

# OLD TRADITIONS, NEW LIFE

## A Worship Tool for Advent

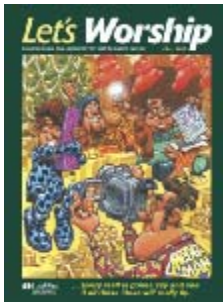
By Pamela Everly

For hundreds of years, the Advent wreath has been used to tell the story of the coming of the Messiah. In earlier times, the symbolism of the evergreen wreath with its colored candles communicated the truths of the gospel to a largely illiterate population. Today we live in a world with large numbers of biblically illiterate people who have only the vaguest ideas about what the gospel says. Most of us know several friends or relatives like this whom we could include in Advent celebrations at home or at church. By using the simple Advent activities below, we can combine evangelism with our worship to offer the greatest Christmas gift of all—new life in Christ.

Advent is celebrated on the four Sundays preceding Christmas, and each colored candle represents one element of the Christmas story, with the fifth, white candle representing Jesus Christ. The wreath usually is evergreen and lies flat on a table as a candleholder for the five candles: three purple, one pink and one white. The first Sunday, the first purple candle is lit and the prophecies concerning Jesus are celebrated. On the second Sunday, both the first purple candle and the pink Mary candle are lit to commemorate the announcement to Mary. The third Sunday, the first two candles are lit along with the second purple candle, which represents the angels' announcement to the shepherds. The last purple candle, the Wise Men's Candle, is lit along with the first three on the fourth Sunday. Finally, on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, the white Christ Candle is lit with all the others. While there is no rigid formula for celebrating the holiday, the Advent celebrations given emphasize a different aspect of the gospel each week to explain the gospel to the unsaved.

### EVANGELISTIC CELEBRATION OF ADVENT

General Instructions: Each Sunday, light the appropriate candle(s), share the Scriptures, pray and close with singing. (There are several good Advent music tapes on the market.) Then, extinguish the candles until the next week. During prayer time, provide an opportunity to receive Christ.



This document is provided courtesy of *Let's Worship!* Magazine. A comprehensive 96-page resource, each quarterly issue of *Let's Worship!* is packed with innovative and life-changing worship ideas for preaching, music, drama, and more.

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# The First Sunday

# The Prophet's Candle

## Focus

Purple is the color of priests and kings. We light the first purple candle to remind us of the coming of our great High Priest and King, Jesus Christ. It is the Prophet's Candle and reminds us of God's promised Savior. God gave us over 300 prophecies about the Messiah so we would recognize Him when He came.

## Read

SCRIPTURE #1: Genesis 3:15—This earliest prophecy foretold the coming of a savior born only of woman, who would crush the power of Satan.

SCRIPTURE #2: Isaiah 11:1-5 with Matt. 1:1-16; Luke 1:27; and 3:23-27—What family was the Messiah to be born into? What family did Jesus belong to?

SCRIPTURE #3: Isaiah 7:10-14 with Luke 1:26-35—How was Jesus' conception different from the rest of the human race's?

SCRIPTURE #4: Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1; and Luke 2:1-7—Where was the Messiah to be born? Where was Jesus born? How did God use the Roman Empire to get Mary to the right place?

SCRIPTURE #5: Isaiah 9:2-6 with John 1:1-4; Acts 26:18; and Col. 1:13-14—What were the identity and purpose of the Messiah?

## Pray

PRAYER FOCUS: Thank God for His love and faithfulness in making and fulfilling the promise of a Savior. Remind everyone present that receiving the Savior is as simple as asking God to forgive one's sin and come into one's life as Savior and Lord. Invite those who don't know Christ to receive Him now through prayer.

## Sing

SINGING: "O Come, O Come,

The Second Sunday

# Mary's Candle

## A Mother Who Needed a Savior

### Focus

This Sunday we add the pink candle to the Prophets' Candle to remind us of Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was the virgin of the House of David, chosen by God to bear the Messiah. But even Mary understood that she, like everyone else, had sinned and needed a Savior.

### Read

SCRIPTURE READING #1: Luke 1:46-47—Mary calls God her savior because she was trusting Him to save her from the eternal consequences of her sin, just as we need to.

