

# GLORY

ADVENT 2023

# INTRODUCTION

Merry Christmas and welcome to the season of Advent. I'm so glad you decided to pick up one of our Advent devotionals. If you are new to the season of Advent, think of it as a journey to Christmas day that many in the Church worldwide travel over the four weeks prior to December 25. The word Advent comes from Latin and means "arrival" or "coming." During this season Christians worldwide remember that we live in between the first and the second arrival of Jesus Christ.

You may have certain traditions or rhythms you look forward to when December comes around, whether decorations, music, gatherings, or gifts. Traditions are good. They help anchor us in and remind us of our values. For most of us, our traditions are rooted in the Gregorian calendar which came about in the 16th century, and in the United States, includes dates that represent the things most important to our nation, including love of country (memorial day, independence day, labor day), love of others (Mothers Day, Fathers Day, Valentines Day) and days for feasting and giving thanks (Thanksgiving, Christmas). Our calendar immerses us in a story of sorts beginning with New Year's Day, on which it's customary to make resolutions and celebrate the past year.

The church calendar begins in late November with the season of Advent and a spirit of anticipation and waiting. We remember there were 400 years between the Old and New Testaments when the world waited for the Messiah. We recall his promise that he will come again prompting us to wait actively for his second coming, and to rise each morning not in a posture of striving, straining, and stress but rather a posture of quietness, courage, and confidence. The Kingdom of God is already making itself manifest in the world and one day it will come in its entirety.

The practice guide you hold in your hands is designed to accompany our Advent series entitled "Glory." Over the next 4 weeks we want to journey toward Christmas mindful of the incarnation of Christ as told in the book of John. He beckons us back to Genesis with his opening words, "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God" (John 1:1). We get the sense that John wants us to see a recreation of sorts brought about by the light of the world, the word made flesh come to dwell among us. The glory that filled the whole earth now fills this infant in a manger who is destined to right every wrong, pay for every sin, triumph over evil, render death defeated and restore all creation to its original state: Glory! As we wait for creation to be fully and rightly restored, we must never forget that the "glory" present at creation and present at incarnation is present within the Church, dwelling in each and every person who receives Jesus as Lord and believes in His name! (John 1:12)

"Belief", as Dallas Willard says, is the "readiness to act as if what we believe is true" (Renovation of the Heart, 132). Few things made Jesus more excited than seeing people exercise belief in Him when he walked the earth (Matthew 8:10; 9:2; 9:22). So passionate was He about this that at the end of His greatest teaching He charged those within the sound of His voice to put His words "into action" and "do them" (Matthew 7:24 ). As we journey toward December 25th, it's our desire to do so exercising belief in Jesus and His way. We are glory bringers and image bearers and Advent is about being led into the non-anxious presence of the Spirit of God, grounded in His word, and at peace because we know Jesus and have been with Him. May the people we come in contact with this December be encouraged by the hope of Jesus, the light of the world in and through us and may they see His glory.

# WHY SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Why the spiritual disciplines? Why spend time practicing things like silence, the slow reading of scripture, abstaining from technology, gratitude, and reflection this December? Is this some initiative to turn us all into modern day monks, or 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. The question we ask ourselves is, "Did Jesus give us anything to battle this with?" In fact, he did. Jesus gave us both ideas and practices to combat this assault. Ideas form our minds. Practices form our bodies. It is the participation in embodied belief over a long period of time, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, that forms us into true disciples. "If you do what I said to do, you are truly my disciples," Jesus says in John 8:31.

So often, we attempt to think our way to transformation. But we can no easier think our way to being more patient and loving in the midst of an argument on a busy December evening than we can think our way to playing Rachmaninoff piano concerto No 2 next Wednesday. If we could just think our way to new habits, we would have all become experts by now. "Spiritual transformation", as John Ortberg so aptly put it, "is not a matter of trying harder, but of training wisely." It's so tempting to try to implement the ideas of Jesus without participating in any of the practices in which he walked, but if we want the life of Jesus we must learn to live his lifestyle. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me," but we often decline his invitation to put on that yoke because we'd rather not wear one. Yet the reality is, we are all wearing one. It's just a matter of what

yoke we choose to wear. The question is not will I choose to be formed, but rather by whom and in what way will I be formed? This Advent season the invitation is to choose the easy yoke of Jesus over the heavier yokes with which we are so often tempted.

