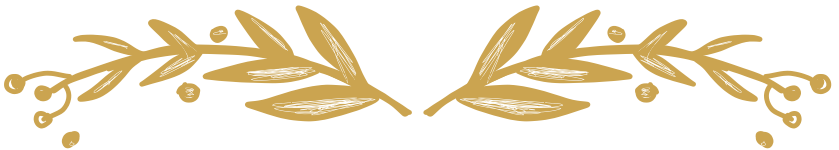




FOR *this* REASON



EAST WHITE OAK BIBLE CHURCH

ADVENT '19

WEEKLY DEVOTION GUIDE

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EAST WHITE OAK BIBLE CHURCH

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All Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV)

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ADVENT

History & Traditions

The word Advent has Latin roots, meaning “coming.”

Christians of earlier generations spoke of “the advent of our Lord” and of “His second advent.” The first phrase refers to God’s becoming incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. The latter phrase speaks of Jesus’ second coming. In a second sense “advent” designates a period before Christmas when Christians prepare for the celebration of Jesus’ birth. This practice may have begun in some churches as early as the late fourth century. Advent began as a time of fasting. Sermons focused on the wonder of the Incarnation. By the Middle Ages, four Sundays had become the standard length of the Advent season.

There are a couple of ways people have celebrated the Advent season. One is through an Advent calendar that has some doors counting down to Christmas Day. Often, behind these doors were poems, verses, and gifts that reflected the story of Jesus’ birth. Another tradition is an Advent wreath. The wreath is made up of five candles that reflect Christ being

the light of the world (Matt. 4:16; John 1:4-9, 8:12). As each week passes during Advent, a candle is lit leading up to the first advent, Christmas Day!

Advent is a season filled with expectation.

It's a time when we remember the world waiting for a coming Savior and celebrate the way the world changed when Christ was born. It's a season filled with the light and love of Jesus, the King, born to save us.

But if we're being honest, it's also a season filled with madness. As Christmas approaches, the focus of Advent sometimes gets lost amidst the chaos and craziness that comes with the holiday season.

So, to help you focus your attention on the heart behind this special season, we've created this four-week devotional guide to walk you through Advent. As you journey through this devotional, take time to think through the questions, spend time in prayer, and make time to participate in the activities that involve you or your family.

Our prayer is that as you turn your eyes to the coming Savior this Christmas season, your hearts will be transformed as you remember the birth of the King who came to save us.



ADVENT BIBLE READING

During 2019 we've been experiencing the Bible together using the ESV Study Bible Reading Plan.

We have added this element to our Advent book for 2019. You'll find the passages for each day listed within that week's devotion. Whether you have been reading along throughout the year or never started at all, we invite you to journey with us through the Scripture during the month of December! For more information on our Bible reading program, visit ewo.org.



Week One: **DECEMBER 1 – 7**



One of my favorite things
about the Christmas season
is all the lights.

Every year my wife and I bundle the kids up, grab a hot chocolate from Starbucks, and drive around town looking at all the lights. The beauty that these lights bring to the dark nights of winter brings a flood of joy in anticipation of Christmas Day.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to be “light.” In Matthew 5:16, Jesus shares with His disciples that they must show their “good works.” Good works are everything we do that reflects the mind and will of God. Through our good works, we can display the light of Christ. It may provoke persecution (vv. 10–12), but that is no reason for hiding the light others may see and by which they may come to glorify the Father. Witness includes not just words but deeds.

This word picture helps us realize that the values which we hold as citizens of Jesus’ kingdom are to be evident in our behavior so that our difference from men of the world will be made plain. Those who come to know us will gradually realize that we are different because of our relationship with our Father “in heaven” (v. 16). The kingdom of heaven is to break into our world, today, through you and me!

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

During this Advent season, let us not shy away from what makes this time of year so exciting for us. If it were not for Christ, we would not have the “light” of Christ to shine in a dark world that is desperately searching for hope. We did not deserve the sacrifice of Christ, but that’s what makes this Gospel light so amazing. Despite us, Christ came to give us hope. Let’s respond in worship by being a “light” to those God has placed in our sphere of influence!

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

- Has Christ changed you or are you still building your own kingdom rather than God’s? We must submit to God’s kingdom if we are to be an effective “light” for His glory!
- How can you be a light for Christ to your neighbors/co-workers/classmates/friends this week?

THIS WEEK’S BIBLE READING

SUNDAY Psalm 121, Job 4-5, Isaiah 25, John 21

MONDAY Psalm 122, Job 6-7, Isaiah 28, 1 John 1:1-2:6

TUESDAY Psalm 123, Job 8, Isaiah 29:1-30:17, 1 John 2:7-17

WEDNESDAY Psalm 124, Job 9-10, Isaiah 30:18-32:20, 1 John 2:18-3:3

THURSDAY Psalm 125, Job 11, Isaiah 33-34, 1 John 3:4-24

FRIDAY Psalm 126, Job 12, Isaiah 35, 1 John 4

SATURDAY Psalm 127, Job 13, Isaiah 36-37, 1 John 5



Week Two: **DECEMBER 8 - 14**



I love seeing the excitement on the faces of my children on Christmas morning.

