



O COME, EMMANUEL

*Advent Journal and Prayer Guide*

2024

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by

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Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are to the New International Version (NIV).

## *O Come, O Come Emmanuel....*

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My extended family continues a Christmas tradition we learned from my grandparents. Before we open presents, my eldest sister and her family read part of the Christmas story. Then they lead us in singing a Christmas carol. My next sister and her family do the same. My family then leads in part of the story and a Christmas carol. Finally, my parents do the same. One of my sisters and I collude every year before we start. Which one of us will choose to lead in our favorite Advent hymn, “O Come, O Come Emmanuel?”

Advent, and the hymn, are both about waiting. Israel waited roughly seven and a half centuries for their Messiah to come. We wait every year, not just for Christmas day and its celebration, but for Christ to return. Advent is our season to practice our intentional anticipation that Christ will return.

This journal is designed to lead you through two ancient practices that nurtured faith in Christians for centuries: *lectio divina* and the daily examen. Sunday is left as a day to worship in your church, look back on the previous week, and look forward with anticipation on the week to come. Monday through Saturday include scripture readings and prayer. The journal is designed for you to read the scripture and practice the *lectio divina* as your morning devotion, and practice the daily examen in the evening. However, it can be adapted to your schedule.

Join us in a season of waiting. We wait for Christmas. We wait for the Christ child. We wait for Jesus to come again.

—Jonathan Hanover

## *What is Lectio Divina?*

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This journal focuses on the Bible study method known as *lectio divina* (literally meaning “divine reading”). *Lectio divina* dates back to at least the third century. Early church leaders such as Origen, Ambrose, and Augustine used *lectio divina* to learn and pray through scripture.

*Lectio divina* assumes the Holy Spirit is speaking through the text. Whereas many modern ways of reading scripture depend on study methods like historical criticism, *lectio divina* focuses on what the Holy Spirit may be telling us now. The method was formalized in the late 12th century by a monk named Guigo II. It is adapted for our purposes to be used as an individual practice rather than a communal way of reading scripture.

Using *lectio divina* may feel strange at first. The practice focuses on what the Holy Spirit is speaking to you through scripture. John Wesley wrote that hearing the Holy Spirit is one of our senses, just like taste or smell. However, sin has clouded our sense of the Holy Spirit. Our sense of the Holy Spirit may be weak. The *lectio divina* practice trains us to focus again on the Holy Spirit. It may be awkward or difficult at first, just like training for a 5k run. Over time our sense of the Holy Spirit grows and we will be able to hear the Spirit’s voice more easily not just in this study, but everywhere.

# *Lectio Divina* Instructions

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1. **Prepare** — Settle yourself with your Bible and your journal. Say a prayer that God will open your eyes and your heart to the message of scripture.
2. **Lectio** | *Read* — Read the scripture the first time. Listen for any words or phrases that stick out. These reflections may be short.
3. **Meditatio** | *Reflect* — Read the scripture a second time. Listen for a message from God. This may build on the previous step, or may take you in a different direction.
4. **Oratio** | *Respond* — Read the scripture a third time. Listen for the way God may be calling you to respond to the scripture.
5. **Contemplatio** | *Rest* — Take several deep breaths. Pray that God's message in the scripture is clear in your heart.

## *What is the Daily Examen?*

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The guided prayers in this journal are based on the Daily Examen, a daily model of prayer created by St. Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius first proposed this practice in 1524 C.E. in his work *Spiritual Exercises*.

The practice of Daily Examen is not intended to be a rigid blueprint for all your prayers. Rather, it is a flexible guide to a daily practice of prayer and reflection. Some days you may focus on all five prayer prompts. Other days, one or two prompts may monopolize your prayer time. Ignatius encouraged us to “follow God” as we pray through these prompts.

Just as *lectio divina* trains you to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, the Daily Examen trains you to reflect on your day and God’s presence in your life. It is a flexible practice. It may seem awkward or unwieldy at first. Keep with it! This practice has helped Christians grow closer to God over more than five centuries.

