

Real Life Ministries' Guide for ...

# Advent 2017: A Time for Blessing

December 3rd → December 30th

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## Introduction to the RLM's Guide for *Advent 2017*

Advent (Latin translation of Gk. *parousia*, meaning "coming" or "arrival") is the first season in the Liturgical Calendar of the Church. It is intended to focus our hearts and minds on the coming of Jesus in His Birth, His coming to people in salvation, and His future Second Coming. The guide below is intended to help you, your family, and your Home Group as you focus on Jesus Christ, His mission, and His arrival(s) during the Christmas season! Our guide runs from December 3rd → December 30th.

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## How to Use This Guide

Each week this guide will offer multiple options for helping you to focus on Jesus and His mission. The format will be the same for each week and is outlined below:

- Weekly Family Devotion: A family devotion for use in the home or in your Home Group that is centered on the Advent theme for that week (i.e., Peace, Hope, Joy, Love) and includes a link to the *Bible Project's "Advent Word Series"* videos.
- Daily Scripture Readings: Scripture readings focused on the weekly theme. These are adapted from Angie Mosteller's free eBook "How to Do an Advent Wreath".
- Prayer for the Week: A prayer to recite throughout the week, individually and in your family or Home Group.
- Song: A song to sing at your family devotion time or throughout the week.
- Living Advent This Week: Thoughts on how you can live out the theme for the week.

You can use the guide in any way you choose: use every element, every week **or** pick-and-choose which parts are most beneficial for you and your family. The key is to focus yourself, your family, and the members of your Home Group on Jesus. This is a season to think about Jesus' arrival(s).

(1) He came and was born to live as the Savior and King of the world!

(2) He comes to us in salvation as we receive Him as our Savior and Lord!

(3) He is coming again and we are to be on mission with Him (to be a blessing to our world) until He arrives!

The guide runs up to Christmas and slightly beyond. It is intended to focus us on arrivals 1 & 2, but also to focus us on the fact that Jesus lives with us always and that we are called to be on mission to be a blessing to our world by introducing them to Him!

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## Week 1: December 3 - 9 - *PEACE*

### Weekly Family Devotion:

The world in which we live is often filled with chaos and conflict. Yet, Jesus came and comes to bring **PEACE**. In a word about Jesus from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, we read the following: "... And He will be called ... Prince of **Peace**. Of the greatness of His government and **peace** there will be no end...." (Isaiah 9:6-7) The word used here for peace is from the Hebrew, *Shalom*, and speaks to the absence of war and also to the concept of a restoration of order and a setting-right of all things. In a declaration about Jesus from the Apostle Paul, he says: "For He Himself is our **peace**." (Ephesians 2:14) The word used here is from the Greek, *Eirene*, and speaks to the absence of conflict between people and nations, but also to a state of order and wholeness.

Jesus came to bring peace - restoration, wholeness, and harmony - to our lives and our relationships. He brings peace between us and God as He forgives our sin; He fills our life with His Spirit; He begins to heal our disordered lives and relationships. Watch the video for this week from *The Bible Project*, and then take some time to **discuss how Jesus brings you peace and how you can bring peace to the city/region in which you live.**

[The Bible Project's "Word Series for Churches" - PEACE](#)

### Daily Scripture Readings:

This first week's readings focus on **PEACE** and prophecies about Jesus - the One who can bring peace to our city/region.

**Sunday:** Prophecy about the One offspring/child who will crush Satan: *Genesis 3:15*

**Monday:** Prophecy about the virgin birth: *Isaiah 7:14*

**Tuesday:** Prophecy about the the identity of the coming child: *Isaiah 9:6-7*

**Wednesday:** Prophecy re: the majesty & mission of the child/Servant-King: *Isaiah 42:1-4*

**Thursday:** Prophecy about the birthplace of the child: *Micah 5:2*

**Friday:** Prophecy about the forerunner of the Servant-King: *Malachi 3:1*

**Saturday:** Prophecy fulfilled: Jesus brings peace: *Romans 5:1 & Colossians 3:15-17*

### Prayer for the Week:

*"Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our heart, world, our universe."*  
~ **from an unknown source ... began to circulate around England in the 1980s**

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## Song:

*O come, O come, Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

*O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny  
From depths of Hell Thy people save  
And give them victory o'er the grave  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

*O come, Thou Key of David, come  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

## Living Advent This Week:

Below are some simple ideas for you to live **PEACE** this week.

1. Pray you would be an agent of peace and reconciliation in your city this week.
2. Pray for God's peace to come to everyone in the Treasure Valley this Christmas.
3. Consider who you need to reconcile with and make plans to do it this week.
4. Participate in the *Angel Tree* program by grabbing an angel on Sunday, or hooking up with a Home Group (call Justin McMurdie, *Family & Groups Pastor*, if you need help getting plugged in - 541.514.8027).