There is a joy experienced as a parent to see your children eagerly waiting to see what gifts they might receive on that December morning. Once the gifts are opened and assembled, the house fills with squeals of laughter as they enjoy the gifts that others have provided for them.

While the joy of Christmas morning is something we treasure, there is something far more significant that brings followers of Christ unsurpassed joy. In John 17:13, the joy that Christ promises his followers is one that comes when we know that we are welcomed and loved by the heavenly Father. If God's love for us was not expressed through Jesus and His sacrifice on our behalf, what hope would we have, what purpose in life do we cling to, or what motivates us to see a promising future?

The joy we experience in Christ is one that comes when we recognize that through faith in Christ, our sentence of eternal hell has been exchanged with the life-giving reality of Christ's righteousness. There can be no other fact that can bring such incredible joy. We have done nothing to deserve the experience of the joy of Christ. This kind of joy surpasses all others!

*But now I am coming to you, and these things
I speak in the world, that they may have my joy
fulfilled in themselves. (John 17:13)*

We live in a world that is attempting to find joy in things that were not meant to last. As wonderful as those Christmas mornings are for my children, I want them to see Jesus as their Savior, who can bring an immensely better joy for them to experience. This joy is lasting, and it is eternal. And this joy is available to them and to anyone who turns from their sin and places their faith in Christ as the only one who paid the price necessary for our sin. Only then can this joy be experienced!

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

- Have you put your faith in Christ? Only when you have experienced this internal change can you experience the joy Christ brings!
- Is there someone in your life that struggles with this particular time of year? Consider having them over for dinner or grab a cup of coffee with them and share with them how they can experience the joy of Christ.

THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

SUNDAY Psalm 128, Job 14, Isaiah 36-37, 2 John

MONDAY Psalm 129, Job 15, Isaiah 38, 3 John

TUESDAY Psalm 130, Job 16-17, Isaiah 39, Jude

WEDNESDAY Psalm 131, Job 18, Isaiah 40, Revelation 1

THURSDAY Psalm 132, Job 19, Isaiah 41, Revelation 2

FRIDAY Psalm 133, Job 20, Isaiah 42, Revelation 3

SATURDAY Psalm 134, Job 21, Isaiah 43:1-44:5, Revelation 4



Week Three: **DECEMBER 15 - 21**



GIVE MORE

In our American culture, it can be easy to focus on receiving during the Christmas season.

With every commercial we watch, my children seem to discover new items that they now need to add to their Christmas list. Even as we go about our regular shopping, there appears to be an onslaught of advertising about things that we must have. There is no escaping the reality that we face a culture that tells us we deserve some new thing.

What if I told you that Christmas and Christianity for that matter are not about you? For Jesus' disciples, the statement He makes in John 13:13-17 to be servants would not have been the norm from a cultural perspective. Essentially Jesus was telling His followers that status was not to be the ultimate goal. Instead, they were to find ways to serve even in the lowliest of positions. The emphasis was not so much on what they knew, but how what they knew impacted how they responded to the people around them.

When we come to Christ, it becomes far too easy to elevate ourselves above everyone else. But the reality is, apart from the grace of God being extended to us, there is nothing different about our unsaved neighbor and us. Our response to God's rescue of us is an opportunity to give ourselves to others so that they see God's love through us. The Christian

You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:13-17)

life is not about us; it is about God and His kingdom. We must orient our lives so that we are communicating godly character through our actions towards other people.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

This Advent season don't make it about you and what you think you deserve. Challenge yourself to give your time, energy, finances, and even gifts to those that don't deserve it but need it most. Use these opportunities to further the kingdom of God rather than making your name greater or making your circumstance more comfortable. Building God's kingdom is one of the greatest expressions of worship to the God who rescued us!

THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

SUNDAY Psalm 135, Job 22, Isaiah 44:6-28, Revelation 5

MONDAY Psalm 136, Job 23-24, Isaiah 45, Revelation 6

TUESDAY Psalm 137, Job 25-26, Isaiah 46-47, Revelation 7:1-8:5

WEDNESDAY Psalm 138, Job 27, Isaiah 48-49, Revelation 8:6-9:21

THURSDAY Psalm 139, Job 28, Isaiah 50, Revelation 10

FRIDAY Psalm 140, Job 29, Isaiah 51:1-52:12, Revelation 11

SATURDAY Psalm 141, Job 30, Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Revelation 12



Week Four: DECEMBER 22 - 28



As Christians, how do we celebrate Christmas differently than our unsaved neighbors?

