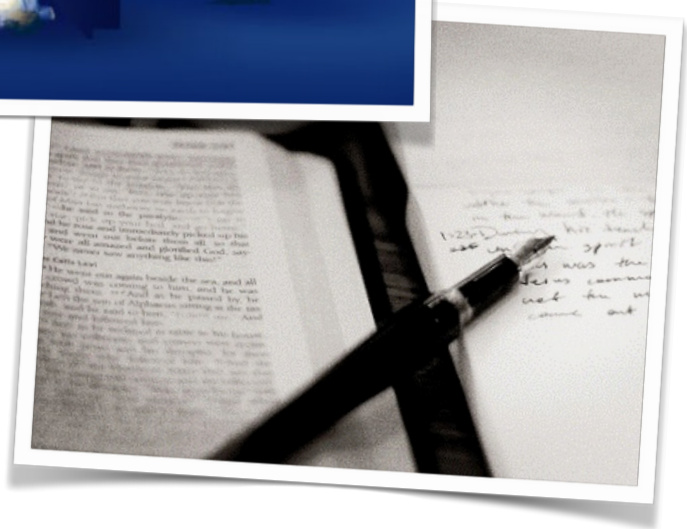


# ADVENT

Unto us a Savior is born!



Five Family Devotions  
For The Season of Advent

**Jack Gilbert**

## Advent Script

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First, the **wreath** is always in the form of a **circle**. Since a circle has no beginning and no end, it is a symbol for God, Who is eternal and without beginning or end.

The Advent wreath is made from **evergreens**. These branches, as the name indicates, are "ever green" -- ever alive. They are symbolic of Christ, Who died, but rose again and is alive, never to die again. The evergreen branches also symbolize our soul's immortality. Christ came into the world to give us never-ending life. Entwined around the circle of evergreens are **red holly berries**. They look like large red drops of blood, and symbolize the blood shed by Christ for mankind. They remind us that Christ came into this world to die for us and redeem us. It is through the shedding of His blood that we have eternal life.

In our home, the wreath has five candles, **Three red, one purple, and one white:**

- The **Red** color represents our **sin**, that is, that people are sinful and need forgiveness. This forgiveness comes only from Christ, the promised messiah and savior of the world.
- The **purple** represents **Christ royalty** and our **repentance**.
- The white candle represents Christ, who is the light of the world.

### Week One

#### A Rite for the Beginning of Advent at Home

#### WEEK 1: PROMISES AND PATIENCE (HOPE)

Theme: Our God makes and keeps promises, and His people are called to wait with patient longing.

#### Gen 22:1-14 NIV -

(1) Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

(2) Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

(3) Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

(4) On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

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- (5) He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."
- (6) Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together,
- (7) Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"
- (8) Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.
- (9) When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.
- (10) Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.
- (11) But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.
- (12) "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." (13) Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.
- (14) So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

### ***The first day the wreath is in the home, the leader may say:***

As our nights grow longer and our days grow short,  
we look on these earthly signs--lights and green branches--  
and remember God's promise to our world:  
Christ, our Light and our Hope, will come.  
Listen to the words of Isaiah the prophet:

**Isa 7:14** NIV - (14) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

**Isa 9:2-3** NIV -

- (2) The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.
- (3) You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.

### ***Then all pray***

### ***Then the first candle is lit.***

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Each day at home, the candles are lighted, perhaps before the evening meal -- one candle the first week, and then another each succeeding week until December 25th.

**Sing:** O Come, O Come Immanuel

**O come, O come, Immanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny  
From depths of Hell Thy people save  
And give them victory o'er the grave  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**Week two: Immaculate Conception**

**Jer 33:14-16 NIV -**

- (14) "'The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will fulfill the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.  
(15) "'In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land.  
(16) In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.' "

**Isa 7:14 NIV -**

- (14) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

**Luk 1:26-38 NIV -**

- (26) In the sixth month, 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 be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name 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 the house of Jacob 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 upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called 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 barren is in her sixth month.  
(37) For nothing is impossible with God."  
(38) "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

GOD had promised a savior. He had promised to send Immanuel--GOD with us-- and so here it began. In a fashion typical of GOD, the Lord had chosen to do the impossible--to reunite GOD and man--through impossible means--a virgin birth in which

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GOD himself would come to be with us. Though these were impossible things, nothing is impossible with GOD. The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and she became pregnant with the savior of the world: Yeshua Ha Mashiach, Jesus the Christ.

