

## **Advent Reflection Explanation**

Throughout Christian history many have celebrated Advent, the Christmas season, by lighting candles on an advent wreath. There are many different traditions, but these traditions are just that - traditions. There is no right way or wrong way to celebrate Advent.

Advent means "coming." In Christmas, we are celebrating the first coming of Christ with a longing for His second coming.

The following is one way that you or your family could celebrate Advent. On Sunday Terry is going to be preaching from the four Gospels. Each advent reflection is a reflection of some element of the Gospel and object lesson with the lighting of a candle.

Each week there will be a reading, prayer, and lighting of a candle. The readings will be from the first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. After the reading, someone will light the candle. After lighting the candle, there will be a written prayer followed by a short time of open prayer. Once the time of open prayer is finished, the leader should close with a short impromptu prayer.

You could do these reflections as a family or invite others. You could invite people in your neighborhood or small group. These reflections would also be a way to invite other friends who do not go to church to spend time with you this Christmas. Typically you would meet on a Sunday evening, but any night will do.

## **Sample Agenda for the evening**

7:00 - 7:20 (Snacks, cider, fellowship) We will cover the snacks the first week and then ask others to bring snacks the following weeks. We might cover drinks each week.

7:20 - 7:35 Light the advent candle and do the reading.

## **Prep and Supplies**

- Decide who to invite.
- Invite those people
- Plan for refreshments (optional)
- Get advent candles. You can get a wreath or just have four candles on a table or mantle, whatever. Some advent wreaths use four candles, some five. We are going to use four for these reflections, but we might add a fifth - unlit - candle, just for our family. The fifth unlit candle would be a reminder of people who do

not have the Holy Spirit in their life. It will be a reminder to us to take the light of the world to others.

**Jesus is Unique**  
**Week 1: John 1:1-18**

**\*\*Optional:** Begin the evening with some snacks and open time to just catch up.

**Read:** John 1:1-18

**Comment:** Jesus is unique above all other people. In our reading Jesus is referred to as the Word. He is God and was with God in the beginning. Jesus is not just a baby in a manger or the Savior who died on the cross. He is God. We cannot completely understand the reality that Jesus is God and Human, but He is. Jesus is unique.

**Light the Advent Candle.**

**Explain the Candle:** Tonight we lit a candle to remind us of Jesus' unique nature. The flame on this candle is just like other flames. It is hot. It will burn your hand if you touch it. Have you ever noticed when you look at a fire how each flame is unique? The flames maybe similar but they are not exact duplicates of each other. They have different shapes and dance and move just a little different. Each flame is similar but they are also unique. When we light this candle let it remind you of Jesus' uniqueness. Among all the billions of people born, Jesus was similar to them as a man, but He is still unique. He is God.

**Prayer:** Jesus, there is no one like You. You were present when the world began. Help us this Christmas season and all through the year to remember that You are unique.

**Open Prayer:** If anyone wants to pray now they can.

**Closing Prayer:** (Brief impromptu prayer by the leader)

**\*\*Optional:** Sing a Christmas Carol, "Joy to the World"

**Jesus Came with a Purpose**  
**Mark 1:1-19, 10:45**

**\*\*Optional:** Begin the evening with some snacks and open time to just catch up.

**Read:** Mark 1:1-19, 10:45

**Comment:** In the book of Mark there is no story of Jesus' birth. Mark jumps right to the action. The author of the book is getting right to the point, right to the meat of the story. One of Mark's favorite words throughout the book is "immediately." Mark is reminding us that Jesus came with a purpose. He had a mission. He came - as Mark 10:45 says - to "give His life." He came because of the sin of man. His death on the cross paid for sins of humanity.

**Light the Advent Candle**

**Explain the Candle:** Last week we lit a candle to remind us that Jesus is unique. He is like no other person to ever walk on the earth. This week we light a candle to remind us that Jesus came for a purpose. Fire in our homes has a purpose. It can provide light, warmth, cook our food, and heat our water. When you look at a flame on the candle remember that Jesus came with a purpose.

**Prayer:** Jesus, thank you for coming with a purpose. You are unique and You came to die on the cross to pay for our sins. We pray tonight for any who have not recognized the purpose for which You came.

**Open Prayer:** If anyone wants to pray now they can.

**Closing Prayer:** (Brief impromptu prayer by the leader)

**\*\*Optional:** Sing a Christmas Carol, "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

## **Jesus' Coming was Foretold** **Matthew 2:1-12**

**\*\*Optional:** Begin the evening with some snacks and open time to just catch up.

**Read:** Matthew 2:1-12

**Comment:** This is the story of the Magi, sometimes called the three wisemen. The Bible does not tell us how many wisemen came, but it does tell us they came. They came because they saw the star and because Jesus' birth was foretold. When Herod went to confirm their story, He asked where the promised Messiah was to be born. He was to be born in Bethlehem as recorded in the Old Testament. Jesus was born in a lowly setting but his coming was no surprise. It was promised in the Old Testament, and the star was a sign to the Magi that the promised child, the Messiah had come.

### **Light the Advent Candle**

**Explain the Candle:** We lit two candles, remembering that Jesus is unique, and that He came with a purpose. Tonight the candle we light reminds of the star over Bethlehem. The star that shone in Bethlehem reminds us that Jesus' birth was promised in the Old Testament. He may not have come *as expected* but His coming *was expected* and foretold. It was not a great secret that He came.

**Prayer:** At just the right time Jesus, You came. Your coming was promised and You kept Your promise. We remember that You are the unique one, who came with a purpose and You came to fulfill a promise.

**Open Prayer:** If anyone wants to pray now they can.

**Closing Prayer:** (Brief Impromptu prayer by the leader)

**\*\*Optional:** Sing a Christmas Carol, "O Come All Ye Faithful"

**Jesus is Savior**  
**Luke 2:1-20**

**\*\*Optional:** Begin the evening with some snacks and open time to just catch up.

**Read:** Luke 2:1-20

**Comment:** Have you ever noticed how the shepherds responded to the angel's visit? They were in awe and were terrified. It must have been an amazing sight but it was also a sight that made them fearful. The angel's encouragement was to not be afraid, because a Savior is born. The news was terrific news and it was terrifying news. The shepherds followed the angel's instructions and found Jesus.

**Light the Advent Candle:**

**Explain the Candle:** Our last candle reminds us that Jesus is Savior as the angels said. A savior brings life and light. Jesus is the light. Those who recognize Him as unique and see the purpose for which He came, they have life. The light of the candle is a symbol of the life that we have in Christ if we have trusted Him to be our savior. We recognize there is evil in the world, and in us, and acknowledge that only Christ can restore us. He is the Light of the World.

**Prayer:** Jesus you are the Light of the World. You are the Savior. This Christmas we help us remember You as Savior. Help those who have not asked You to be their Savior to ask You to be in their life.

**Open Prayer:** If anyone wants to pray now they can.

**Closing Prayer:** (Brief Impromptu prayer by the leader)

**\*\*Optional:** Sing a Christmas Carol, "Silent Night"