

Together in Advent

A 4 SESSION BIBLE STUDY
ON GOD'S ADVENT GIFTS

WEEK 1

BE
PRESENT



WEEK 2

SEND
PEACE



WEEK 3

SHARE
JOY



WEEK 4

WRAP IN
LOVE



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INTRODUCTION

Peace, joy, love—those are good words, Christmas words! We see them on signs and banners and store advertisements and we sing about them in Christmas carols. Peace, joy and love are gifts to share with others during this Advent season, but these gifts do not fade away when Christmas is past. These gifts come to us from our heavenly Father—peace with God, the joy of our salvation and the love of Christ our Savior. All of these gifts have come to us through the greatest present we could ever receive, the gift of God’s presence among us in the Person of his Son, the holy Child of Bethlehem.

Creative
Communications
Sample

TIPS FOR USING THIS STUDY GUIDE

1. Always begin each session with a prayer. One is included for each session. You are encouraged to expand each of them with prayer concerns from the group.
2. Feel free to follow the format of each session as presented here or rearrange and adapt the material to meet the needs of your group.
3. You will need Bibles to look up the verses listed in each session.
4. As you work through the material in this study guide, be sure to write down in the margins any questions that come to mind or any thoughts that arise in the course of the discussion and your contemplation of each session's Scripture verses.
5. Throughout each session, think about specific ways you can apply the themes of the study to your life this Advent season.
6. If you are using this guide in a group setting, consider assigning the Bible verses to various people in the class to read aloud at the appropriate time. This will move the session along more efficiently.

Note that some of the questions ask for facts. Typically, the answers to these questions will come from the Scripture verses just read. Other questions are more subjective, asking for your opinion or an example from your own experience. Since your life experiences are different from anyone else's, answers to these questions are neither right nor wrong. A Leader's Guide that accompanies this material is available from Creative Communications for the Parish (Code TGLG).

SESSION 1: BE PRESENT

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope. Psalm 130:5



OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, during these last weeks before Christmas we become busy with our holiday preparations. Forgive us when we become too busy, for you and for others. Lead us by your Spirit to enter your presence in worship and prayer and to be present for our family and friends. Hear our prayer in the name of Jesus, our Lord Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

DISCUSSION

If you wish, share a time when you did not get what you wanted for Christmas.

INTRODUCTION

What do you want or need for Christmas? What does the world want—power, wealth, glory? What does the world need? According to tradition, or at least to a popular song, Santa has a list to check and see who is being naughty or nice. No one in the world, not even one of us, is on the “nice” list. “None is righteous, no, not one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:10-11, 23). What does the world need? What do we need? On the first Christmas we received exactly what we need. Our Gift came wrapped in swaddling cloths..

NO PLACE TO HIDE

Read Genesis 3:1-13. We like to imagine how wonderful it would be to walk with God and to speak with him face to face. Yet that is not what Adam and Eve imagined after they disobeyed God and ate the fruit forbidden to them. How did our first parents respond to God’s call in the garden? How did they try to solve the problems created by their sin? What excuses did they make? How do we sometimes try to resolve the problems that we create with our sins? What excuses do we make?

God did not leave Adam and Eve—and all of their descendants—without hope. He promised that the offspring of the woman would come to crush the power of the tempting serpent, although the offspring himself would be killed in the encounter—and, as we now know, rise to life again! **Read Malachi 3:1-6.** The Lord himself will come among his people, but he will first send a messenger to prepare the way. Then the Lord will come, “the messenger of the covenant.” What will his coming be like? Will it be a welcome event or a frightening experience? This is something far beyond a lump of coal in a Christmas stocking! What will the messenger of the covenant do for his people? **Read Jeremiah 31:31-34.** What is the new covenant that God will make with his people?

Together in Advent

During Advent and Christmas we love to buy and wrap presents, send Christmas cards and share cookies. Those are wonderful things to do, but we may become so busy with those things that we forget that Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. In this Bible study we will see that in the holy Child of Bethlehem, God is present among us with his gifts of peace, joy and love, gifts that we can now share with others in his name.