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# SILENCE

The practice of silence is a lost art in our day. Jesus, as sought out as he was, insisted on making time to slow and get away from the crowds and the hustle and bustle. In the book *Live No Lies*, John Mark Comer states, “Many people misunderstand solitude and stillness as a way 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, it was not a break from the battle, it was the field on which the battle was won or lost.”

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 (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 has been nourished this entire time by abiding with his Father. He’s better equipped than at any other time in his ministry to face the devil because he has just spent 40 days practicing silence, solitude, fasting, and meditating on scripture. There’s a sense that Jesus is preparing for the war but there’s another sense that he is 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 Jesus will return to the “*eremos*” again and again. Like Jesus, we want to learn to return to the “*eremos*” and so we will begin each day by taking a moment to practice silence.



## PRACTICE OF SILENCE

1. Choose a place to practice silence this December (an office, a desk by a window, a favorite nook).
2. Resolve in your heart to be with Jesus in silence.
3. Plant your feet on the ground and sit in a comfortable location and posture.
4. Place your hands in your lap, consider opening your palms and breathe slowly. If it helps silently pray “Emmanuel” as you breathe in and “God with us” as you breathe out.
5. As thoughts clamor for your attention resolve not to get on board. You are with Jesus. Other things can wait. As you finish this time (5-10 min) thank Jesus for his presence.

# TECH FAST

We live at a time in history where the supply of accessible information doubles every two years. Add to this, that the majority of us have immediate access to this information via powerful personal handheld computers we carry with us wherever we go. Add to this that businesses everywhere are using these powerful personal handheld computers to fight for our attention every second of every minute of every day. A report issued by the United Nations Economist Network in 2017 put it this way, “We are increasingly living in an attention economy rather than an information economy, that treats human attention as a scarce commodity.” In the 2020 documentary “The Social Dilemma” ex facebook president Sean Parker stated, “The objective and agenda is to consume as much of your time and conscious attention as possible.”

And stats would show that it’s working. 75% of Americans sleep next to their phone. 90% of Americans check it first thing upon waking. As Neil Postman so prophetically uttered in his 1985 book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, “people will come to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think.”

What then is the answer? Should we all sell our smartphones in the name of Jesus and take an oath to never again participate in technology of any sort? While some of us may think this wise, perhaps there is good that comes from technology. Perhaps there is a way to live in the world while not being of the world? Perhaps we can learn to build an “abstaining from technology” into our daily and weekly rhythms as a means of practicing the way of Jesus in an attempt to bear His image in this world.

One of the more beautiful aspects of the Advent story as

told in John 1 is that Jesus became incarnate. To be incarnate is to be with or to be present amongst others. It means a giving of attention to people. Maybe part of what it means to walk in the way of Jesus is to continually learn, in this day and age, how to cease giving attention to our devices so that we can in turn give our attention to one another. To that end, we want to practice abstaining from technology in a number of ways. Throughout the next four weeks we will offer several ideas and opportunities to put away technology in the name of being present to each other. It's our hope and prayer that the glory of the Lord might be made manifest even in small ways as we practice presence over distraction this Advent season.

# GRATITUDE

Does our mood inform our gratitude practice or does our gratitude practice inform our mood? Do we give thanks when our heart is free and light or is our heart free and light because we give thanks? Brenee Brown, in her stunning research on the relationship between joy and gratitude, 12 years of study, 11,000 pieces of data, says this, “I did not interview one person who had described themselves as joyful, who also did not actively practice gratitude.” Most of us are convinced that if we are joyful then we will be grateful but author and priest David Steidl-Rast suggests the opposite is true, “It’s not joy that makes us grateful, it’s gratitude that makes us joyful.”

