

ADVENT
IN
ISAIAH



INTRODUCTION

Merry Christmas Cherry Hills!

It is a gift to pursue the way of Jesus with you. This practice guide you hold in your hands is designed to accompany our Advent series.

Advent, if you're unfamiliar with the term, is a season in the Church worldwide that is traditionally celebrated on the four Sundays prior to Christmas day. The word Advent comes from the Latin and means "arrival" or "coming". During this season, we the Church remind ourselves that we live in between the first and second coming of Christ.

This Advent season we are spending time in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah has been called the fifth gospel by early church fathers and theologians alike. Many of the themes of the gospels, embodied in Jesus himself, find their scriptural beginnings in Isaiah. Even the prophet Isaiah's name means "God Saves". Although Isaiah himself may have looked no further than the birth of Ahaz's son Hezekiah as he wrote these words, followers of Jesus for centuries have seen in this book a foretelling of the birth of Jesus. Furthermore, Jesus himself quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 as He begins His ministry (Luke 4:21). It's our hope that as we meditate on and study this text, we will gain a new appreciation for the "long expected Jesus".

The primary purpose of this practice guide is to help you slow down and be present to Jesus this December. Isaiah is an ancient book, written some 700 years prior to the birth of Christ. This is just one of so many examples in the scriptures that show us God is not in a hurry. Rather, it's we who are tirelessly running from one thing to the next. And it's Jesus who bids us when we are weary to come to Him to rest and learn (Mt 11:28-30).

This book is a guided invitation to learn from Jesus the practices of the slow reading of scripture (also called *Lectio Divina*), silence (also called centering prayer) and self reflection (also called Examen). As our team sat thinking about what would most benefit our church family in this season the answer was unanimous: We need to be led into the non anxious presence of the Spirit of God, grounded in His word, and at peace because we've been with Christ. No matter your experience level in these practices, we're confident in their ability to slow us down. And this is what we long to run after this Christmas. We invite you on the journey and to imagine what might happen in our city if each of us begins to become more like Him in our patience, our peace, and our presence.

WHY SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Why spend time practicing things like the slow reading of Scripture (Lectio Divina), silence (centering prayer) and reflection (Prayer of Examen) this December?

Is this some initiative to turn us all into modern day monks or worse, to enter the kingdom of heaven through works? The simple answer of course, is no. Rather, it seems that the pull of our secular society on our hearts, our minds, and our bodies has never been more acute than in this cultural moment. The sense of hurry, anxiety, and isolation only grows with each passing year. Did Jesus give us anything with which to battle this? Yes, He did. Jesus gave us both ideas and practices to combat this cultural narrative. As we step into these ideas and practices with the help of the Spirit, we are formed in the way of Jesus over a lifetime. “If you do what I said to do, you are truly my disciples” Jesus says in John 8:31.

When I (Chuck) was a boy my dad built a basketball court for my brother and me in the backyard. It was complete with a lane, free throw line, and three point arc. There was a period of my life as a teenager when I would go out and shoot free throws every day for a significant amount of time. I knew exactly where the tip of my shoe aligned with the pavement and the paint on the concrete. I knew where to focus my eyes. I knew the feel of the release of the ball from my fingertips so well that I could tell almost instantly if the shot was good. The discipline of shooting free throws

happened in my backyard when I was by myself. It did not happen in a game time situation in front of a crowd with 30 seconds left on the clock. I trained myself to shoot free throws on my own, alone, through the discipline of practice.

In the same way, we don't become less anxious, more present, and more at peace by willing ourselves to do so in the middle of an argument with a family member on an extremely busy December evening. We become less anxious, more present, and more at peace a little more each day as we spend time with Jesus practicing the disciplines he gave to us in order to help us become more like Him. Jesus said “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,” and we often decline His invitation to put on His yoke because we'd rather not wear one. But the truth is that we are all wearing one. It's just a matter of what yoke we choose to wear. In other words, the question is not whether we will be formed, but by who and in what way will we be formed? I resonate with the words of the disciple Peter who, when asked if he was going to turn away from Jesus as well, he said “To whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life?”

Teach us your way, Jesus.

Teach us your practices.