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## Week 2: December 10-16 - HOPE

### Weekly Family Devotion:

In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante sees an inscription above the doorway to Hell which reads, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here." While our world is no Dante's *Inferno*, it can sometimes feel like we live in a place with very little hope. However, Jesus came and comes to offer **HOPE!** The Biblical concept of hope has much to do with the concept of waiting on our God who will bring redemption. In a famous promise from God, given by way of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, we read: "*For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you **hope** and a future.*" (Jeremiah 29:11) The Hebrew word used here is *Tiqwah*, and means "cord" or "hope." When used in its verbal form, *qavah*, it essentially speaks to the idea of "stretching a cord tight" and metaphorically alludes to "stretching tight with expectation." In the New Testament, we see that Jesus is the One whose coming gives us ultimate **hope**. For example, Peter writes: "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living **hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*" (1 Peter 1:3) In Jesus' coming (which includes his birth, life, death, resurrection, and eventual return), our dark world has the light of hope dawn.

Jesus is for His people and wants us to have a "tightly stretched expectation" that He has & is working in our world to bring about redemption and good. Watch the video for this week from *The Bible Project*, and then take some time to **discuss how Jesus brings you hope and how you can bring that to the neighborhood in which you live.**

[The Bible Project's "Word Series for Churches" - HOPE](#)

### Daily Scripture Readings:

This second week's readings focus on **HOPE** and promises about Jesus - the One who can bring hope to our neighbors and to us.

**Sunday:** Promise to Abraham about the ultimate hope to come: *Genesis 12:3*

**Monday:** Promise that Abraham's seed (Isaac) is in the covenant of hope: *Genesis 17:19*

**Tuesday:** Promise to Isaac's son, Jacob (Israel) that the promise continues: *Genesis 28:14*

**Wednesday:** Promise for Judah (one of Jacob/Israel's sons) that a ruler who brings hope will come through his line (this is the ultimate seed of Abraham - Jesus): *Genesis 49:10*

**Thursday:** Promise to all Israel that a King will come and give hope: *Jeremiah 33:14-15*

**Friday:** Promises to Israel/world are fulfilled through Jesus: *Matthew 1:1-17*

**Saturday:** Promise of Jesus is for all people's hope and healing: *Ephesians 3:6*

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## Prayer for the Week:

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. ~ **from *The Book of Common Prayer***

## Song:

*Come, Thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in Thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.*

*Born Thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a King,  
Born to reign in us forever,  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all sufficient merit,*

*Raise us to Thy glorious throne.  
By Thine all sufficient merit,  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne*

## Living Advent This Week:

Below are some simple ideas for you to live **HOPE** this week.

1. Pray you that would bring peace to your neighbors/neighborhood this season.
2. Pray for God's hope to come to your neighbors and their families & friends.
3. Consider whether your life is rooted in Jesus' hope and promises.
4. Go to [www.reallifetv.church](http://www.reallifetv.church) and download the e-book, "5 Ways to B.L.E.S.S. Your Neighbors" by Dave Ferguson and put it into practice.

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## Week 3: December 17 - 23: JOY

### Weekly Family Devotion:

We all want to be happy and live with a sense of well-being. However, we live in a world that is often filled with hardship: trials, tribulations, sin, sorrow, and death. God's Word never minimizes the pain of life; still, it offers us "happiness" in the midst of our circumstances - a settled state of soul/mind called **joy**. God proclaims that He will bring things to right; that He will give us **joy** in and through His Son, Jesus. Our "job" as God's people is to choose - through the Spirit working in us - to have **joy** even in the midst of hardship, for God will renew all things. He has proclaimed in the Old Testament, that, *"Those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting **joy** will crown their heads. Gladness and **joy** will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."* (Isaiah 51:11) In Jesus' arrival and in all He did and is doing, we can choose to be joyful, because we know that He is making the world new! In fact, when the angels announced Jesus' impending birth, they said to the shepherds: *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great **joy** for all the people."* (Luke 2:10) Jesus' first coming and His second coming is the foundation of **joy** for those who receive Jesus as their King!

God wants fullness of joy for His people! We see in creation that our God is a God of abundance and exuberance. Jesus' hard work of sacrificing Himself for the world is a perfect example of how one can be rooted in joy - even though pain is present. God desires His people to be joyful, and He has fought for our happiness in/through the work of His Son, Jesus! Watch the video for this week from *The Bible Project*, and then take some time to **discuss how Jesus brings you joy and how you can bring that to your life-calling and your work.**

[The Bible Project's "Word Series for Churches" - JOY](#)

### Daily Scripture Readings:

This third week's readings focus on **JOY** and proclamations about Jesus - the One who can bring joy to those we work and live with.