# Daily Examen Instructions

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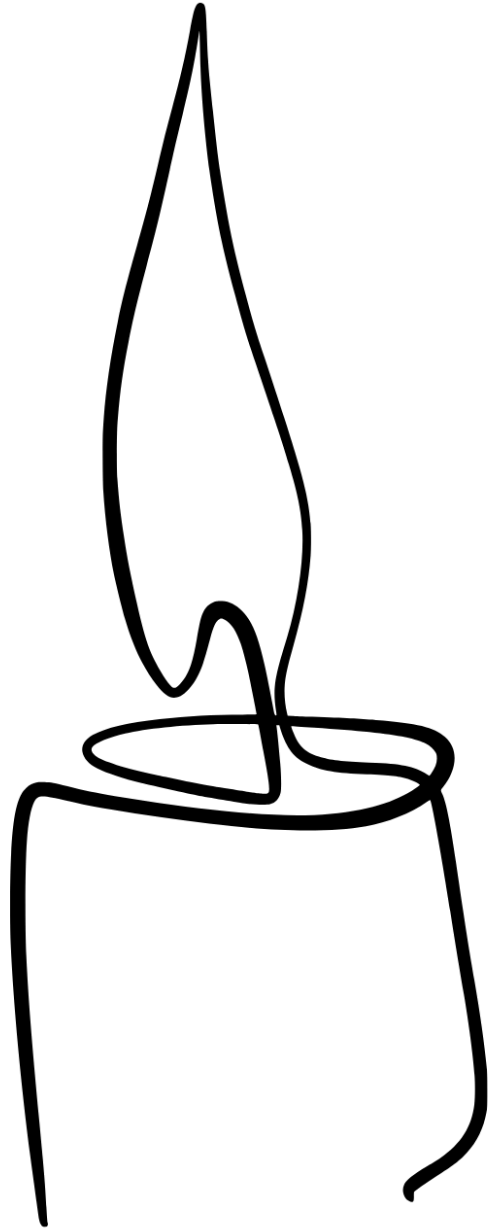
*Although the Daily Examen is meant to be an adaptable prayer,  
there are several consistent elements.*

1. **Prepare** — Settle your heart and ready yourself to hear God speak to you. We include a short breath prayer to align yourself with God and ask for God to be revealed.
2. **Thanksgiving** — Give thanks for the gifts God brought you in the past day.
3. **Review** — Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you through your past day. Let it play out like watching a movie. What stands out? What moments, emotions, or obstacles did you face?
4. **Respond** — Take an honest look at the moments you gave into temptation, put God aside, or separated yourself from God. Confess your sins and ask for forgiveness. God is gracious.
5. **Look to Tomorrow** — Begin to think about the next day. Where are you anxious? Where do you need to ask God for strength or wisdom?
6. **Close** — Take a few deep breaths. Wait a few moments to see if God speaks more to you. Give thanks to God for these moments together.





# Advent: Week I



*December 1-7*

# **Scriptures | Week I**

## *Prophecies Foretelling the Coming Messiah*

**Sunday, December 1** | Preview the Coming Week

**Monday, December 2** | Isaiah 7:10-17

**Tuesday, December 3** | Isaiah 9:2b-7

**Wednesday, December 4** | Micah 5:2-5a

**Thursday, December 5** | Isaiah 53:3-6

**Friday, December 6** | Zechariah 9:9-12

**Saturday, December 7** | Ezekiel 37:24-28

**Sunday** | December 1, 2024

*Preview the Coming Week*

Our universe is huge. So huge that light can take thousands or millions of years from distant stars to reach our skies. There are several scientific theories for what the Magi may have seen in the sky over Bethlehem at Christmas. I will not bore you with the details, but let me summarize by saying if any is correct, the light from those stars was millions of years old by the time it reached earth to signify Jesus' birth.

Jesus was not a last minute plan or something that came out of the blue. His life, death, and resurrection was foretold. It was anticipated. Just as we anticipate his return.

This week's readings focus on the Old Testament prophecies that anticipated Jesus. We did not realize the prophecies were fulfilled until Christ came. As you study this week, ask yourself what signs God may be placing in your life for what is to come.

