

MOUNTAIN BROOK COMMUNITY CHURCH

# *Advent*

2023



## *What is Advent?*

Advent is a season designed to help us long for God's coming. It is a time to reflect upon the ancient hopes of God's people for the coming Messiah and to anticipate the Messiah's return. Advent readies us for the celebration of Christmas — the wonder of God becoming flesh stirs our own longings for a fresh experience of God's presence and anticipates the return of Jesus Christ, our King.

In this season, we must remember the miracle that Christ came, but also the miracle that Christ comes—that He comes in the midst of the darkness and despair, when all hope seems lost. He enters directly into the void of this world and our lives to comfort us in the darkness and offer us a way out of the darkness. He promises that He will one day come again.

Christ came. Christ comes. Christ will come again.

This reading guide is intended to help you as you wait and hope this season.

May your observance this Advent be blessed.

– MBCC Pastors



## *How Do I Use this Devotional?*

There are several ways to use this Advent Devotional personally and with family and friends.

1. Every Sunday, read the weekly devotional aloud and reflect on the weekly question by journaling or talking with others. The weekly devotional will anchor you in this week's theme and prepare you for the daily Scripture readings.
2. Every day, read the daily Scripture readings aloud and reflect on the daily questions.
3. Throughout the week, listen to the suggested worship songs to go along with the Scripture reading. These will help you meditate on Scripture and assist you in family worship. To help you worship through Advent, don't forget to check out the MBCC Advent playlist available on Spotify!
4. Throughout the season, pray about how you can participate in this year's Advent Conspiracy project. We encourage you to be a part of what the Lord is doing this Advent to take the Gospel "From Anywhere to Everywhere" through India National Inland Mission and Eagles of Peace.





# ADVENT CONSPIRACY

2023

## WHAT IS *Advent Conspiracy?*

We believe the story of Christmas is ours to tell. So, instead of buying a bunch of stuff we have a challenge for you: Worship Fully, Spend Less, and Give More. Let's tell the real story of Christmas: The story of Jesus.

This year our Advent Conspiracy project is "From Anywhere to Everywhere" as we strive to take the Gospel to the hardest to reach places. We will be focusing on two organizations: **India National Inland Mission** and **Eagles of Peace**. We encourage you to buy fewer gifts this Christmas and give away what you would have spent for the sake of the Gospel. This is the Advent Conspiracy. 100% of what we raise together will be given away to support this project.

## WHAT IS *India National Inland Mission?*

- India National Inland Mission (INIM) was founded in 1964 by Paul and Annie Pillai, and has the mission of bringing souls to Christ, teaching souls in Christ, and sending souls for Christ.
- Located in New Delhi, INIM hosts Grace Bible College which trains pastors to plant and lead churches as well as an orphanage and medical clinic.
- In the 1960's Paul Pillai started a school with 7 new believers that became Grace Bible College and has slowly grown over the years to nearly 700 students currently.
- Since the beginning, INIM has commissioned over 7,000 pastors.

## WHY *India?*

- The population of India is over 1.4 billion or approximately 1/7 of the world's population, and India is the largest English speaking country in the world.
- In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult for believers in India as the government strives to drive out Christianity and no longer allows Western ministries operate in India.
- The mission of INIM has always been to train local believers and disciple and equip them to plant their own churches throughout the country and neighboring countries.
- Over 80% of the Bible college students can never go back home as their parents and families disown them after becoming believers.



## WHAT IS *Eagles of Peace?*

- Eagles of Peace is a new mission movement that was founded by our missionary to Albania, Nathan Graves. Eagles of Peace (EoP) serves to provide missionary training and mobilization structure for those living in Latin American countries. EoP acts as a mission sending agency to then send these missionaries into Muslim countries in the Balkans, Middle East, and Africa.
- EoP is equipping believers from countries who have not historically sent international missionaries.
- EoP has a close relationship with the largest seminary in Guatemala and has established an effective training program to train candidates who wish to pursue life as a missionary upon graduation.
- Phase I training takes place in Guatemala. It is then followed a few months later by Phase II training in Albania. Phase III is the final phase when they are sent out as missionaries to an assigned country.
- Over 70 people have completed Phase I training, and currently 21 trainees are living as missionaries in these Muslim countries.

