



ADVENT SERIES

A Season of Preparation: What are we to prepare for?

by Elizabeth Forshee

As I walked with the Lord one morning, I felt an excitement considering the coming Advent season. It's been a full semester for my family and selfishly all I wanted was a moment to catch my breath and read a good Advent devotional while sitting under Christmas lights with a hot drink.

As my conversation with God progressed, God reminded me that while Advent is restful in one sense, it is also a season of preparation. I asked God what he meant by preparation, what am I meant to be preparing for? How am I to prepare for Christ?

Out of those questions, this Advent devotional was born. God got real serious with me on that walk. My weariness reminded me of the groaning we all feel when we pause to sense the undercurrent of the Holy Spirit's longing for wholeness not only in us, but for all creation. The political, global, and relational turmoil I sense when I watch the news, engage in my community, and pray has been quite overwhelming in the past few years and made me realize that as Christians we need to be prepared for what the Lord is doing. We need eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit is communicating, and I believe Advent is the season in which we are gifted a time to purposely prepare for the wedding of all time.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Revelation 19:7

It gets easily forgotten that Advent is not just about preparing for the birth of Christ, it is also rooted in a rich eschatological understanding of the arrival of Christ. The earth has received Christ the Son of God and Man, which we remember in celebration on Christmas; but we live in the current reality with the Spirit, Christ in us, of the not yet. We continue to await Christ the King's return and as we exist in the age of the Church. We live in a time of continued waiting, longing, and preparing the Kingdom of Earth for Christ's second coming, the Kingdom of Heaven.

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. Revelation 21:1-3

Each week in Advent, we will reflect on how we are invited to be preparing ourselves for the coming bridegroom.

You will read the blog post that goes with each week in Advent. Use the following worksheets to interact with the material as you ponder what this Advent season is preparing you for.



The First Sunday in Advent
Preparing for FORTITUDE OF FAITH (Hope)

*If you want, light a candle and then read the coinciding article for this week
in which we focus on "Preparing for Fortitude of Faith."*

In the article Elizabeth writes, "There are three truths in Romans 8 that should affirm our hope and fortify our faith." Fill in the blanks below with those three truths:

First, we are _____. Secondly, we will _____,
yet we are _____; and thirdly, our hope, though unseen,
_____. In Christ, these promises strengthen us.

Draw a picture of these three truths. Don't overthink it, how could you show them working together to help fortify your faith?

How are you being fortified by these truths currently?



Take some time to sit with this Romans passage in prayer and meditation. As you enter Advent, “the coming of Christ,” where do you desire your faith to be fortified? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to be fortified in your spirit as you prepare to see Jesus face-to-face. Read the passage asking yourself “What do I hope or wait for in myself and from Christ this Advent season?”

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 8: 14-25 (NIV)

What do you hope or wait for in yourself and from Christ this Advent season?



The Second Sunday in Advent
Preparing to BE COMPASSIONATE (Love)

*If you want, light a candle and then read the coinciding article for this week
in which we focus on "Preparing to Be Compassionate."*

Another great virtue of the early church was compassion. To be compassionate means "to suffer with." Recently at Global Trellis we had a 4-part series on compassion fatigue. If you haven't read the short series, you can read it [here](#).

On a scale from 1 (lacking compassion) to 10 (filled with compassion) for those you're called to serve, what number would you give yourself today? What influences your number?

What helps you "prepare to be compassionate?"



Spend this week soaking in 1 John 4 and asking the Holy Spirit to help you grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:18). We prepare for Advent by being open to receive God's love in order to be Christ's love in our present age. We are preparing to emulate the love of Christ.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. 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. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. [...] God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus.

1 John 4:7-12, 16-17 (NIV)

What stood out to you about God's love?

Where did God pour his love into you recently?

How did God's pouring into you "prepare you to be compassionate"?



The Third Sunday in Advent

Preparing to STAND FIRM (Joy)

If you want, light a candle and then read the coinciding article for this week in which we focus on "Preparing to Stand Firm."

Elizabeth asks, "What is it that we are to stand firm for?" and writes, "As we light the candle of joy this week, we recall that Christ came down as the light of the world. His death and resurrection born in all believers is his light and claim on our life."

Recall a time when you felt joy over your salvation or the salvation of someone you know.

How does the memory of that joy encourage you today?

Spend some time soaking in Ephesians 6. Consider the gifts God has given us to help us stand firm and defend the light of Christ in us. Look at your inner life, are there areas Satan is trying to blow out the flame of Christ? Is there an area of your life that needs strengthening in order to stand firm? Ask the Holy Spirit to give you what you need to stand firm in your faith with the joy of Christ as your salvation. You'll have space below to reflect on these questions.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV)



You may not have thought of combining the “full armor of God” and joy before. But as you “prepare to stand firm” how does standing firm facilitate joy for you?

Look at your inner life, are there areas Satan is trying to blow out the flame of Christ?

Is there an area of your life that needs strengthening in order to stand firm?

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you what you need to stand firm in your faith with the joy of Christ as your salvation.



The Fourth Sunday in Advent

Preparing to WAIT WITH CONFIDENT ASSURANCE (Peace)

If you want, light a candle and then read the coinciding article for this week in which we focus on "Preparing to Wait With Confident Assurance."

Elizabeth wrote, "Each Advent I find it ironic that my prayers often sound just like that of Israel's in wait of a savior, 'How long O' Lord?' The paradox of this prayer is that it seems a cry of despair, but in truth it is an age-old prayer of hope. It is a call for God to complete what he's promised to do." As you live with this paradox, where are you crying out in despair? And how is this a prayer of hope for you?

In Advent we can prepare ourselves to live confidently with inner peace and assurance that Christ has made all things well, and he will continue to do so.

As you consider this prophetic word from Micah 5:4-5 (NIV), interact with it in some way. You could draw a picture to the right, underline words, or use different colored ink for the shepherd and the flock.

*He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.
And he will be our peace.*

In our final week of Advent we light the candle of peace. As you meditate on Psalm 130 in preparation for Christmas, imagine God's peace flooding your body, feel God's presence and peace with you as we prepare to welcome Emmanuel. What do you hope for on Christmas morning? Where will you expect to experience delight, joy, hope, love, peace, and assurance as you live with fortitude and compassion while standing firm with confident assurance because Christ is with us. As we've done in other weeks, you'll have space below to interact with these questions.

*I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.
I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.
Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.*

Psalm 130: 5-7 (NIV)



What relationship do you see in this passage between waiting and peace?

How does waiting inform peace? How does peace help you wait?

What do you hope for on Christmas morning?

If peace is a grace you need from the Holy Spirit this Advent, I encourage you to pray more with these passages: Colossians 3:15-16, Philippians 4:6-8, 1 John 5:13-15. Where do you notice the peace of Christ in scripture? What promises are here for you today? Ask God for what you need in order to experience his peace.

Thank you for participating in this Global Trellis Advent series. We know that Advent is “A Season of Preparation” and have spent the last four Sundays asking “What are we to prepare for?” It is our hope and prayer that God has used this series to prepare you **to live with fortitude and compassion while standing firm with confident assurance because Christ is with you.**

With blessing,
Elizabeth Forshee