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**Prayer:**

*Mighty God, you are the wonderful counselor, everlasting Father, and the prince of peace. I know that you desire to reveal yourself to me in new ways this week. Open my eyes to see you. Open my mind to be transformed by you. Open my heart to receive all that you have for me in this season. Come, Lord Jesus. I am waiting expectantly for you. Amen.*

**Prayer Requests/Thoughts for the Season:**

**I. First Reading—Words and Phrases**

**II. Second Reading—Message from God**

**III. Third Reading—God’s Call to Respond**

**IV. Prayer**

**I. Breath Prayer:** (*Inhale*) Come, Holy Spirit. (*Exhale*) Reveal yourself to me... (slowly repeat)

**II. What gifts did God bring during the past day? Give thanks.**

**III. Review the day, guided by the Holy Spirit.**

**IV. Where did you separate yourself from God? Confess your sins and shortcomings.**

**V. Look forward to tomorrow. Where do you need God's help?**

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# Advent: Week II



*December 8-14*



## **Scriptures | Week II**

### *Preparing the Way*

**Sunday, December 8** | Review and Anticipate

**Monday, December 9** | Mark 1:1-8

**Tuesday, December 10** | Luke 1:5-20

**Wednesday, December 11** | Luke 1:21-25

**Thursday, December 12** | Matthew 1:18-25

**Friday, December 13** | Luke 1:26-38

**Saturday, December 14** | Luke 1:39-45

**Sunday** | December 8, 2024

*Review and Anticipate*

Many have said that there are two types of people: those who pack for a trip three days ahead of time, and those that pack five minutes before the car leaves. Inevitably, those people marry each other.

Waiting is not a passive, spectator activity. Waiting is active. We are called to prepare ourselves for what is to come. That is part of what this journal hopes to encourage: active waiting for Christ in Advent.

Take a few moments to fill out the review of the past week on the next page. What prayers were answered? What messages from scripture stand out? How did worship this morning tie in with your own devotions?

Then look forward. This week's passages focus on setting the stage for the birth of Jesus. Just as Zechariah, Joseph, Mary, and others prepared themselves, prepare yourself for Christmas.

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**Prayer:**

*God, all throughout scripture I see you moving and changing lives by the power of your Holy Spirit. Teach me to prepare the way for you in my own life, so that it can be testimony of your transforming love. Come, Lord Jesus. I am waiting expectantly for you. Amen.*

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# Advent: Week III



*December 15-21*



## **Scriptures | Week III**

### *God Among Us*

**Sunday, December 15** | Review and Anticipate

**Monday, December 16** | Luke 1:67-80

**Tuesday, December 17** | Luke 9:18-27

**Wednesday, December 18** | Luke 10:21-24

**Thursday, December 19** | Luke 17:20-37

**Friday, December 20** | Luke 20:9-19

**Saturday, December 21** | Luke 21:25-33

**Sunday** | December 15, 2024

*Review and Anticipate*

We use a fancy theological term to describe what happened when Jesus came to earth: *incarnation*. Memorize this term in case you are ever on *Jeopardy*. Jesus became one of us. Jesus lived among us. God was not just out there somewhere in the universe. *God was among us!*

Take a few minutes to fill out the weekly review on the next page. What prayers have been answered? Do you notice God moving differently in your life? What patterns may be emerging in your study?

This week's scriptures focus on Jesus' life among us. Specifically, all the stories are from the Gospel of Luke. Most of Israel expected the Messiah. Yet they missed Jesus when he was among them. How may you see Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit incarnate in your life this week?

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**Prayer:**

*Holy God, you loved me so much that you sent your Son, Jesus, into the world to become human like me. I'm grateful that you know me fully and that you are not distant. You are with me always. Reveal yourself to me this week and show me how to love others the way that you do. Come, Lord Jesus. I am waiting expectantly for you. Amen.*