SCRIPTURE READING #2: Romans 3:10-18; 23—Sin is a turning away from God either through rebellion or indifference. Romans 3:23 says that “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” A description of it is in v. 10-18. As you listen to these verses, privately consider where you have fallen short of God's expectations.

SCRIPTURE READING #3: Romans 3:21-22—Connect this with Mary's prayer of praise for her salvation from the punishment for sin. Anyone can receive this righteousness from God at any time by placing faith in Jesus' payment for their sins.

### Pray

Use Mary's prayer in Luke 1:46-55 as a guide for your own small group prayer. List in praise the great things the Mighty One has done for each person present. Praise Him for His work in history and for His provision of a savior.

### SING

“Silent Night,” “Away In A Manger,” and “What Child Is This?”

The Third Sunday

# The Angels' and Shepherds' Candle Finding Peace With God

## Focus

This third candle is the Angels' and Shepherds' Candle and reminds us of the announcement of Jesus' birth. As we hear the first Scripture, find out who has peace with God.

## Read

SCRIPTURE #1: Luke 2:1-20—God the Father sent the Son to be our peace. Only those who have found favor with God by believing in Christ can have peace with Him.

SCRIPTURE #2: Ephesians 2:13-18—What was Jesus' purpose in coming to us? It was to make peace for us with God.

SCRIPTURE #3: Colossians 1:12-14—The Bible tells us that there is a kingdom of darkness under Satan's power and a kingdom of light under God's rule. There is no third alternative. We choose to be in one or the other. Listen carefully to discover who it is that qualifies us to enter the kingdom of light.

## Pray

Thank God for seeking us out to bring peace with Him. Anyone can have God's favor and peace if they honor Jesus as their Savior.

## Sing

“The First Noel,” “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear,” “Hark, The Herald Angels Sing”

The Fourth Sunday

# The Candle of Wise Men We Bring Him Gifts

## Focus

The final purple candle symbolizes the wise men, who traveled from the east to worship the Messiah. They knew that it was not enough to simply be aware of the Savior's existence, so they sought Him out to honor and worship Him. Like the wise men, we can still seek and find the Savior even though we were not there at His birth. We all need to come to Jesus and lay our lives before Him to receive peace and eternal life in Him. Anyone can do this at any time by simply praying and asking Jesus to be their savior.

## Read

SCRIPTURE #1: Matthew 2:1-12—As you listen to the story, consider what gifts you would like to bring to the Savior.

SCRIPTURE #2: Matthew 11:28-30—What does Jesus want you to bring to Him? How does this compare with your earlier answers?

SCRIPTURE #3: John 14:27—Where do you need peace from the Lord in your life?

## Pray

Thank God for His offered peace and rest. Invite the participants to bring their own troubles and weariness to Him. Allow anyone present who wishes to invite Jesus to be their Savior and Lord so that they can find rest and peace in Him.

## Sing

“We Three Kings of Orient Are” or “O Come, All Ye Faithful.”

The Fifth Sunday

# The Candle of Christ

# The Holy Lamb of God

## Focus

Tonight we add the Christ Candle to the others. It is white because Jesus was without sin, and, when we accept His payment for our sins, we also are without sin in the eyes of God.

## Read

SCRIPTURE #1: Isaiah 1:18—Listen to this prophecy and either write down or recount privately any sins that the Holy Spirit lays on your heart. What does this promise mean to you?

SCRIPTURE #2: 2 Cor. 5:21—We cannot make ourselves righteous before God. Only God make us righteous by cleansing us of our sins through the death of Jesus. How was the legal requirement of the Law (death) fulfilled by Jesus? Why was Jesus the only one who could do this? Finally, where does our righteousness comes from?

SCRIPTURE #3 Luke 1:68-70—(Read this Scripture aloud as a sacrifice of praise.)

## Pray

Thank God in humble acceptance of His gift—Jesus Christ, Who came to deliver us from our bondage to sin. Invite anyone who has not done so to accept the best Christmas gift of all by expressing their faith in the effectiveness of Jesus' loving sacrifice.

## Sing

“Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come”