

Everyday Advent

A devotional series with Brenda Drost

Everyday Advent is a video driven devotional series
available on the following platforms...

RightNowMedia.org

BrendaDrost.com

This devotional guide accompanies the videos and is free
to use for your church, small group or individual study.

Welcome to the Everyday Advent

I didn't grow up with the tradition of Advent and quite honestly just brushed it off as a tradition I simply didn't know much about. The only exposure I had to the word or idea at all was a chocolate Advent calendar I received each year on the first day of December. Each day I would be so excited to open the little numbered door to reveal a chocolate treat hidden inside. As a mom, I kept of the tradition of the yearly Advent calendar with my kids and loved how it became a fun way to fill the holiday season with anticipation and excitement.

This year I decided to do a little research into the meaning and significance of this tradition. What I found was a beautiful and ancient ritual spanning back to just a few centuries after Christ's death. Although the specific traditions vary, Christians have been honoring the anticipation of the coming Christ through prayer, fasting, scripture reading and candle lighting for generations.

Whatever your background or beliefs, I'm sure we can agree that Advent has one common focus; to refocus our attention and realign our lives with the person of Jesus.

Advent is a time to remember and reflect, but it's also a time of looking forward with hope and anticipation. We remember the significance of the baby Jesus who was born in the flesh, in a little town called Bethlehem, and we look forward with great anticipation to his return one day for his church. But the greatest revelation of all is that Jesus is alive and being revealed in a deeper way in our hearts every day. This is the Everyday Advent.

God is constantly revealing himself in and through his people. He is active and working in our lives at all times. There is something fresh for us to receive daily from His presence. This is the essence of faith... that we have something real and practical to hold on to and actually live out.

For the next four weeks we will focus on hope, faith, joy and peace and how these incredible hallmark characteristics of faith are revealed in our daily lives.

My hope for you over this series is that you will discover how to live in the constant awareness that God is actively at work in our personal lives, and how we can learn to live in expectant hope for his promises to manifest in every area of our lives.

I hope you will join me for the journey as we learn what it means to live the Everyday Advent.

Hope

The Prophet's Candle

Hebrews 10:23 NLT

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.

This first week of Advent is all about the promises of God and the expectant hope we carry in our hearts as we wait for his promises to be fulfilled in our everyday lives.

My hope isn't just in arriving safely at the doors of heaven one day, but my hope is in an ever-present Saviour, who is being revealed in and through my life right now. Jesus didn't come just to get us into heaven... he said that he came so that we could have life and experience it to the fullest.

God is always moving, always working, and always doing something new. But often it's difficult for us to see his activity in the world around us. This is especially hard if you are hurt, disappointed and have been waiting for a long time to see God show up in difficult situations.

I have to wonder if we sometimes miss the activity of God because he doesn't show up like we expect him to. Just like the ancient Jews waiting for their Messiah to come, sometimes God works in ways we don't expect and would often never choose. I don't want to miss what he's doing, so I need to position myself to recognize and embrace his activity every day.

Here's three simple things you can do to position yourself to see God's work in your own life, your family and the situations you are praying about.

Ask God to reveal himself. Every morning as I pray, I talk to God about the areas of my life where I'm finding it difficult to see his activity. I tell him how much I trust him and ask him to reveal to me where he is working. At the end of the day I review the things I heard and saw throughout my day and again ask God for clarity and revelation to be able to see where he is at work.

Watch for him in everything. God is always at work, and I believe he longs to open your eyes and for you to see things from his perspective. Sometimes when I'm only looking for God in the big things, I miss the little shifts that are happening every day. I want to keep my heart fully tuned to what God is doing so I don't miss a thing.

Make note of his activity and thank him. Journal about it so that when you go through difficult times you can look back and remember all the great things he has done!

Reflections on Hope

Ephesians 1:18 NLT

I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called...

Are there things you've been believing for God to do for a long time? What are they?

Have you lost hope while waiting for a promise to be fulfilled in your own life?

What's one specific area of your life where you need to experience hope and anticipation again?

Have you ever considered praying for God to reveal to you where he is currently at work?
How could this be an encouragement to hold on in the waiting?

Take a moment each day this week to reflect on the activity of God in your current situations and journal about the things you see and hear.

Faith

The Bethlehem Candle

Romans 1:17 NLT

This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”

This second week of advent is about preparing ourselves through faith to see God’s promises come to pass. God’s promises often take time to unfold in our lives. Faith helps us to hold on and continue to believe even when things look desperate and difficult.

In order for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem as the prophets foretold, God arranged for a census to be taken and all hometown natives of Bethlehem needed to return there for the census. Mary and Joseph would have to make the difficult 90-mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem with Mary fully pregnant and almost ready to give birth. When they arrived, there was no room for them to stay and they end up sleeping in a stable. I can only imagine how hard this all would have been for Mary.

But even in the difficulty and uncertainty God was at work, making a way for what he had promised to come to pass.

My personal definition of faith is simply this... I know I can trust in the character of God when I can’t see the activity of God. Even when I can’t see anything changing or shifting in the natural, I can trust that God is at work behind the scenes making good on his promises to me.

Our faith is always going to be tested. It’s tested when we suffer through difficult things, when there are obstacles and opposition in our way, and when we have to wait for what seems like forever and nothing is changing. Although our faith is tested, it’s not just so that we can learn to persevere in the face of adversity, testing is always an opportunity for our faith to grow.