SILENCE

as slowing

SCRIPTURE

as slowing

REFLECTION

as slowing

SILENCE

CENTERING PRAYER

Practicing silence. It feels like a lost art in our day. But Jesus, as sought out as He was, insisted on making time for it, as have His followers ever since. Centering prayer is a practice used for centuries by disciples of Jesus to help them practice silence as a type of spiritual warfare. “Many people misunderstand silence and solitude as a place to relax and recharge or a kind of emotional break for introverts to catch their breath before they return to the fray of life. But that is not the solitude of Jesus. For Jesus, silence was not a break from the battle, it was the field on which the battle was won or lost.” (Comer, *Live No Lies*, p.85)

After Jesus’ baptism, the official beginning of His public ministry as Messiah, the first thing He did was go and spend 40 days in the wilderness or “*eremos*” in Greek (Matthew 4:1, Luke 4:1, Mark 1:12-13). The devil came to tempt Him at the end of the 40 days and we think, intuitively, that the devil chose an opportune time, because after

all this fasting in the wilderness, Jesus was at His weakest. On the contrary, Jesus had been nourished this whole time. He’d been abiding and He was better equipped than at any other time in His ministry to face the devil because He had just spent 40 days consecrating himself in silence and solitude. There’s a sense that Jesus was preparing for the war but there’s another sense that He was actually waging the war during those 40 days. The devil thinks he has shown up at just the right time, but to his surprise, he is actually 40 days too late. The war has already been won in the *eremos*. During His ministry we see the pattern of Jesus returning (to the *eremos* again and again). (Luke 4:42, Luke 5:16, Mark 1:35, Mark 6:31-32, Matthew 14:13, Matthew 14:23)

Like Jesus, we want to learn to “return to the *eremos*” (A.K.A the place of solitude) and we are practicing that this December through the act of silence (centering prayer).

- **Plant your feet firmly on the ground.**
- **Open your hands and breathe in and out.**
- **Practice 3 minutes of Centering Prayer in which you repeat this anchor phrase slowly with each exhalation: “Emmanuel, God with us”.**
- **Pray a Psalm.**
- **Lift your mind and heart to God by journaling** (I’m angry about... sad about... excited about... etc.).
- **Pray the Lord’s Prayer.**
- **Final Prayer:** Lord, help me to be present to You, present to myself, and present to my neighbors this day.

SLOW READING OF SCRIPTURE

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina simply means “sacred” or “divine” reading. It is a practice used by followers of Christ for centuries, designed to help the reader slow and engage the scriptures as an encounter with Christ. The goal is not so much analysis, but rather communion. Analysis is a good thing, but not the goal of this particular practice. Because analysis is the norm in our western culture, it may take some time before you feel comfortable with this switch. But don’t give up. It’s worth it! We promise!

Lectio Divina has 4 movements, which are less like distinct categories or steps, and more like smaller motions within a singular movement (e.g., a golf swing). It is intended to move us deeper and deeper into a quiet and speechless communion with God that nevertheless leads ultimately to action in the world. The practice engages the True Self, as does all prayer, and forms us from the inside out to enjoy communion with God that results in a renewed

understanding of our calling and purpose. To put it simply, this practice is about the “wonder of being with”.

Here are the 4 movements of Lectio.

When you practice Lectio in this practice guide you will go through each of the movements in order 3 times, on 3 separate readings of the text.

Read (Lectio)

Read the text

Reflect (Meditatio)

Reflect on the prompt for that read-through

Rest (Oratio)

Enjoy God speaking through silence

Respond (Contemplatio)

Write down what the spirit is speaking to you through journaling prayer

FIRST READING

Read: Read the selected text slowly and intentionally.

Reflect: Note a word or phrase that stands out to you.

Rest: Take 2 minutes to rest in silence before writing.

Respond: Write down the word or phrase in journaling prayer.

SECOND READING

Read: Read the selected text slowly and intentionally.

Reflect: This time, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you get in your mind's eye, a memory you recall, etc. What do you hear, see, imagine or feel as you read the text a second time. Note: The text itself doesn't need to have imagery or concrete language for you to do this.

Rest: Take 2 minutes to rest in silence before writing.

Respond: Write down what you noticed.

THIRD READING

Read: Read the selected text slowly and intentionally.

Reflect: Make note of God's invitation for you in this text. In other words, if you could write down what God is saying to you, what is it? It's ok to hear God saying something that challenges us (we should be suspicious if God were always giving us gold stars), but it's also ok to simply enjoy an embrace. True transformation and change comes both from increasing mindfulness of our imperfections, as well as our obedience. Speak to yourself with grace and truth.

