

Wake Up

to

JOY

**Family
Devotions
for Advent**



Mark Neilsen

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What makes you happy? Where does real joy come from? Is there a difference between happiness and joy? Everyone asks such questions from time to time, no matter what their faith. Christians are people who have discovered that happiness comes from following Jesus and living by the great commandments to love God and neighbor.

Jesus came to share our life so that we might have joy and have it to the full (John 15:11). Advent is a perfect time to pray and invite Jesus into our lives. The joy of Christmas is not the same as the happiness we might experience giving and receiving presents, gathering with family and friends for special meals or listening to our favorite carols and hymns. The wonder and the joy of Christmas is knowing our Savior came to free us from sin and death so that we might have a share of the very life of God, now and forever.

Families share their faith best when they gather to pray, whether at church or at home. This little booklet offers your family a way to pray each day of Advent. Perhaps at the dinner table or before bed, parents and children can read these prayers, Scripture verses and reflections as a way of staying alert to blessings all around them. Perhaps your family will want to extend your prayer time with discussions about your faith. However your family prays, know that you are praying with all of us who want to welcome Jesus into our hearts, this Advent and every day of our lives.

— Mark Neilsen



Paying Attention

First Sunday of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, we know you are coming again at the end of time. Open the eyes of our hearts to your presence all around us.

Scripture

Keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.

Mark 13:35-37

Think about it...

Imagine being a musician with a great symphony. Or a major league baseball player. Or a great cook in a fine restaurant. Whenever you were doing your thing, you would have to be on the alert at all times. You couldn't just go through the motions or set your life on autopilot and expect to do well. In just that same way, Christians have to be alert if they are going to wait for Jesus well.

We don't need to be afraid or anxious about the coming of the Lord, but we stay awake through regular prayer and worship of God. Advent is the season of the Church year when we remember that just as Jesus was born long ago in Bethlehem, so he will come again to establish the Kingdom of God in all its fullness.

As we wait for the Lord this Advent, let us stay alert to the presence of the Lord in our lives, especially in the love we have for one another.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, draw us near to you as we wait in joyful hope for your coming.

Choosing the Path of Light

Monday, First Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, may your justice be revealed to all the nations of the world.

Scripture

He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!



Isaiah 2:4-5

Think about it...

Decorations hung on houses and storefronts remind us that Christmas is coming. Songs of the season echo through malls and offices. We would have to close our eyes and ears to miss out on the season.

In the same way, we would have to shut our eyes and ears to the evening news not to know that we desperately need a Savior. War and injustice, crime and violence were not part of God's original plan, but sin brought a lot of bad things into the world. In his life, death and resurrection, Jesus overcame sin and death and opened the way for us to share his life forever in heaven. Meanwhile, a struggle goes on between good and evil.

This Advent, let us choose good. Let us follow the Lord every day and open our hearts to his love.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, may your kingdom come in our hearts and in our homes.

Thanking God for Jesus

Tuesday, First Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, you show us the loving face of God. Help us to love you in return.

Scripture

Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants..."

Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it."

Luke 10:21, 23-24

Think about it...

How wonderful it must have been to hear Jesus speak those words! God had revealed something special to them, not because they were great students or especially smart, but because God wanted them to know who Jesus was.

God still wants us to know who Jesus is. That's why we have the Bible. That's why we have our church. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we know that Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth. And it's not because we've figured something out or because we have used our brain power. Instead, it's because the Father wants us to know who Jesus is so that we can be saved from sin and death.

Closing Prayer

Father, we thank you for showing us your Son. May we come to see him in his kingdom.

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Just as a variety of patterns make up a quilt, so the activities leading up to Christmas form a whole experience for the Christian family. Jesus was born in Bethlehem so that we might have life to the full, and thanks to our relationship with him through baptism, our lives are filled with opportunities to draw closer to him and to one another. These simple, Scripture-based devotions by author Mark Neilsen invite parents and children alike to consider all the different ways Christ is in our lives as we prepare for Christmas.

There, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

Matthew 2:9-10

This book, along with many other Creative Communications for the Parish products, is available on [amazonkindle](#) and [nook](#).