Jesus gave thanks to his Father that his teaching was revealed to those with the heart of a little child (Mt 11:25). He gave thanks before he multiplied the loaves (Mt 15:36). He gave thanks to his Father for allowing him to raise Lazarus from the dead... before he did it (John 11:41-42). And on the night before he was crucified he took bread, broke it and gave thanks, giving the church a practice to remember him by until he comes again (Luke 22:19). Jesus said, to a group of grumpy and bitter religious people that it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34). Out of the heart of Jesus flowed rivers of living water, the source of which was overwhelming gratitude towards the smallest act of faith, the basic provision of a meal, the beauty of community. Surely he embodied Paul’s command to “give thanks in all circumstances,” it was he that inspired Paul to pen these very words.

This Advent season, we invite you not just into an attitude of gratitude but into the tangible practice of giving thanks. As you walk in this way, may the joy of Jesus be yours

and may rivers of living water flow from your heart to bless others.

## GRATITUDE PRACTICE

### GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS

- Ask the Spirit of God to bring to mind friends, family, co-workers, or neighbors that have experienced a celebration of some kind. Perhaps it's a raise or promotion, the welcoming of a newborn, an unexpected gift or award, or a small victory of sorts.
- Spend time thanking God for the blessings in other's lives.
- Praise God for being the giver of every good gift.

### GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS IN YOUR OWN LIFE

- Take a moment to reflect on the celebrations, small or big, in your own life or your immediate family. What are you grateful for?
- Be as specific as you can and don't neglect to name both what's obvious as well as what is not so obvious (e.g., the kindness of an individual, or tastebuds and the flavor of favorite foods).

Each week you will write down 3-5 things you are thankful for. While you will only be prompted to practice gratitude once per week, consider making the practice of gratitude more of a concrete rhythm for yourself or your family this Advent season (At the dinner table, at the end of the day, on the commute to work).

# SCRIPTURE

In this guide we will be practicing both scripture memorization and Lectio Divina. A brief word about each followed by a guide to practice Lectio.

Why memorize scripture? In Jesus' day, the Jewish education system had three levels. Level one was called "bet sefer" or "house of the book" and it was for kids ages 6-12. Level two was called "bet talmud" or "house of learning" and it was for ages 12-14. If, after completing level 1 & 2 you were the best of the best, you might then be asked to move to level 3 which was an invitation to become a disciple or "talmidim" in the Hebrew language, of a rabbi in the community. All this to say, it was the norm for students who finished level 1 in this education system to have Genesis to Deuteronomy memorized. It's therefore quite likely Jesus had put these books of the bible to memory before the age of 13. It's remarkable to think that when he confronts Satan in the wilderness at age 30, Jesus is recalling scripture he has been meditating on for some 17 years. Our goal here is not to memorize the first five books of the bible before Christmas. That might be biting off a bit more than we can chew. However, what would it look like to put just a few verses to memory this Advent season? How might it be helpful to meditate on these verses through the next four weeks and what difference could it make as we confront the world, the flesh, and the devil. Each week, you will be invited to memorize either part or all of the scripture we are walking through on Sunday morning. In the digital companion to this devotional, you can listen to these passages on repeat if that would be helpful. Why memorize scripture? Because Jesus gives us this example and says things like, "The sky and the earth will wear out but my words will not." The word of God is one

of the few things we take with us from this world into the next. Why not take as much as we can?

One of the things our staff has recently begun practicing during our Thursday prayer time is a way of reading scripture called *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 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."

# FOUR MOVEMENTS OF LECTIO DIVINA

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 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.

# REFLECTION

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 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). While we will practice this on Fridays each week, you may want to incorporate it more often, as you’re able, at the end of each day. 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. 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.”

# REFLECTION PRACTICE

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, 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, 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 the way of Jesus with you this Advent season.



**WEEK  
ONE**

# TECHNOLOGY FAST

As you begin this experiment of being mindful of your technology use this December, take a moment to become aware of the amount of time you spend on your phone or other devices right now. You can find this information in screen time settings on most devices. Simply notice how much time you spent on your phone in the last week or month.

## **THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE:**

Each evening this week spend 1-2 hours with your phone powered off and put away.

We recommend putting it in a basket in a closet somewhere.

This practice is meant to help you be present to those around you and to the Spirit of God at work in the ordinary.

# SILENCE

Plant your feet on the ground and sit comfortably.

Place your hands in your lap, open your palms and breathe slowly. If it helps silently pray “Emmanuel” as you breathe in and “God with us” as you breathe out.