**Sunday:** Proclamation from angels about Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist: *Luke 1:16-17*

**Monday:** Proclamation from angels about Jesus: *Luke 1:31-33*

**Tuesday:** Proclamation from Elizabeth (John's mother) about Jesus: *Luke 1:41-44*

**Wednesday:** Proclamation from Mary about God: *Luke 1:46-49*

**Thursday:** Proclamation from Zechariah (John's dad) about Jesus: *Luke 1:68-70*

**Friday:** Proclamation from angels about Jesus: *Matthew 1:20-21*

**Saturday:** Proclamation about joy and requesting for it from God: *Romans 15:13*

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### Prayer for the Week:

Dear loving Lord, I thank you for all you do for me. You go so far beyond what I think I need. You let me be me. You let me live free. My happiness is so much greater, with so much less. And, no matter how dark things get, your light never leaves me. Thank you, Lord, for forgiving me. Thank you, Lord, for loving me. My soul sings, joyously, your praises. In your name, Jesus Christ, Amen. ~ **from [prayerforanxiety.com](http://prayerforanxiety.com)**

### Song:

*Lift up your heads, O ye gates*

*And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors*

*And the King of Glory shall come in*

*Who is this King of Glory?*

*The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle Lift up your heads, O ye gates*

*And be lift up, ye everlasting doors*

*And the King of Glory shall come in*

*Who is this King of Glory?*

*The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory*

### Living Advent This Week:

Below are some simple ideas for you to live **JOY** this week.

1. Pray you that would bring joy to your coworkers this season.
2. Pray for God's joy to fill your life this season and that it would flow to others.
3. Walk in creation or do something to root your life in Jesus' joy.
4. Write a letter to your boss/employer thanking them for giving you a place to work and for allowing you the ability to provide for your needs.

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## Week 4: December 24 - 30: LOVE

### Weekly Family Devotion:

As we come to Christmas and we focus on Jesus' first coming at his birth, we also are challenged to look beyond. We think of Jesus' promise to come to people in salvation if they will receive Him. And, we ponder His promise to come again, raise all those who are in Him, and renew the Heavens & the Earth. In all of Jesus' "comings," the overarching theme is **love**! It was **love** that caused the Father to send the Son into our world so that we could have peace, hope, and joy. In the New Testament, the Apostle John writes a very famous statement: "*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" (John 3:16) The word here is from the Greek verb, *Agapoō*. We are probably most familiar with the noun form, *Agapē*. This word for **love** is a very deep word and essentially speaks of a **love** that is centered in the well-being of others. At the heart of *Agapē* is the idea of blessing. We set our affection on God or others to be a blessing to them - with God this takes the form of worship, gratefulness and obedience; with others, we treat them as ourselves and bless them accordingly. At the heart of the Christmas season is the **love** of God for us - a settled desire to free us from our bondage to sin and bring us the fullness of His **love**. This Advent purpose is summed up well in another writing of John: "*This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.*" (1 John 4:9) God has been seeking our life (peace/wholeness; hope; joy; etc.) and it has been about His great **love** coming to us in Jesus Christ!

God has come to us in love! Watch the video for this week from *The Bible Project*, and then take some time to **discuss how Jesus brings you love and how you can bring that love to your family and friends by blessing them.**

[The Bible Project's "Word Series for Churches" - LOVE - Link available starting Dec. 11th](#)

### Daily Scripture Readings:

This third week's readings focus on **LOVE** and the presence of Jesus - the One who fills our lives with love and moves us to love & bless others at Christmas and beyond.

**Sunday:** God's presence among us: *Zechariah 2:10-11*

**Monday:** God's presence as a human: *Philippians 2:5-7*

**Tuesday:** Jesus' presence is with us always as we walk His path: *Matthew 28:20*

**Wednesday:** Jesus presence is with us; He will never leave us or forsake us: *Hebrews 13:5*

**Thursday:** As we abide in Jesus, His presence bears fruit in us: *John 15:4-5*

**Friday:** Jesus is present as our Atoning Sacrifice and Advocate: *1 John 1:9-2:2*

**Saturday:** Jesus is coming and we will see Him and know His presence: *1 John 3:2*

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### Prayer for the Week:

O God, enlighten my mind with truth; inflame my heart with love. O God, inspire my will with courage; enrich my life with service. O God, pardon what I have been; sanctify what I am. O God, order what I shall be and thine shall be the glory and mine the eternal salvation through Jesus Christ my Lord, Amen. ~ a **Morning Prayer from crosswalk.com**

### Song:

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come; Let earth receive her King  
Let every heart prepare Him room;  
And heav'n and nature sing, And heav'n and nature sing  
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing*

*Joy to the world, the Savior reigns; Let men their songs employ  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy*

*He rules the world with truth and grace; And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness  
And wonders of His love, And wonders of His love  
And wonders, wonders of His love*

### Living Advent This Week:

Below are some simple ideas for you to live **LOVE** this week.

1. Pray you that would love your family well this holiday season and always.
2. Pray for God's love to fill your life so that it would flow to others.
3. Meditate on the fact that God loves you and accepts you if you are in Christ.
4. Write a blessing that you will read to your family members on Christmas Day.