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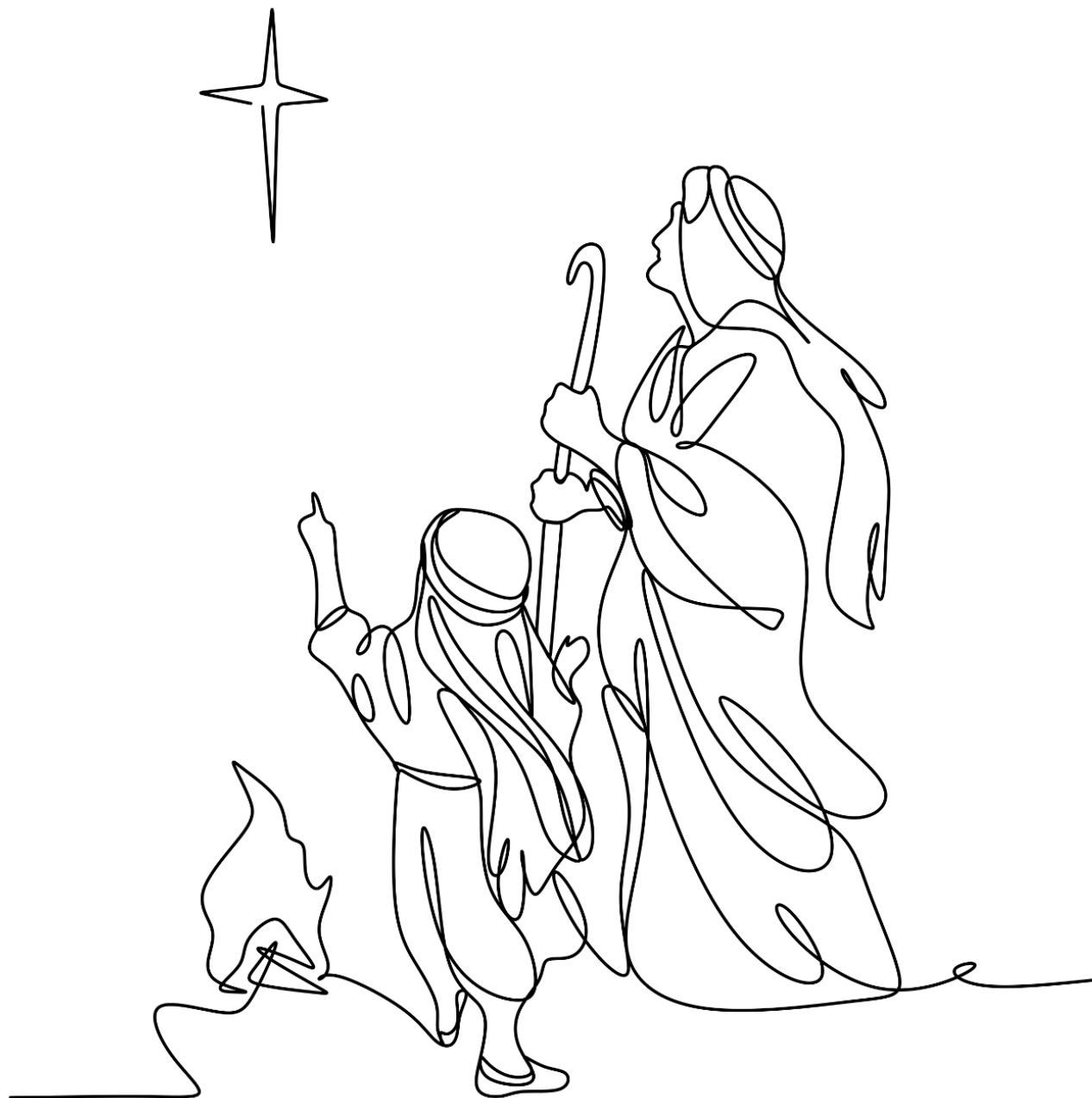
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# Advent: Week IV



*December 22-24*



## **Scriptures | Week IV**

### *The Incarnation*

**Sunday, December 22** | Review and Anticipate

**Monday, December 23** | Luke 1:46-56

**Tuesday, December 24** | John 1:1-18

**Sunday** | December 22, 2024

A few years ago, a fellow pastor asked me which character I related to most that Christmas season. After some reflection, I replied “the innkeeper.” Okay, in fairness, the innkeeper is not really a character in the story. Also, the first century did not really feature inns as we think of them today.

Yet in my imagination, the innkeeper was the character who missed Christmas. If he had known the Messiah would be born in his hotel, he would have reserved the Presidential Suite! Jesus was born in his stable, because the innkeeper was not ready for the child to come.

That reading takes some liberties with the story. The point still applies. Do not miss this week! Do not get so distracted by parties, presents, church services, end-of-year deadlines, and everything else to the point you miss the Christ child.