Rest: Take 2 minutes to rest in silence before writing.

Respond: Write down what you noticed.

PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Thank you Jesus for your presence and for the power of your word at work.

Thank you for the opportunity to experience the scripture as living and active.

I receive this specific invitation to follow You today.

May my "yes" in this way be a sign of my belief that you are the way, the truth, and the life.

Amen

REFLECTION

PRAYER OF EXAMEN

In Matthew chapter 3 Jesus is baptized and as He comes up out of the water the Father speaks these words: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Jesus moves into His public ministry assured of the approval of His Father rather than in search of approval from others (Matthew 3:17). He would often withdraw from the crowds to spend time alone with His Father (Luke 5:16). Because He was fully human, Jesus had an emotional life like us; He took time to process His feelings and desires (Luke 22:42).

The third practice we are participating in this December is “reflection” and it is taken from the ancient practice of Examen. The prayer of Examen has been used by followers of Christ for centuries as a way to reflect on a previous time period with the Lord. Our everyday lives, though often seemingly mundane and rote, are actually packed with rich and meaningful moments that will help us not only to understand ourselves better, but to grow in our

relationship with God. Think of the practice of reflection as rummaging through a day’s or week’s experience, looking for God. Could it be that we feel so little of God’s presence in our lives because we simply don’t make time to “rummage” or reflect on meaningful moments with Him? This kind of work is richly rewarded.

Each week this Advent season we will spend time practicing reflection (or Examen). Before you begin, set aside anything that would keep you from being fully present such as a smartphone or computer. Take a minute to breathe or consider practicing centering prayer. When you’re ready, ask the Holy Spirit to help guide you in this practice by praying the following prayer:

“Holy Spirit I seek to make myself completely available to You. Open my eyes to see and in seeing to understand what you have to show me.”

Work your way slowly through the four prompts.

Step One: Replay the last few days in your mind.

- Take a few minutes to practice active remembering of the last 24-72 hours. What significant things happened? Name them.

Step Two: Rejoice - Where did I feel grace in the last 24-72 hours? Where was God particularly present?

- Recall a moment, however simple or brief it was, when you felt grace in your life. Where did God “show up” for you?

e.g., “I noticed God yesterday, when I walked outside and smelled the fragrant autumn air. What I felt was a sense of well-being, of feeling gratitude to God for so lovely a day, and of wishing that I could go for a walk right now with a good friend.”

Step Three: Repent - Where did I feel emotional pain in the last 24-72 hours? Where did I sin?

- Name the strongest feelings you have experienced in the last few days. When have you felt most strongly moved in your emotions? Which emotion in particular was activated strongly? Give a name to that particular feeling: joy, depression, anger, delight, contentment, hope, shame, regret, confusion, disgust, compassion, doubt, gratitude, etc.
- Be honest with Jesus about what “caused” this strong affective response in you, and try to name accurately which particular feeling it was that you felt.
- Ask Jesus whether He ever felt this same thing, and the way that you felt it, when He lived and moved and had His earthly life among us. You may turn to a Gospel text, to a scene in Jesus’ life in which you

think that He reacted as you did. Read that text to yourself and explore Jesus’ affective response if applicable. Like yours, or different?

- The main goal of step three is to notice your strongest emotional reactions to particular things, and wonder with God about those reactions. “Why did I feel that so strongly?” “Does this strong reaction reveal my faith in God, or a lack of it?” If lack of it, ask God for forgiveness.

Step Four: Resolve - With the help of the Spirit, what changes can you make in the coming day?

- Thank God for being present to you in this practice and for helping you grow in your relationship with Him.

We hope that as you start to practice these disciplines they will become life giving for you. As you move through this practice guide we will remind you of prompts and steps. If you get stuck simply flip back to these pages and reference each practice. Cherry Hills family we are grateful for you and excited to practice slowing down and being present to Jesus with you this Advent season.



WEEK ONE
DAY ONE

SILENCE

Like Jesus, we want to learn to slow this Advent season through the practice of silence (centering prayer). Here is an overview of the practice.

INSTRUCTIONS

Plant your feet on the ground

Open your hands and breathe

Three minutes of Centering Prayer

Pray a Psalm

Lift your mind and heart to God
by journaling

Pray the Lord's Prayer

Final prayer

The following pages will walk you through step by step. Remember: breathe, go slow, and when you get distracted give yourself grace and return to Jesus.

