

FAMILY  
**ADVENT**  
DEVOTIONAL

CELEBRATE CHRIST TOGETHER

**MATT & LAUREN CHANDLER**

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# About the Authors

**MATT AND LAUREN CHANDLER** have been married for over 20 years—they met when Matt spoke at a camp that Lauren attended. They have had the opportunity to teach through writing, speaking, and leading worship across the world in various platforms.

Matt and Lauren have been in ministry at The Village Church in Flower Mound, Texas, for nearly 20 years. They have 3 children, Audrey, Reid and Norah.

**RYANE WEINERT** created the devotional content for the Advent Family Devotional. She is the Director of Resources at The Village Church. She has a passion for equipping disciples everywhere with tools to grow in their love and knowledge of God. Ryane lives in Flower Mound, Texas, with her husband, Cameron, and their son, Walt.

# How to Use This Study

## WHO IS THIS STUDY FOR?

This is a family devotional, but a family can look a lot of different ways. You can complete this book as parents with kids of all ages, as a couple who doesn't have children or are empty nesters, as an individual, or with a group of friends.

*Family Advent Devotional: Celebrate Christ Together* is 25 day, video-enhanced devotional. This book is divided into four weeks, with each week focusing on a major theme of Advent: hope, peace, love, and joy.

This devotional is meant to begin on December 1 and end on December 25. If you begin late or miss a day, try to catch up, but don't let this stop you from completing the study. If you've fallen behind, you can always simply rejoin on the appropriate day's devotional when you are able. Each day includes a Family Time devotional, conversation prompts to facilitate discussion amongst a wide variety of ages, and a prayer prompt.

## DEVOTIONAL

On the first day of each week, you will watch a short video in which Matt and Lauren introduce that week's theme. On the remaining days of each week, you will read a short devotional that continues with the week's theme. You can read these on your own, with your spouse, or with the group you are completing the study with—including your kids!



To access your videos, follow these steps:

1. Open the camera app on your phone.
2. Focus on the QR Code graphic.
3. Follow the instructions that appear.

Videos may also be accessed at [lifeway.com/familyadventvideos](http://lifeway.com/familyadventvideos)

## ADVENT

### SCRIPTURE READING

To accompany each day's devotional, there is a Scripture reading prompt. Take time to look up and read the verses, as they are typically directly connected to the daily devotionals and/or the study as a whole.

### CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Each day's study includes five questions. These questions range in depth in order to facilitate conversation amongst families of all types, with members of all ages. You know your family best and can therefore determine which prompts will work for you and your group. As a general rule, the questions are written with the following audiences in mind:

#### **PROMPT 1**

For a family with a child or children between the ages of 4–7

#### **PROMPT 2**

For a family with a child or children between the ages of 8–12

#### **PROMPT 3**

For a family with teenage children

#### **PROMPTS 4 AND 5**

For adults (and teenage children)

### PRAYER PROMPTS

Following each day's devotional and conversation prompts is a prayer prompt. Close your time as a group in prayer, using these short prompts to get you started. You might find these to be particularly helpful for yourself, children, or other members of your group who desire to pray but are not sure where to start.

# What is Advent?

Of all the seasons in the church calendar, Advent probably feels the most familiar. Many people, regardless of faith, have used an Advent calendar—the ones with little windows to help you count down the days until Christmas. Yet, even though Advent is certainly about anticipating the coming of the Messiah, we don't seem to be very good at it, and what we generally call "Advent" looks pretty different than what the church historically has called "Advent."

Formed from a Latin word meaning "coming" or "arrival," Advent is the traditional celebration of the first advent of Jesus in humility and the anxious awaiting of His second advent in glory. The season is a time for remembering and rejoicing, watching and waiting. In American Christianity, we've got that first part down. As soon as Thanksgiving is over (and sometimes even before), we start putting up the tree and listening to our favorite Christmas songs. There's nothing wrong with doing these things, of course, but the whole point of Advent is to spend several weeks—four weeks, to be exact—preparing for Christmas instead of celebrating Christmas. It's about stepping into the shoes of the Israelites, longing and crying out for the Messiah to come. It's about reflecting on our sin and shortcomings and our need for a Savior. It's about looking around at our broken world and hoping for the second coming of Jesus. And, once we get to Christmas Day, the celebration of Jesus' birth becomes that much more spectacular and meaningful.

As we remember and enter the story of the coming of Jesus Christ, we deconstruct and deny the false stories that we find ourselves caught up in, especially those connected to our culture's concept of Christmas—individualism and consumerism. Instead, we reconstruct and embrace the true story of the gospel in our lives, specifically the focuses and themes of Advent. We recognize the weight of sin personally, corporately, and cosmically and understand why we need Jesus Christ, Immanuel, to dwell among

## ADVENT

us, restoring and reconciling creation back to the Father by the Spirit. Celebrating the Son of God coming as a gift, not to be served but to serve, we respond out of praise and gratitude, using this season to serve and to give to others.

## HISTORY & TRADITIONS

The Advent season begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and continues up to Christmas Day, or Christmas Eve in some contexts (though for this study, we will begin on December 1 and conclude on December 25).