Take some time to fill out the review sheet for the previous week on the next page. Then prepare yourself. *Christmas is just around the corner!*

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**Prayer:**

*God, you gave me the ultimate gift of love on Christmas in Jesus Christ. Guide my mind to focus fully on the miracle of Christmas this week as I prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ. Rescue me from distractions and keep my heart aligned with what truly matters. Come, Lord Jesus. I am waiting expectantly for you alone. Amen.*

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**Lectio Divina Scripture:** John 1:1-18

**Date:** December 24, 2024

**I. First Reading—Words and Phrases**

**II. Second Reading—Message from God**

**III. Third Reading—God’s Call to Respond**

**IV. Prayer**

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# Christmas



*December 25-January 5*



## **Scriptures | Christmas**

*Glory to God in the Highest!*

**Wednesday, December 25** | Review and Anticipate

**Thursday, December 26** | Luke 2:1-20

**Friday, December 27** | John 1:29-34

**Saturday, December 28** | Luke 2:22-38

**Sunday, December 29** | Review and Anticipate

**Monday, December 30** | Matthew 2:13-23

**Tuesday, December 31** | Hebrews 1:1-4

**Wednesday, January 1** | Galatians 4:1-7

**Thursday, January 2** | Philippians 2:5-11

**Friday, January 3** | Romans 5:1-8

**Saturday, January 4** | Matthew 2:1-12

**Sunday, January 5** | Review and Wait for Epiphanies

**Wednesday** | December 25, 2024

*Review and Anticipate*

My father is a pastor. When he found out his wife was expecting a baby in late January, he decided to make good use of the Advent season. He planned his Advent sermon series around the character of Joseph expecting a son. I have always been a bit stubborn. I simultaneously disrupted his plans and fulfilled them by arriving on December 23. His Christmas Eve sermon, which had been pre-planned and pre-written: “The Baby is Here. Now What?”

I sometimes feel that “now what” feeling around 10 a.m. on Christmas morning. We spent so much time leading up to this. Now, the presents are opened. The worship services are completed. Now what?

Christmas is not just a day. Christmas is twelve days. Christmas lasts from the first day (December 25) until Epiphany (January 6). Do not take your lights or tree down yet! More importantly, do not stop this season of celebrating the Christ child. More parties! More cookies! Joy has come!

Fill out your week in review. More importantly, keep going forward. The baby is here! God is among us! Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel has come to thee, O Israel.

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**Prayer:**

*God, I give you praise and join in the song of the angels! Glory to the newborn King! Teach my heart to continue to worship in endless praise for your goodness and grace. Your love endures forever and ever. Alleluia! In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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**Lectio Divina Scripture:** John 1:29-34

**Date:** December 27, 2024

**I. First Reading—Words and Phrases**

**II. Second Reading—Message from God**

**III. Third Reading—God’s Call to Respond**

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A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for writing about continuing prayers.

*What I Learned in Worship*

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for writing about what was learned in worship.

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**II. Second Reading—Message from God**

**III. Third Reading—God’s Call to Respond**

**IV. Prayer**

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**II. What gifts did God bring during the past day? Give thanks.**

**III. Review the day, guided by the Holy Spirit.**

**IV. Where did you separate yourself from God? Confess your sins and shortcomings.**

**V. Look forward to tomorrow. Where do you need God's help?**

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## Epiphany Eve | January 5, 2025

Tomorrow, January 6, marks Epiphany, the end of the Christmas season. We have celebrated the partridges in pear trees, the drummers drumming, the lords a-leaping, and now we begin the next season.

Epiphany is the day we celebrate the Magi visiting Jesus. The word “Epiphany” comes from the Greek word, meaning a sudden appearance. It is the day that God’s glory in Jesus Christ was revealed to a set of foreign priests, representing God’s light to the whole world. God’s grace in Christ is for everyone.

In our common usage, we think of epiphanies as sudden revealings of truth. Epiphanies are “a-ha” moments. Epiphanies may feel sudden, but they are often the byproduct of behind-the-scenes moments of work and preparation.

By completing this journal, you committed to greater preparation for Christmas and for Christ to come again. May God grant you an epiphany of faith during this Epiphany season. **Amen.**

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### **Breath Prayer:**

*(Inhale)* Come, Holy Spirit. *(Exhale)* Reveal yourself to me...

(slowly repeat)







COME,  
THOU LONG  
EXPECTED  
JESUS.