CENTERING PRAYER

Plant your feet on the ground.

Open your hands and breathe.

For three minutes as you breathe pray this repeatedly:

EMMANUEL

as you breathe in

GOD WITH US

as you breathe out

After three minutes turn the page.



PRAY A PSALM

PSALM I

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the
wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the

company of mockers, but whose delight

is in the law of the Lord,

and who meditates on his law day and night.

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not
wither – whatever they do prospers. Not so the wicked!

They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor

sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,

but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.



JOURNAL

Lift your mind and heart to God by journaling.

PRAY THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in
heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our
trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For
yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Help me Lord to be present to You,
present to myself, and present to my
neighbors this day.

Amen

WEEK ONE
DAY TWO

SLOW READING OF SCRIPTURE
ISAIAH 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

FIRST READING
ISAIAH 7:14

As you read note a word or phrase that stands out to you.
Write down the word or phrase below.



SECOND READING

ISAIAH 7:14

This time as you read, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you see, a memory you recall, etc.

What do you hear, see, imagine, or feel?

Note: The text itself doesn't need to have imagery or concrete language for you to do this.



THIRD READING

ISAIAH 7:14

In this last read through make note of God's invitation for you in this text. If you could write down what God is saying to you in the first person, what is it?

PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Thank you Jesus for your
presence and for the power of
your word at work.

Thank you for the opportunity
to experience the scripture as
living and active.

I receive this specific
invitation to follow You today.

May my “yes” in this way be a
sign of my belief that you are
the way, the truth,
and the life.

Amen

WEEK ONE
DAY THREE

SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 1:20-23

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

FIRST READING

MATTHEW 1:20-23

Note a word or phrase that stands out to you.
Write down the word or phrase in journaling prayer.



SECOND READING

MATTHEW 1:20-23

This time as you read, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you see, a memory you recall, etc.

What do you hear, see, imagine, or feel?

Note: The text itself doesn't need to have imagery or concrete language for you to do this.

THIRD READING

MATTHEW 1:20-23

In this last read through make note of God's invitation for you in this text. If you could write down what God is saying to you in the first person, what is it?

PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Thank you Jesus for your
presence and for the power of
your word at work.

Thank you for the opportunity
to experience the scripture as
living and active.

I receive this specific
invitation to follow You today.

May my “yes” in this way be a
sign of my belief that you are
the way, the truth,
and the life.

Amen

WEEK ONE
DAY FOUR

SCRIPTURE

JOHN 1:1-2, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God....

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

FIRST READING

JOHN 1:1-2, 14

Note a word or phrase that stands out to you.
Write down the word or phrase in journaling prayer.



SECOND READING

JOHN 1:1-2, 14

This time as you read, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you see, a memory you recall, etc.

What do you hear, see, imagine, or feel?

Note: The text itself doesn't need to have imagery or concrete language for you to do this.

THIRD READING

JOHN 1:1-2, 14

In this last read through make note of God's invitation for you in this text. If you could write down what God is saying to you in the first person, what is it?



PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

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presence and for the power of
your word at work.

Thank you for the opportunity
to experience the scripture as
living and active.

I receive this specific
invitation to follow You today.

May my “yes” in this way be a
sign of my belief that you are
the way, the truth,
and the life.

Amen

WEEK ONE
DAY FIVE

REFLECTION

Take the next three pages to reflect and prayerfully journal on these questions.

REFLECTION
JOURNAL

Step One: Replay the last 24-72 hours in your mind. What happened in this time frame?

Step Two: Rejoice - Where did I feel grace in the last 24-72 hours? Where was God particularly present?

Step Three: Repent - Where did I feel emotional pain in the last 24-72 hours? Where did I sin?

Step Four: Resolve - With the help of the Spirit, what changes can you make in the coming day?

Refer back to the introductory section on reflection (Examen) for more information on each prompt.



REFLECTION
JOURNAL

PRAYER FOR HOPE

Father God,

Hope of the world.

I rest in you.

You have come and put on flesh

so that I may have hope.