## SCRIPTURE MEMORY

TAKE THIS WEEK TO COMMIT **JOHN 1:1-5** TO MEMORY. RETURN TO IT AS OFTEN AS YOU NEED TO IN THE COMING DAYS.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.



USE THIS PAGE TO WRITE THE SCRIPTURE OUT  
IF THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO YOU WHILE  
YOU MEMORIZE.

## PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Jesus your word has the power  
to transform our  
lives and redeem the world.

Thank you for the opportunity  
to hide it in our hearts  
this week.

The sky and the land will one day wear  
out but your word will never wear out.

May it instruct and encourage us this  
week as we follow you.

Amen

**WEEK  
ONE**  
DAY TWO

# SILENCE

Plant your feet on the ground and sit comfortably.

Place your hands in your lap, open your palms and breathe slowly. If it helps silently pray “Emmanuel” as you breathe in and “God with us” as you breathe out.

# SCRIPTURE

JOHN 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

# FIRST READING

JOHN 1:1-5

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

Write down the word or phrase below.

## SECOND READING

JOHN 1:1-5

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

JOHN 1:1-5

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 as if

He wrote you a letter, what would it say?

## PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Jesus, your word has the power  
to transform my  
life and redeem the world.

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

I receive this specific invitation  
you have for me as good news over my life  
and I say “yes” to it.

May my “yes” be a sign of my belief that  
you are the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Amen



# WEEK ONE

DAY THREE

# GRATITUDE

## GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS

- Ask the Spirit of God to bring to mind friends, family, co-workers, or neighbors that have experienced a celebration of some kind. Perhaps it's a raise or promotion, the welcoming of a newborn, an unexpected gift or award, or a small victory of sorts.
- Spend time thanking God for the blessings in the lives' of others.
- Praise God for being the giver of every good gift.

## GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS IN YOUR OWN LIFE

- Take a moment to reflect on the celebrations, small or big, in your own life or the life of your immediate family. What are you grateful for?
- Be as specific as you can and don't neglect to name both what's obvious as well as what is not so obvious. (Thank you, Lord, for the kindness of this individual; thank you, Lord, for my tastebuds and the flavor of that meal.)

**Write down 3-5 things you are thankful for  
on the next page.**

Consider making the practice of gratitude more of a concrete rhythm for yourself or your family this advent season (at the dinner table, at the end of the day, on the commute to work).



## PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Father God, help me to live this day  
present, prayerful, and full of gratitude.

And may your peace that surpasses all  
understanding guard my heart and mind in  
Christ Jesus.

Amen

**WEEK  
ONE**

DAY FOUR

# SILENCE

Plant your feet on the ground and sit comfortably.

Place your hands in your lap, open your palms and breathe slowly. If it helps silently pray “Emmanuel” as you breathe in and “God with us” as you breathe out.

# SCRIPTURE

GENESIS 1:1-5

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

# FIRST READING

GENESIS 1:1-5

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

Write down the word or phrase below.

## SECOND READING

GENESIS 1:1-5

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

GENESIS 1:1-5

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 as if

He wrote you a letter, what would it say?

## PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Jesus your word has the power  
to transform my  
life and redeem the world.

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

I receive this specific invitation  
you have for me as good news over my life  
and I say “yes” to it.

May my “yes” 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 two pages to reflect and prayerfully journal on these questions.

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

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

*Step Three:* Repent - Where did you 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 for more information on each prompt.









**WEEK  
TWO**



# TECHNOLOGY FAST

As we begin the second week of Advent, take inventory of the amount of time you spent on your phone this past week. Go to settings and compare your screen time this week to the past week. Did it decrease at all? Did the break from your screen in the evening spur on any other habits?

## **THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE:**

Spend 24 hours off of social media. Delete the apps from your phone.

Don't have social media?

Pick your favorite app and spend 24 hours away from that.

If you are looking for an extra challenge try staying off of social media for the entire week.

# SILENCE

Plant your feet on the ground and sit comfortably.

Place your hands in your lap, open your palms and breathe slowly. If it helps silently pray “Emmanuel” as you breathe in and “God with us” as you breathe out.