## WHY *this approach?*

- The Muslim countries that the EoP trainees are serving in are typically closed to Westerners, and there are many unreached people groups in these countries. Latin Americans have a more open entrance into these countries.
- The Latin American culture is closer to the Muslim culture making the transition to a new country smoother and making relationships easier to build.

## HOW CAN WE *help?*

**Our goal is to raise \$200,000 in support of these organizations seeking to train up people to take the Gospel to unreached people in places that we, as westerners, cannot go - From Anywhere to Everywhere.**

- It costs INIM \$2,700 per pastor to go through the 3-year Bible College program. Our goal is to raise funds to send 40 new pastors through Grace Bible College training and equipping them to go plant churches.
- The other half of the funds will be used to support EoP. They are currently hosting two Phase I trainings in Guatemala and two Phase II trainings in Albania each year. Each training session costs approximately \$20,000.
- In the next 5 years, EoP also plans to purchase land to build a training center in Guatemala that will enable more trainings to be held more efficiently and cost effectively.
- Our funds will be used to support training sessions and beginning process of the training center.

***Please visit [mbcc.us/adventconspiracy](https://mbcc.us/adventconspiracy) for more info and to make a donation.***

# Hope

## *Daily Reading*

- s** Mark 1:1-14
- m** Psalm 126
- t** 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
- w** Isaiah 40:9-31
- r** Hebrews 10:19-35
- f** Psalm 130
- s** Isaiah 11:1-10

## *Songs*

- O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*
- Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*
- God Made Low* (Sovereign Grace Music)
- King of Kings* (Hillsong)
- O Little Town of Bethlehem*

**For many people, HOPE is a desire or a wish** that things will somehow get better. We live in a broken world full of sickness and disease, war and terrorism, broken relationships and broken homes...death—sometimes it feels like HOPE is a rare commodity, or maybe just a dream.

For the people of God, HOPE is more than just a desire or a dream. It is the confident expectation that God Himself will one day set all things right, that He will restore all things completely. This restoration is made possible by the Advent of Jesus Christ, our Everlasting King.

The word Advent means “coming” or “arrival.” When we use this word at Christmas time, it reminds us of the anticipation, expectation, and HOPE held over hundreds of years by the people of Israel as they waited for the coming of their Messiah and promised King.

As we light the first Advent candle, representing HOPE, we are reminded that just as the people of God long ago hoped for the coming of the Messiah, “the light that was coming into the world,” today, we also HOPE and long for His second coming. The Advent season is a season that grounds us in the HOPE that only comes through Christ.

### *Weekly Questions*

What is hope?

Where do I place my hope? Is it in myself/my circumstances or in God?

What hope does Jesus offer?

How can we share the hope of Jesus with others this week?

### *Daily Questions*

What does this passage teach me about God and the hope He provides?

How can I apply this passage to my everyday life?

What practices can I put into place to cultivate hope today?

# Peace

## *Daily Reading*

- s** Isaiah 9:1-7
- m** John 14:15-31
- t** Romans 15:4-13
- w** Colossians 1:15-23
- r** Romans 5:1-11
- f** Ephesians 2:11-22
- s** Ephesians 4:1-16

## *Songs*

*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

*Peace, Peace*—Sara Groves

*Glory (Let There Be Peace)*—Matt Maher

*Shalom*—Ten Thousand Fathers

*God With Us*—All Sons & Daughters



**To be human is to long for PEACE.** In Scripture, PEACE is not simply the absence of conflict. It is a word that describes completeness, wholeness, fullness, the way things are supposed to be. God created all things to be at PEACE.

Yet, PEACE is not a word that describes our world today. Sin disrupts the PEACE that God desires for His people and His world, a world full of conflict and brokenness. Mankind's only hope for true PEACE is the coming of Jesus Christ.

When Jesus was born as a human, He came to restore harmony and order, and He did so through His death, burial, and resurrection. He offers this PEACE to any who will trust in Him alone for their salvation.