In my slowing today,

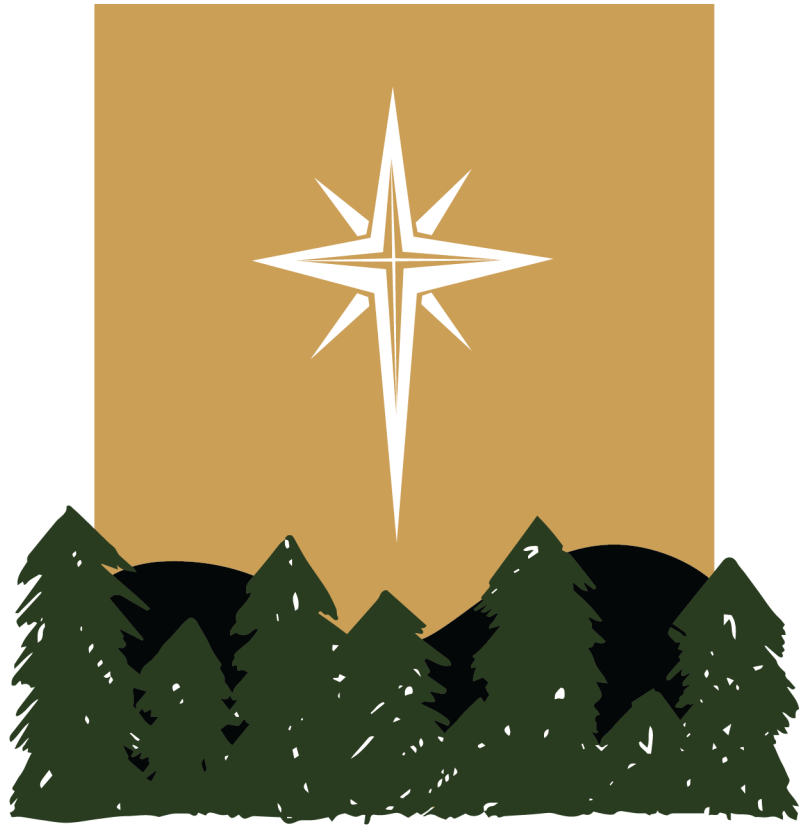
help me to be a reflection

of the new creation

that one day will be complete

so that more might know Your hope.





WEEK TWO
DAY ONE

SILENCE

Like Jesus, we want to learn to slow this Advent season through the practice of silence (centering prayer). Here is an overview of the practice.

INSTRUCTIONS

Plant your feet on the ground

Open your hands and breathe

Three minutes of Centering Prayer

Pray a Psalm

Lift your mind and heart to God by journaling

Pray the Lord's Prayer

Final prayer

The following pages will walk you through step by step. Remember: breathe, go slow, and when you get distracted give yourself grace and return to Jesus.

CENTERING PRAYER

Plant your feet on the ground.

Open your hands and breathe.

For three minutes as you breathe pray this repeatedly:

EMMANUEL

as you breathe in

GOD WITH US

as you breathe out

After three minutes turn the page.



PRAY A PSALM
PSALM 1

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the
wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the
company of mockers, but whose delight
is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not
wither – whatever they do prospers. Not so the wicked!

They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor
sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.



JOURNAL

Lift your mind and heart to God by journaling.

PRAY THE LORDS PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in
heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our
trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For
yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Help me Lord to be present to You,
present to myself, and present to my
neighbors this day.

Amen

WEEK TWO
DAY TWO

SLOW READING OF SCRIPTURE

ISAIAH 9:2-5

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.
You have enlarged the nation
and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice
when dividing the plunder.
For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
you have shattered
the yoke that burdens them,
the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.
Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.

FIRST READING

ISAIAH 9:2-5

As you read note a word or phrase that stands out to you.
Write down the word or phrase below.



SECOND READING

ISAIAH 9:2-5

This time as you read, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you see, a memory you recall, etc.

What do you hear, see, imagine, or feel?

Note: The text itself doesn't need to have imagery or concrete language for you to do this.



THIRD READING

ISAIAH 9:2-5

In this last read through make note of God's invitation for you in this text. If you could write down what God is saying to you in the first person, what is it?

PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Thank you Jesus for your
presence and for the power of
your word at work.

Thank you for the opportunity
to experience the scripture as
living and active.

I receive this specific
invitation to follow You today.

May my “yes” in this way be a
sign of my belief that you are
the way, the truth,
and the life.

Amen

WEEK TWO
DAY THREE

SLOW READING OF SCRIPTURE

ISAIAH 9:6-7

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.

Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.