***Then all pray***

***Then the first candle is lit, followed by the second candle.***

**Sing:** Come, thou long expected Jesus

Come, thou long expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art;  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,  
born a child and yet a King,  
born to reign in us forever,  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all sufficient merit,  
raise us to thy glorious throne.

**Week Three: John the Baptist (Preparing our hearts for the arrival of the Christ)**

**Isa 40:3-5 NIV -**

- (3) A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.  
(4) Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.  
(5) And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

**Luk 1:8-17 NIV -**

- (8) Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God,  
(9) he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.  
(10) And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.  
(11) Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.  
(12) When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.  
(13) But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John.  
(14) He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth,  
(15) for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.  
(16) Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God.  
(17) And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Now, all of this was before the conception of Jesus. John was to be a messenger, a preparer of the people's hearts and minds for the arrival of the long awaited messiah.

**Mar 1:7-8 NIV -**

- (7) And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.  
(8) I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

This time of advent--in which we read the Lord's word, remembering both the making and the keeping of GOD's promises--is a time in which we prepare our hearts and our minds for Yeshua. Let us pray that GOD will open our hearts and minds to the Gospel, and that will make our joy complete as we abide in Him.

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*Then all pray*

*Then the first and second candles are lit, followed by the third candle.*

**Sing:** Refiner's Fire

Purify my heart  
Let me be as gold and precious silver  
Purify my heart  
Let me be as gold, pure gold  
Refiner's fire

My heart's one desire  
Is to be holy  
Set apart for You, Lord  
I choose to be holy  
Set apart for You, my Master  
Ready to do Your will

Purify my heart  
Cleanse me from within  
And make me holy  
Purify my heart  
Cleanse me from my sin  
Deep within

Refiner's fire  
My heart's one desire  
Is to be holy  
Set apart for You, Lord  
I choose to be holy  
Set apart for You, my Master  
Ready to do Your will



**Week Four: Immanuel--GOD with Us**

**Matthew 1:23 ESV**

[23] "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

We once knew GOD in a personal way. He walked with us in the garden that he created for us, but we chose lesser things. Separated from him because of our selfish ambition we had no way back, at least, not within our own strength. It would take an event of enormous magnitude, one bigger than the sin that separates creation from the creator, in order to reconcile a race of selfish and damned creatures with a the holy and just GOD. If our separation was the problem, then the answer was for GOD to come to where we could not go, and thus—Immanuel: GOD with us.

GOD could have chosen to send salvation in some other fashion, but he chose instead to send his one and only son, Jesus Christ—GOD himself—down to earth to make personal connection again. This was more than an act of obligation; this was an act of love. This was the intentional self-sacrifice of the most holy and worthy GOD in exchange for the lives of ungrateful lovers of the dark, of those who would fight him in order to hold on to the lethal sin that so lethally poisoned their souls rather than accepting such a sacred life giving gesture.

**John 3:16-21 (ESV)**

16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Christ sacrifice on the cross set right what was once askew. He who was without sin became sin for us, bearing the punishment for us all. He was able to do this because he came here among us, experience the same trials and temptations which we do, and yet lived a sinless life. So when he offered himself up as a sacrifice on our behalf, the righteous demand for a spotless sacrifice was met.