Jesus promises that, one day, He will come again to completely reverse the curse of sin and restore all things back to perfection. The Advent season reminds us of our secure hope for PEACE through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The second Advent candle represents PEACE, the shalom, unity, and harmony that comes into the world through Jesus Christ.

### *Weekly Questions*

What is peace according to the Bible?

Where do you find peace?

How can we experience peace by trusting God?

### *Daily Questions*

What does this passage teach me about God and the peace He provides?

How can I apply this passage to my everyday life?

What practices can I put into place to cultivate peace today?

# Joy

## *Daily Reading*

- s** Isaiah 61:1-4; 10-11
- m** Psalm 16
- t** Isaiah 12
- w** John 16:16-24
- r** Philippians 4:4-9
- f** Romans 12:9-21
- s** Isaiah 55

## *Songs*

*Joy to the World! The Lord is Come*

*Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee*

*O Come, All Ye Faithful*

*Joy Has Dawned*—Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend

*Angels We Have Heard on High*

**JOY.** On the night of our Savior's birth, the angel said, "Fear not, for behold, I bring to you good tidings of great JOY which shall be to all the people." The announcement of Christ's birth was the announcement that true JOY had entered into the world.

True JOY is much more than just a happy feeling that comes and goes. It is an eternal perspective. It is gratefully celebrating what God has provided for His people - peace through His Son. We can rejoice, even in our waiting, because we know that Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God and secured for us an eternal destiny marked by infinite JOY.

Our JOY is expressed by our praise. It is the joyful overflow and expression of our righteous standing before our Holy God. Because we are one with Jesus Christ through faith, the one who possesses "pleasures forevermore," we can "rejoice always."

When Jesus comes again, we, as the people of God, will experience a lasting and uninterrupted JOY, praising His glorious name forever.

We light the third Advent candle of JOY to symbolize the JOY that entered our joyless world when Jesus arrived.

### *Weekly Questions*

What is joy?

Where do you search for your joy?

How can our lives be marked by joy?

### *Daily Questions*

What does this passage teach me about God and the joy He provides?

How can I apply this passage to my everyday life?

What practices can I put into place to cultivate joy today?

# Love

## *Daily Reading*

- s**    Philippians 2:1-11
- m**    Isaiah 43
- t**    1 John 3:11-24; 4:7-21
- w**    1 Corinthians 13
- r**    Titus 3:3-9
- f**    Psalm 103
- s**    John 3:1-21

**Christmas Eve:** Matthew 1:18-2:23

**Christmas Day:** Luke 2:1-21

## *Songs*

*Labor of Love*—Andrew Peterson

*What Child is This*

*O Holy Night*

*All Glory Be to Christ*—Kings (MHM)

*Go, Tell It on the Mountain*

**LOVE.** One of the great wonders of the world is the fact that God loves us even though we don't deserve it. Throughout Scripture, we see promise after promise that God loves His people with an unfailing, never-ending, steadfast LOVE. His ultimate expression of this LOVE is displayed in His Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because God loves us, He sent Jesus to be born as a human.

Because God loves us, He commissioned Jesus to grow up and die as a sacrifice for our sins.

Because God loves us, He resurrected Jesus from the grave and claimed victory over sin, death, Satan, and hell. God's LOVE for His people is not abstract—it is tangibly expressed in the reality that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,” and that this Word, Jesus Christ, broke His body and shed His blood to pay the penalty for our sin.

The LOVE of God makes possible the forgiveness of our sins, so we can have peace with Him. It paves the way for entrance into His eternal kingdom, and all of this is ours by grace through faith in Christ alone.

The fourth advent candle represents “LOVE,” the immovable, irrevocable, unconditional LOVE of God for us.

### *Weekly Questions*

What is love according to the Bible? How does it differ from how our culture defines love?

What are the ways God shows His love to us daily? Make a list of the ways God has shown His love to you and add to it daily this week.

How can we receive God's love for us and extend God's love for others this week?

### *Daily Questions*

What does this passage teach me about God and His love for us?

How can I apply this passage to my everyday life?

How can I receive and reflect God's love today?







MOUNTAIN BROOK  
**COMMUNITY**  
CHURCH

[www.mbcc.us](http://www.mbcc.us)