FIRST READING

ISAIAH 9:6-7

As you read note a word or phrase that stands out to you.
Write down the word or phrase below.



SECOND READING

ISAIAH 9:6-7

This time as you read, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you see, a memory you recall, etc.

What do you hear, see, imagine, or feel?

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Amen

WEEK TWO
DAY FOUR

SLOW READING OF SCRIPTURE

LUKE 1:46-55

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has been mindful of the
humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will

call me blessed,

for the Mighty One has

done great things for me -

holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him,

from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

he has scattered those who are proud in their

inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers

from their thrones

but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things

but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,

remembering to be merciful

to Abraham and his descendants forever,

just as he promised our ancestors."

FIRST READING

ISAIAH 9:6-7

As you read note a word or phrase that stands out to you.

Write down the word or phrase below.

SECOND READING

LUKE 1:46-55

This time as you read, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you see, a memory you recall, etc.

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WEEK TWO
DAY FIVE

REFLECTION

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REFLECTION
JOURNAL

Step One: Replay the last 24-72 hours in your mind. What happened in this time frame?

Step Two: Rejoice - Where did I feel grace in the last 24-72 hours? Where was God particularly present?

Step Three: Repent - Where did I feel emotional pain in the last 24-72 hours? Where did I sin?

Step Four: Resolve - With the help of the Spirit, what changes can you make in the coming day?

Refer back to the introductory section on reflection (Examen) for more information on each prompt.

REFLECTION
JOURNAL

PRAYER FOR JOY

Father God,

Giver of life,

I rest in you.

Today I ask that you would fill me
with gladness and a spirit of rejoicing.

For your gift of life,
is worth my celebration.

In my slowing today,
as I'm present to others,
make me a light and encouragement to them
that they might know Your joy.





WEEK THREE
DAY ONE

SILENCE

Like Jesus, we want to learn to slow this Advent season through the practice of silence (centering prayer). Here is an overview of the practice.

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Plant your feet on the ground

Open your hands and breathe

Three minutes of Centering Prayer

Pray a Psalm

Lift your mind and heart to God
by journaling

Pray the Lord's Prayer

Final prayer

The following pages will walk you through step by step. Remember: breathe, go slow, and when you get distracted give yourself grace and return to Jesus.



CENTERING PRAYER

Plant your feet on the ground.

Open your hands and breathe.

For three minutes as you breathe pray this repeatedly:

EMMANUEL

as you breathe in

GOD WITH US

as you breathe out

After three minutes turn the page.

PRAY A PSALM
PSALM 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,

he leads me beside quiet waters,

he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me

all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

JOURNAL

Lift your mind and heart to God by journaling.

PRAY THE LORDS PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in
heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our
trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For
yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.



PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Help me Lord to be present to You,
present to myself, and present to my
neighbors this day.

Amen

WEEK THREE
DAY TWO

SLOW READING OF SCRIPTURE

ISAIAH 11:1-5

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;

from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him -

the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,

the Spirit of counsel and of might,

the Spirit of the knowledge

and fear of the Lord -

and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears;

but with righteousness he will judge the

needy, with justice he will

give decisions for the poor of the earth.

He will strike the earth with

the rod of his mouth;

with the breath of his lips

he will slay the wicked.

Righteousness will be his belt

and faithfulness the sash around his waist.



FIRST READING

ISAIAH 11:1-5

As you read note a word or phrase that stands out to you.

Write down the word or phrase below.

SECOND READING

ISAIAH 11:1-5

This time as you read, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you see, a memory you recall, etc.

What do you hear, see, imagine, or feel?

Note: The text itself doesn't need to have imagery or concrete language for you to do this.



THIRD READING

ISAIAH 11:1-5

In this last read through make note of God's invitation for you in this text. If you could write down what God is saying to you in the first person, what is it?

PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Thank you Jesus for your
presence and for the power of
your word at work.

Thank you for the opportunity
to experience the scripture as
living and active.

I receive this specific
invitation to follow You today.

May my “yes” in this way be a
sign of my belief that you are
the way, the truth,
and the life.

Amen

WEEK THREE
DAY THREE

SLOW READING OF SCRIPTURE

ISAIAH 11:6-10

The wolf will live with the lamb,
 the leopard will lie down with the goat,
 the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
 and a little child will lead them.