Maybe our nativity décor will give it away. Perhaps it is our generosity. What would make it on your list?

For some, it has been to display the cross. For Christians the cross points to the death and resurrection of Christ. But the cross was never meant to be a shiny, gold, diamond-encrusted fashion accessory to complement an ensemble or a signal of personal wealth. If this were the only requirement for discipleship, then anyone could do it. The true mark of a Christian is love for others.

Jesus' new commandment was a new way of loving. The commandment of the Old Testament said, "Love your neighbor," but the new said, "Love your enemies." It called for a higher degree of love. This heavenly declaration was designed to be obeyed in a new way—through divine power made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' commandment to love one another as He loves us is very challenging. Sometimes people are not very lovable, or they do outrageous and malicious things. What about the hard to love? Are we supposed to love them?

Often our love for someone is a reflection of our view of them. By treating love this way, we overlook the fact that God loved us even as sinners. We are people who rebel against God, and yet He sent Jesus to rescue us

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. (Luke 5:43-45a)

through Christ. So, to obey this commandment the way Christ modeled, we must love indiscriminately, just as Jesus loves.

God can help us love when we ask Him to enable us to see past people's attitudes or behaviors, to view people as God sees them. After all, we have been commanded to love and not to judge other people.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

How will you show love this Advent season? Will the reasoning be more than a superficial, feel-good at Christmas-time kind of love? Or is it motivated by a heart that has experienced the love God has for you and is now overflowing as you love others?

THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

SUNDAY Psalm 142, Job 31, Isaiah 54, Revelation 13

MONDAY Psalm 143, Job 32, Isaiah 55, Revelation 14

TUESDAY Psalm 144, Job 33, Isaiah 56-57, Revelation 15

WEDNESDAY Psalm 145, Job 34-35, Isaiah 58, Revelation 16

THURSDAY Psalm 146, Job 36:1-21, Isaiah 59, Revelation 17

FRIDAY Psalm 147, Job 36:22-37:24, Isaiah 60, Revelation 18

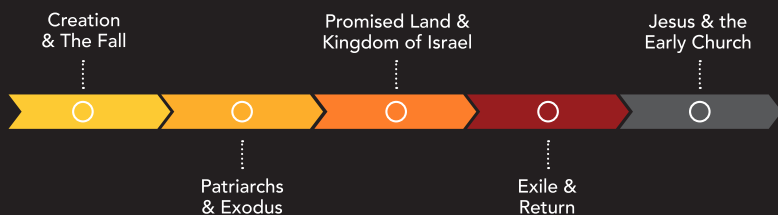
SATURDAY Psalm 148, Job 38, Isaiah 61-62, Revelation 19

ADVENT Calendar

Get your family involved in the Advent season.

Choose a different activity for each day. Provide a small prize for each bingo!

Read Luke 2:1-7	Invite someone over for dinner	Collect canned goods to give to a local food pantry	Pray for families in your town who don't have a home	Make a birthday card for Jesus
Write down 5 things you are thankful for	Read Micah 5:2-5	Watch a Christmas movie with your family	Sing <i>Silent Night</i>	Read Luke 1:26-38
Create a music playlist for the season	Sit by someone new at school or church	Put up Christmas decorations and sing <i>Joy to the World</i>	Read Matthew 2:1-12	Christmas carol in your neighborhood with your family or a group
Call someone in your family and tell them you love them	Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21	Choose 3 toys to donate	Make a Christmas card for someone in your neighborhood	Read Titus 3:4-7
Write a card and bring some treats for your local police or fire station	Sing <i>O Holy Night</i>	Write a thank you note to a teacher or coach	Read Philippians 2:1-11	Make Christmas cookies for your mailman

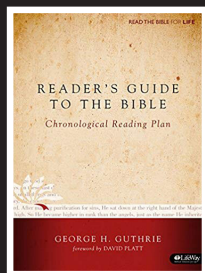


JOIN US ON A CHRONOLOGICAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Have you ever wondered where Job or Esther or the prophets fit into the story of the Bible? Experience all the events, prophecies, and teaching of Scripture in chronological order. Make plans now to join us on January 1, 2020 as we launch a new year of reading the Bible together!

**Experience
the Story from
Beginning
to End**

Six reading
assignments
each week
(one day off)



**We will follow George Guthrie's
Chronological Reading Plan.**

**Read on the free YouVersion Bible App
or follow along on a printed plan.**

An OPTIONAL Reader's Guide will be available to purchase online including daily summaries, reflection questions, and a timeline.

More information coming soon!



BE **LIGHT**

BRING **JOY**



GIVE MORE



SHOW **LOVE**

Through faith in the power of the cross I am set free
from the bondage of my sin. **FOR THIS REASON**
I will live to share the love of Jesus to the
world around me!

Ephesians 2-3



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