Bible verses from each day’s discussion and add them to the window.

Week 1

- Invite teens or preteens to read “Hope: An Expectant Leap” by Jay Y. Kim, then go on a challenging hike together. As you walk, discuss Kim’s hiking story and the idea that Christian hope is something that’s gritty and determined.
- With younger children, have fun using a joke book to tell each other silly knock-knock jokes. Afterward, talk about the idea that Jesus will one day *arrive*. He will come again!
- Ask, “What are some things in life that upset you, are unfair, or make you feel angry or hopeless?” (Optional: Use newspapers or online news sites to generate ideas regarding current events.) Record on a posterboard some of the evils, injustices, and painful realities of life, like war, abuse, cancer, poverty, racism, stress, personal conflicts, and so on. Then tear up the poster together as you talk about our ultimate hope in Christ’s future reign described in Revelation 21:1-5.

Week 2

- Find an online recipe for air-dry or no-bake salt dough, then use it to make simple Christmas tree ornaments as a family. The ornaments will need to dry for one or more days. Use the experience of waiting for the dough to harden as an opportunity to talk about Advent as a season of waiting. What were God's people in the Old Testament waiting for? How do we see hope in their waiting?
- Use a telescope or binoculars to look at far-off objects. Discuss how God used prophets like Isaiah to see some of what God would do in the future. Talk about some of the truths Isaiah foretold about Jesus.
- Turn off the lights in your house (other than Christmas tree lights) to play flashlight tag or flashlight hide-and-seek. Have fun together, then read Isaiah 9:2 and John 1:4-5, 9. Discuss Christ's identity as the light promised in Isaiah 9.

Week 3

- Play a quiet game to see who can be silent the longest. (Or challenge everyone to be silent for a set period of time.) Use this experience to discuss what Zechariah might have thought and felt during his long period of muteness as he waited for his son's birth and the coming of the Messiah.
- Have an upside-down dinner as a family. Sit under the table, wear clothing backward, eat food in reverse order, and so on. Use this silly experience to talk about how Mary's song pointed toward the upside-down nature of the kingdom. Discuss some of Jesus' teachings and actions that turned things upside down (the first shall be last, love your enemies, and so on).
- Go on a "choice drive" as a family to look at area Christmas lights. At each intersection, let a different family member choose if you'll turn right, turn left, or go straight. Afterward, use this experience to talk about the choices and decisions that Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, and Joseph faced. How might they have felt in these situations? What motivated their choices or responses? What can we learn from them?

Week 4

- Reflect on the shepherds' and Anna's immediate response to seeing baby Jesus—telling others about him! Create a Christmas card as a family that tells about Jesus, then mail it to someone to share the Good News.
- Gather a baby picture of each family member. (If possible, even include baby pictures of grandparents and great-grandparents.) Look at the pictures and discuss each person's traits you may recognize even when they were babies. Use this experience to talk about how remarkable it was that Simeon and Anna recognized baby Jesus as the promised Messiah.
- Gather around your hope-focused stained-glass window and reflect together on the entire Advent season. How has everyone's understanding of Christian hope been enriched? What is one idea, verse, or biblical story that stands out most to each family member? How was each person's faith impacted through this experience of observing Advent together?