The cow will feed with the bear,
 their young will lie down together,
 and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

The infant will play near the cobra's den,
 and the young child will put its hand into
 the viper's nest.

They will neither harm nor destroy
 on all my holy mountain,
 for the earth will be filled with the knowledge
 of the Lord
 as the waters cover the sea.

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a
 banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to
 him, and his resting place will be glorious.



FIRST READING

ISAIAH 11:6-10

As you read note a word or phrase that stands out to you.
 Write down the word or phrase below.

SECOND READING

ISAIAH 11:1-5

This time as you read, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you see, a memory you recall, etc.

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WEEK THREE
DAY FOUR

SLOW READING OF SCRIPTURE

LUKE 2:8-14

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”



FIRST READING

LUKE 2:8-14

As you read note a word or phrase that stands out to you.
Write down the word or phrase below.

SECOND READING

LUKE 2:8-14

This time as you read, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you see, a memory you recall, etc.

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WEEK THREE
DAY FIVE

REFLECTION

Take the next three pages to reflect and prayerfully journal on these questions.

REFLECTION
JOURNAL

Step One: Replay the last 24-72 hours in your mind. What happened in this time frame?

Step Two: Rejoice - Where did I feel grace in the last 24-72 hours? Where was God particularly present?

Step Three: Repent - Where did I feel emotional pain in the last 24-72 hours? Where did I sin?

Step Four: Resolve - With the help of the Spirit, what changes can you make in the coming day?

Refer back to the introductory section on reflection (Examen) for more information on each prompt.



REFLECTION
JOURNAL

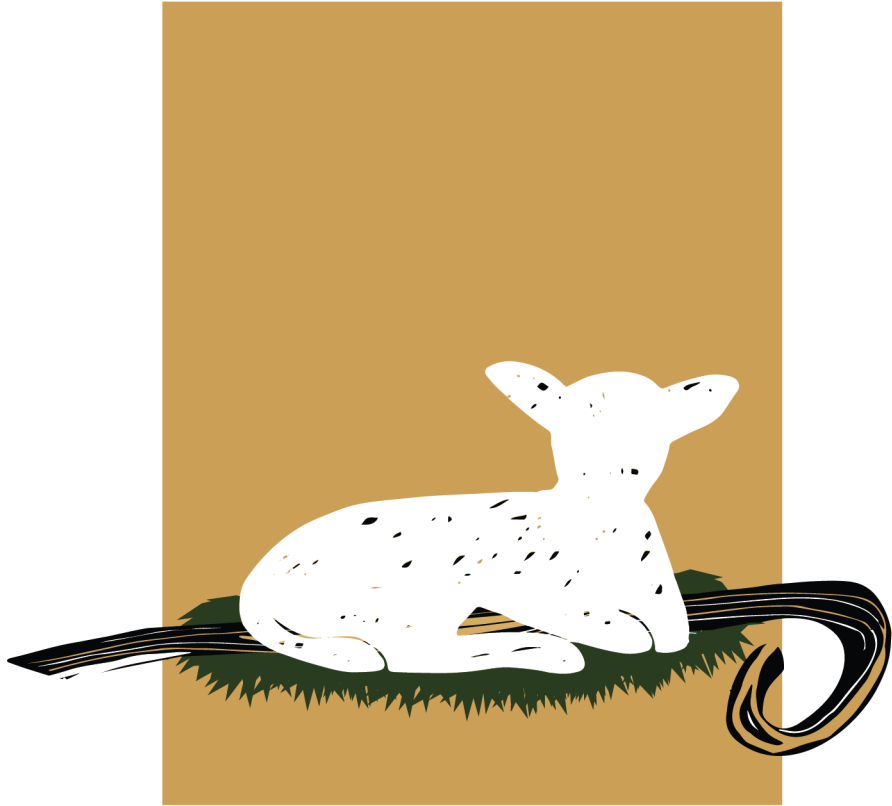
PRAYER FOR PEACE

Father God,
Prince of peace,
I rest in you.

I echo the angels who cry
“Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace!”
Father, pour out Your Spirit
on all peoples and nations
as we await the coming of your kingdom.

In my slowing today,
make me an instrument of your peace,
amongst my family, my friends, and my neighbors
that more people might know You as peace.





WEEK FOUR
DAY ONE

SILENCE

Like Jesus, we want to learn to slow this Advent season through the practice of silence (centering prayer). Here is an overview of the practice.