**The one thing I’ve learned to say on a regular basis is this simple but heartfelt little sentence...
God I trust you.**

I can’t see where you’re working, but I trust you.

Things haven’t worked out like I thought they would, but I trust you.

I’m not where I expected to be at this point in my life, but I trust you.

I don’t understand, but I trust you.

Hold on and don’t give up! Despite what you see or feel right now, God is at work. He is faithful to do everything he has promised to do.

Reflections on Faith

Colossians 2:7 NLT

Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

How would you define or explain faith?

What are some specific times in your own life where your faith was tested and stretched?

Is it easy for you to trust God? Why or why not?

Can you think of some areas of your life where you need to begin to declare that you trust God? List any you can think of and begin to pray over them daily releasing them to the Lord.

Joy

The Shepherds Candle

Luke 2:9-11

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born!"

The angel told the shepherds that he was the bearer of good news that would bring great joy to all people. What is the good news? It was the simple announcement that answered the broken outcry of all humanity. The good news is that we have a Savior.

This good news was not just for the shepherds that night, nor was it reserved for the Jewish people alone. The announcement of the birth of the Messiah was good news for every person of every nation of the world. It was the revelation of a promise that extends through time and is available to us today too!

Throughout the bible, joy is directly linked to our identity in Christ.

Joy is not the same thing as happiness. While happiness is a reaction to what's happening around us, joy comes from somewhere much deeper within. In John chapter 15 Jesus said that when we abide in him, faithfully follow him and remain in his love, then our joy would actually be complete and overflowing. It's only in him and through him that we can find real and lasting joy.

In order to truly experience joy, we must cultivate room for his presence in our lives every day.

The more time we spend with Jesus the more we begin to see things through his eyes and catch what is on his heart for our own lives and the lives of those around us.

I've seen this practically in my own life this year. I started the practice of getting up an hour earlier every day to spend intentional time with Jesus before I start my day. I pray over my calendar and all the people I will be with that day at home and work. I realign myself with God's heart and listen for direction and clarity. The result has been a ridiculous amount of peace and joy in my life that is not influenced by what happens around me, but is anchored deep within my heart.

Joy is not a feeling but rather a perspective, a lens through which we view the circumstances of our lives. Despite what I feel and see, it can't shake the core of who I am, and who I am is revealed to me when I spend time with Jesus.

Joy is an outward expression of a heart that is deeply and intimately connected with the heart of God.

Reflections on Joy

John 15:11 NLT

I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!

Can you explain the difference between happiness and joy?

Do you struggle to experience joy on a daily basis? Why or why not?

Why do you think we struggle with experiencing joy in our North American culture?

Are you intentional about spending time in God's presence everyday? What is that like for you?

If this is not a regular practice for you right now, what could you do to make some changes in your life to prioritize time with God?

In this teaching we mentioned there is a link between joy and identity. Reflect on this in your own life.

Peace

The Angel's Candle

Luke 2:13-14 NLT

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”

In this scripture account of the angel's address to the shepherds in Luke chapter 2 we see that there was a promise of peace on earth for the people of God. We know that Jesus was the Prince of Peace, his message is the Gospel of Peace and his kingdom is a Kingdom of Peace. **The promise of the angels is that same peace that is the atmosphere of heaven would be a reality on earth.**

I think we often consider peace to be rest and stillness, the opposite of a chaos and war. But the word peace from the bible actually means wholeness, or a state where all essential parts are joined together. Peace is possible in our homes and churches when everyone has their part to play and we work together in harmony with one focus.

Because Christ pursued peace with me, I feel responsible to pursue peace with others. The bible talks quite often about being people of peace, those who are to seek peace and pursue it relentlessly. We are commissioned into the world to be peacemakers and peacekeepers.

But here's my question for the day... do we make it easy for people to make peace with us?

Romans 12:18

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Living at peace doesn't always come easy. People will hurt us and do things to undermine peace in every arena of life, including the church. According to the scripture in Romans 12, it's my responsibility to make it easy for people to make peace with me. I must do whatever I can do, but sometimes it's not up to me. If people choose to stay angry and refuse to reconcile when things have gone off course, then I must let them go.

Here's a couple practical tips to keep in mind when it comes to keeping peaceful relationships with others. First, keep the door of your heart open to conversation and reconciliation. Be the first to reach out and attempt to make things right and always keep a humble and gentle attitude towards others.

Second, pray for the person who has hurt or offended you. If they refuse to make peace, then they are likely carrying a heavy burden. Continue to uphold that person in prayer and speak blessing over them. Keep hope alive, believing that God can change their hearts.

Reflections on Peace

2 Thessalonians 3:16 NLT

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation.

Do you feel like your life is fairly peaceful? Why or why not?

In general, do you find it easy to make and keep peace with the people around you?
Where is the most difficult place in your life to keep the peace?

Think of a time when you needed to fix a broken relationship. Did you make the first move or did you wait on the other person? How was that experience?

Do you often pray for people who have hurt or offended you?
If not, would you consider adding this to your daily prayer routine?

What do you think of the idea of speaking blessing over people?
Take some time this week to write out a blessing for someone who has hurt you.