There are a variety of ways to celebrate the season, depending on tradition and background. Many people use an Advent calendar, typically made up of 24 “windows” containing Scriptures, stories, poems, or gifts, to count down the days until Christmas. As each window is opened and the final day draws closer, our expectation increases. This reminds us of the hopeful yet anxious waiting God’s people experienced as they longed for the promised Savior to come.

Another popular tradition is marking the progression of the season through an Advent wreath made up of five candles. This symbol is borrowed from the emphasis throughout Scripture of Jesus Christ being the Light of the world (Matt. 4:16; John 1:4-9; 8:12). Each week, a new candle is lit in anticipation of Christmas Eve. The last candle, called the Christ candle, is lit on Christmas Eve to represent Jesus’ first advent. Through this theme of ever-increasing light penetrating the darkness, we see a picture of the gospel.

Regardless of the tradition, Advent is a significant time in the life of the church. It’s an opportunity for believers to remember God’s promise to send One who would overcome sin and death forever. God promised a Savior, and He kept that promise perfectly.



WEEK 1

# HOPE

## ADVENT

DECEMBER 1

# HOPE

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## Watch

Matt and Lauren begin our study by talking about hope—one of the four main themes of the Advent season. We see hope throughout the Bible—in the Old Testament as God’s people await their Savior, hope fulfilled in the New Testament when Jesus comes to earth, and hope then and now that He will one day return again.



*Watch Video 1 and discuss the questions on the following page with your family or group. See page 5 for instructions on using the QR code.*

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## Reading

*Before they left the garden, God whispered a promise to Adam and Eve: “It will not always be so! I will come to rescue you! And when I do, I’m going to do battle against the snake. I’ll get rid of the sin and the dark and the sadness you let in here. I’m coming back for you!” And he would. One day, God himself would come.<sup>1</sup>*

**THE JESUS STORYBOOK BIBLE<sup>1</sup>**

## Family Time

*Talk about these questions with your family or group.*

### **KIDS**

1. Is there something you are really hoping for this Christmas? What is it?
2. How does the Christmas season teach us about hope? Why do Christians have hope?

### **TEENS AND ADULTS**

3. Has there ever been a time when you placed hope in a person or circumstance and it didn't turn out like you wanted or expected? Explain the situation and why it didn't turn out like you had hoped."
4. Where we put our ultimate hope matters. Are there people, things, or circumstances you're putting your hope in right now instead of in Christ?
5. How does the hope and longing we experience as we wait for Christmas day prepare our hearts as we hope and long for Jesus' return?

## Pray

Pray as a family as you begin this study that you would learn more about God over the next 25 days. Pray that as you talk about hope this week, He would make it clear to you where you may have misplaced your hope, and remind you of the hope you have because of Jesus.

DECEMBER 2

# HOPE

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## Read Genesis 3:1–14.

When you think of the beginning of the Advent story, what do you imagine? Most of us probably picture a stable—a manger, maybe—filled with animals, a newborn Jesus, proud new parents, and lots of visitors. We think of shepherds, angels, and wise men. But, the story really begins way before that—in a garden.

You’ve probably heard Genesis 1 many times. God created the world—the sky, sea, land, plants, animals—and He said it was good. Then, He created people—and He said it was very good. Genesis 1:27 even tells us He created humans, male and female, in His own image! From the very beginning, people were set apart for a special relationship with God and a special role in caring for the rest of creation. At this point in the story, creation functioned in perfect order according to God’s beautiful design and man walked in an unbroken relationship with God, fully known and unafraid.

But in an instant, everything changed as Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s good instruction. Tempted by the snake, Eve ate the fruit from the one tree God had forbidden them to eat from. Eve offered the fruit to Adam, and he ate, as well. When they ate the fruit, they brought sin into the world. Instead of enjoying the relationship they had with God, they wanted to become just like Him. Because of that one decision to disobey Him, their fellowship with God was broken, peace was disrupted, and creation was thrown into chaos. Darkness, depravity, fear, shame, and selfishness flooded the human heart—separating people from God.

But from the very first moment we needed it, God had a rescue plan. He addresses Adam and Eve, later turns to the serpent, declaring that sin would not have the final say and that Satan would not prevail. Even amid the darkness, God spoke a word of hope, promising a Savior who would one day defeat the enemy and deliver God’s people. We’ll learn more about this soon.

## Family Time

*Talk about these questions with your family or group.*

### **KIDS**

1. Do you ever have trouble being obedient? Why can it be so hard?
2. God gave Adam and Eve everything they needed in the garden. Why do you think they chose to disobey Him?

### **TEENS AND ADULTS**

3. How does beginning the Advent story in Genesis (instead of the New Testament) change your perspective as we enter this season? How does this impact your view of the whole story of the Bible?"
4. In what ways do we still see and feel the effects of Adam and Eve's sin, even today?

## Pray

Pray that God would reveal to you areas where you have been or are currently being disobedient. Ask that these things would become clear to you and that you would move toward Him in repentance.