## SCRIPTURE MEMORY

TAKE THIS WEEK TO COMMIT **JOHN 1:6-10** TO MEMORY. RETURN TO IT AS OFTEN AS YOU NEED TO IN THE COMING DAYS.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

USE THIS PAGE TO WRITE THE SCRIPTURE OUT  
IF THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO YOU WHILE  
YOU MEMORIZE.

## PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Jesus your word has the power  
to transform our  
lives and redeem the world.

Thank you for the opportunity  
to hide it in our hearts  
this week.

The sky and the land will one day wear  
out but your word will never wear out.

May it instruct and encourage us this  
week as we follow you.

Amen

**WEEK  
TWO**  
DAY TWO

# SILENCE

Plant your feet on the ground and sit comfortably.

Place your hands in your lap, open your palms and breathe slowly. If it helps silently pray “Emmanuel” as you breathe in and “God with us” as you breathe out.

# SCRIPTURE

JOHN 1:6-13

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.

He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

# FIRST READING

JOHN 1:6-13

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

Write down the word or phrase below.

## SECOND READING

JOHN 1:6-13

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 1:6-13

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 as if

He wrote you a letter, what would it say?

## PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Jesus, your word has the power  
to transform my  
life and redeem the world.

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

I receive this specific invitation  
you have for me as good news over my life  
and I say “yes” to it.

May my “yes” be a sign of my belief that  
you are the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Amen

**WEEK  
TWO**  
DAY THREE

# GRATITUDE

## GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS

- Ask the Spirit of God to bring to mind friends, family, co-workers, or neighbors that have experienced a celebration of some kind. Perhaps it's a raise or promotion, the welcoming of a newborn, an unexpected gift or award, or a small victory of sorts.
- Spend time thanking God for the blessings in the lives' of others.
- Praise God for being the giver of every good gift.

## GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS IN YOUR OWN LIFE

- Take a moment to reflect on the celebrations, small or big, in your own life or the life of your immediate family. What are you grateful for?
- Be as specific as you can and don't neglect to name both what's obvious as well as what is not so obvious. (Thank you, Lord, for the kindness of this individual; thank you, Lord, for my tastebuds and the flavor of that meal.)

**Write down 3-5 things you are thankful for  
on the next page.**

Consider making the practice of gratitude more of a concrete rhythm for yourself or your family this advent season (at the dinner table, at the end of the day, on the commute to work).



## PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Father God, help me to live this day  
present, prayerful, and full of gratitude.

And may your peace that surpasses all  
understanding guard my heart and mind in  
Christ Jesus.

Amen

**WEEK  
TWO**  
DAY FOUR

# SILENCE

Plant your feet on the ground and sit comfortably.

Place your hands in your lap, open your palms and breathe slowly. If it helps silently pray “Emmanuel” as you breathe in and “God with us” as you breathe out.

## SCRIPTURE

HEBREWS 1:1-4

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.



# FIRST READING

HEBREWS 1:1-4

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

Write down the word or phrase below.

## SECOND READING

HEBREWS 1:1-4

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.*

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HEBREWS 1:1-4

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**WEEK  
TWO**  
DAY FIVE

# REFLECTION

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

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

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

*Step Three:* Repent - Where did you 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 for more information on each prompt.











**WEEK  
THREE**

# TECHNOLOGY FAST

As we begin the third week of Advent take inventory of the amount of time you spent on your phone this past week. Go to settings and compare your screen time this week to the past week. Did it decrease at all? Reflect on how the break from social media affected your week or habits?

## **THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE:**

Each morning this week practice reading scripture before looking at your phone.

If you are looking for an extra challenge find somewhere for you phone to be overnight outside of your bedroom (this may require you to find a different type of morning alarm).

# SILENCE

Plant your feet on the ground and sit comfortably.

Place your hands in your lap, open your palms and breathe slowly. If it helps silently pray “Emmanuel” as you breathe in and “God with us” as you breathe out.

## SCRIPTURE MEMORY

TAKE THIS WEEK TO COMMIT **JOHN 1:11-14** TO MEMORY. RETURN TO IT AS OFTEN AS YOU NEED TO IN THE COMING DAYS.

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

USE THIS PAGE TO WRITE THE SCRIPTURE OUT  
IF THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO YOU WHILE  
YOU MEMORIZE.

## PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

Jesus your word has the power  
to transform our  
lives and redeem the world.

Thank you for the opportunity  
to hide it in our hearts  
this week.

The sky and the land will one day wear  
out but your word will never wear out.

May it instruct and encourage us this  
week as we follow you.

Amen

**WEEK  
THREE**  
DAY TWO

# SILENCE

Plant your feet on the ground and sit comfortably.

Place your hands in your lap, open your palms and breathe slowly. If it helps silently pray “Emmanuel” as you breathe in and “God with us” as you breathe out.

# SCRIPTURE

JOHN 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.



# FIRST READING

JOHN 1:14

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

Write down the word or phrase below.

## SECOND READING

JOHN 1:14

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 1:14

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 as if

He wrote you a letter, what would it say?

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**WEEK  
THREE**  
DAY THREE

# GRATITUDE

## GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS

- Ask the Spirit of God to bring to mind friends, family, co-workers, or neighbors that have experienced a celebration of some kind. Perhaps it's a raise or promotion, the welcoming of a newborn, an unexpected gift or award, or a small victory of sorts.
- Spend time thanking God for the blessings in the lives' of others.
- Praise God for being the giver of every good gift.

## GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS IN YOUR OWN LIFE

- Take a moment to reflect on the celebrations, small or big, in your own life or the life of your immediate family. What are you grateful for?
- Be as specific as you can and don't neglect to name both what's obvious as well as what is not so obvious. (Thank you, Lord, for the kindness of this individual; thank you, Lord, for my tastebuds and the flavor of that meal.)

**Write down 3-5 things you are thankful for  
on the next page.**

Consider making the practice of gratitude more of a concrete rhythm for yourself or your family this advent season (at the dinner table, at the end of the day, on the commute to work).



## PRAYER TO END YOUR TIME

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present, prayerful, and full of gratitude.

And may your peace that surpasses all  
understanding guard my heart and mind in  
Christ Jesus.

Amen



**WEEK  
THREE**  
DAY FOUR

# SILENCE

Plant your feet on the ground and sit comfortably.

Place your hands in your lap, open your palms and breathe slowly. If it helps silently pray “Emmanuel” as you breathe in and “God with us” as you breathe out.

# SCRIPTURE

ISAIAH 6:1-3

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

# FIRST READING

ISAIAH 6:1-3

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

Write down the word or phrase below.

## SECOND READING

ISAIAH 6:1-3

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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**WEEK  
THREE**  
DAY FIVE

# REFLECTION

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*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 for more information on each prompt.











**WEEK  
FOUR**

# TECHNOLOGY FAST

As we begin the final week of Advent take inventory of the amount of time you spent on your phone this past week. Go to settings and compare your screen time this week to the past week. Did it decrease at all? Did you spend time with Jesus before reaching for your phone in the morning? How did this practice go?

## **THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE:**

This week set limits on your device (you can do this in settings) to reduce the amount of time you spent on your phone in the last week by half.

If you are looking for an extra challenge find an accountability partner who will set your screentime passcode. This will help you not be able to go over the limits you have set.

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## SCRIPTURE MEMORY

TAKE THIS WEEK TO COMMIT **JOHN 1:15-18** TO MEMORY. RETURN TO IT AS OFTEN AS YOU NEED TO IN THE COMING DAYS.

(John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”) Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

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**WEEK  
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DAY TWO

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# SCRIPTURE

EPHESIANS 1:17-21

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

# FIRST READING

EPHESIANS 1:17-21

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

Write down the word or phrase below.

## SECOND READING

EPHESIANS 1:17-21

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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**WEEK  
FOUR**  
DAY FIVE

# REFLECTION

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**MERRY  
CHRISTMAS**

CHERRY HILLS FAMILY

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 John 1. We pray that through the practices of the slow reading of Scripture, silence, gratitude, technology fasting, 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 Christmas day and the tradition of opening presents, we encourage you to read the story of Jesus' birth found in the Gospel of Luke 2:1-20, and pause to pray thanking God for the greatest gift ever given, Jesus.

We look forward to 2024 and continuing to give ourselves fully to the way of Jesus and His mission.

Merry Christmas Cherry Hills family,  
Brian and Steve