**Hebrews 4:14-16 (ESV)**

[14] Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. [15] For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

**Romans 10:9-13 ESV**

[9] because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

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[11] For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." [12] For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. [13] For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

***Then all pray***

***Then the first through third candles are lit, followed by the fourth candle.***

**Sing: O HOLY NIGHT**

O Holy Night! The stars are brightly shining,  
It is the night of the dear Savior's birth.  
Long lay the world in sin and error pining.  
Till He appeared and the Spirit felt its worth.  
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.  
Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices!  
O night divine, the night when Christ was born;  
O night divine!  
O night, O night divine!

**Christmas: Why Christ Came**

**Isa 9:2, 6 NIV -**

(2) The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. ...

(6) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

So why do we celebrate Christmas in the first place. For those who do not worship GOD, it is a time to be with family, to give and receive presents. Beyond that, this is just a day, a holiday, a respite. Christians do these things also, but we know (I pray that you know, that is) that there is much more to this time of the year that presents and festivities. The birth of this baby boy was the coming of the Messiah, called Immanuel—GOD with us.

Why in the world does this matter? Why does the world need Jesus? Why did GOD come down from heaven and fully dwell in the flesh of a man, fully GOD and fully human? Sin. Sin is the exchange of the glory of GOD for earthly things, for false worship, false knowledge, self-adoration; Sin separates us from the Holy GOD that created us for the express purpose of glorifying and worshiping him. Jesus came to forgive sins and reconcile mankind to GOD.

This happened at the beginning of creation, when Adam and Eve first exchanged the glory and worship of GOD for self gain.

**Genesis 2: 15-17**

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

**Genesis 1:6-7**

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

Anything outside of the will of GOD is foolishness. It does not give wisdom or real wealth, or fulfillment. Instead it brings death. Eve doubted her creator. She thought she would gain "real" wisdom through some created thing, rather than the "false knowledge

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and wisdom” that came from the GOD. But Adam and Eve’s selfish pursuit of self worth and wisdom failed them.

Here is what Romans 1 says about the unrighteous, that is those who do not follow GOD through Christ, the one that makes unrighteous men righteous:

### **Romans 1:18**

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

### **Romans 1:21-23**

21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

What now? Man has fallen. Man is separated from GOD through his own selfish desire, but can we do something do get back to him? Adam and Eve tried to remedy their newly discovered nakedness and shame by covering it up (“And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”) Was this enough? No. What GOD does next is a foreshadow of things to come. We see Adam and Eve try to cover up their nakedness on their own, they pass the blame to others and even to GOD himself. Then GOD spills the blood of an animal to cover them up. The first foreshadow of Christ sacrifice.

Read what happens in Genesis 3: 8-14 **[words in brackets are mine, not scripture]**

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. **[they ran from GOD]**

9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

10 And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” **[Adam and Eve traded the will and glory of GOD for what they thought was good, but received fear and shame. Also, notice that even though they had "covered their nakedness" they still felt naked.]**

11 He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” **[Here was a chance to confess, but instead they pass the blame on to other. This is what sin does, it leads to deceit and more sin.]**

12 The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” **[Adam blames both GOD and Eve for his own sin. Sin causes enmity between GOD and man. Man often blames GOD and circumstance, but the scriptures teach that not only does GOD not tempt or cause people to be tempted, but he**

**provides a way out of temptation-James 4:4, Romans 8:7, James 1:13-15, 1 Corinthians 10:13]**

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." **[Eve also suppresses the truth, blaming the serpent.]**

Adam and Eve had sinned, separating themselves from GOD. They brought death into the world. Christ came to bring life to those who were dead- EVERYONE. This is to say that, for those who accept the sacrifice of Jesus, and receive him as Lord, they gain life where there is death, wisdom where there was foolishness, light where there was darkness. They are saved from the wrath of GOD.

**John 3:16-21**

16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

**Romans 5:12-17**

12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned- 13 for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. 14 Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. 15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.16 And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.17 For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

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***Then all pray***

***Then the first candle is lit, followed by the second candle.***

**Sing:** Joy to the World

Joy to the World , the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare Him room,  
And Heaven and nature sing,  
And Heaven and nature sing,  
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!  
Let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders, wonders, of His love.