INSTRUCTIONS

Plant your feet on the ground

Open your hands and breathe

Three minutes of Centering Prayer

Pray a Psalm

Lift your mind and heart to God
by journaling

Pray the Lord's Prayer

Final prayer

CENTERING PRAYER

Plant your feet on the ground.

Open your hands and breathe.

For three minutes as you breathe pray this repeatedly:

EMMANUEL

as you breathe in

GOD WITH US

as you breathe out

The following pages will walk you through step by step. Remember: breathe, go slow, and when you get distracted give yourself grace and return to Jesus.

After three minutes turn the page.



PRAY A PSALM
PSALM 23

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he leads me beside quiet waters,

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He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

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heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our
trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For
yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Help me Lord to be present to You,
present to myself, and present to my
neighbors this day.

Amen

WEEK FOUR
DAY TWO

SLOW READING OF SCRIPTURE

ISAIAH 53:1-5

Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,

yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

FIRST READING

ISAIAH 53:1-5

As you read note a word or phrase that stands out to you.
Write down the word or phrase below.



SECOND READING

ISAIAH 53:1-5

This time as you read, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you see, a memory you recall, etc.

What do you hear, see, imagine, or feel?

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THIRD READING

ISAIAH 53:1-5

In this last read through make note of God's invitation for you in this text. If you could write down what God is saying to you in the first person, what is it?



PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

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Amen

WEEK FOUR
DAY THREE

SLOW READING OF SCRIPTURE

LUKE 2:28-35

Simeon took him in his arms and
praised God, saying:

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared
in the sight of all nations:

a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

The child’s father and mother marveled at
what was said about him. Then Simeon
blessed them and said to Mary, his mother:

“This child is destined to cause the falling and
rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that
will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of
many hearts will be revealed. And a sword
will pierce your own soul too.”

FIRST READING

LUKE 2:28-35

As you read note a word or phrase that stands out to you.
Write down the word or phrase below.



SECOND READING

LUKE 2:28-35

This time as you read, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you see, a memory you recall, etc.

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Amen

WEEK FOUR
DAY FOUR

SLOW READING OF SCRIPTURE

1 PETER 2:21-25

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

“He committed no sin,

and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.



FIRST READING

1 PETER 2:21-25

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Write down the word or phrase below.

SECOND READING

1 PETER 2:21-25

This time as you read, use your imagination and your 5 senses to note what stands out. Be mindful of stories that come to mind, pictures you see, a memory you recall, etc.

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Amen

WEEK FOUR
DAY FIVE

Christmas Eve

“Joyful, all ye nations, rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With angelic host proclaim
Christ is born in Bethlehem
Hark, the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King!”

REFLECTION

Take the next two pages to reflect and prayerfully journal on these questions.

Step One: Replay the Advent season in your mind. What happened in this season?

Step Two: Rejoice - Where did I feel grace during Advent this year? Where was God particularly present?

Step Three: Repent - Where did I feel emotional pain in this season? Where did I sin?

Step Four: Resolve - What has God been showing you this advent season? Can you write it as a first person invitation? With the help of the Spirit, what changes do you hope to implement as you move into 2022? Take a moment to name some of them.

Refer back to the introductory section on reflection (Examen) for more information on each prompt.

REFLECTION
JOURNAL

REFLECTION
JOURNAL

PRAYER FOR LOVE

Jesus Christ,

Lamb of God.

I rest in you.

Thank you for your self sacrificial love.

It overwhelms me.

As I have freely received, may I freely give,

loving others earnestly as you do.

In my slowing today,

help me to extend hospitality without grumbling

that more people might know Your love.



Merry Christmas
CHERRY HILLS FAMILY

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

The day we have long waited for is finally here, and we celebrate the birth of Jesus – God with us.

Thanks for joining on this Advent journey in Isaiah. We pray that through the practices of the slow reading of Scripture, silence, and reflection, you have been able to slow down this Christmas season and enjoy the presence of family, friends and the Lord Himself.

Before you step into the busyness of the day and the tradition of opening presents, we encourage you to slow down once again and read the story of Jesus' birth found in the Gospel of Luke 2:1-20. Then, stop and thank God for the greatest gift ever given – Jesus.

We look forward to 2022 and continuing to give ourselves fully to the way of Jesus and His mission.

Merry Christmas Cherry Hills family,
Brian and Steve

