

# Advent



## The gift in waiting

**Waiting** — we often see it as wasted time, an inconvenient pause in our busy lives. Yet the season of Advent invites us to discover something profound in the practice of waiting.

For God's people, waiting isn't passive; it's an active posture of hope and expectation. During this season, we wait on God in two ways: for ongoing guidance in our lives (professional, physical, emotional, financial, and relational needs) and for the greater promise of Christ's return to restore all things.

Join us these four weeks as we explore the meaning of waiting and where we place our hope.



**THE RIVER**  
CHURCH COMMUNITY

## **What** do we hope for?

Living aware of our longings can be uncomfortable. We might be tempted to resist thinking about unfulfilled hopes because they connect us to emotions like sadness, anger or even loneliness. But living aware of our longings is living honestly in the deeper places of our lives. There is value in that honesty.

Beyond honesty, in the spiritual practice of waiting, we direct our waiting to God. We don't limit how God might respond, but we also recognize that some longings, directed to God honestly, remain unfulfilled, sometimes for a long time. Even so, there is the promise – recounted in scripture and in many stories of God's people in history and today – that our experience of life changes when we encounter God in it. Perhaps our longing shifts. Perhaps the weight of our longing lessens. Perhaps the presence of God with us in the tender place of our longing gives us enough to keep waiting with hope. Waiting is usually hard. Waiting in the light of God's presence and character and in the ultimate promise of God to make all things right one day can be life changing.

## **How** do we “practice waiting?”

It seems a little funny to think about “practicing waiting” since the reality is that we are forced to wait all the time, but we practice waiting just like we practice anything...with intention. One intentional waiting practice Christ-followers have regularly adopted in Advent is the practice of literally waiting for the morning to dawn. Rising early to sit and watch for the first break of light. For all but the naturally early-rising, this is perhaps a stunning challenge! But, what if we spent 4 weeks waiting in hope for the Lord as we wait for and watch the dawn break on each new day? How might God use that practice to connect us with what we hope for and with Who we hope in?

So, we invite you to join us! As always, join however much you can. If you can't imagine doing this everyday, choose days that work for you. We've provided short liturgies to lead you into and out of your waiting practice as well as questions to prompt your reflection on it. As thoughts and feelings about waiting on God surface, we invite you (and even strongly encourage you) to consider scheduling a conversation with a spiritual coach from our community sometime in Advent, 45 minutes to talk about what you're experiencing (the hard and the beautiful) and to receive the gift of being listened to and prayed for. You can sign up for one of these here:

**<https://lead.me/AdventCoaching>**

# Guidance for A Practice of Waiting for the Dawn:

## 01 CHOOSE A PLACE



Choose a place where you will do your waiting. An east-facing window, or **any space that allows you to watch for the light outside to change** will work.

## 02 SET IT UP



In addition to choosing your place, set it up to **draw you**, given the early hour! Place this booklet, perhaps a blanket, your mug ready for coffee or tea, there to meet you.

## 03 PICK A TIME



Decide what phase of the dawn you want to catch and **set your alarm!** Dawn comes in phases. In December, the first sign of dawn will begin just after 6 AM, and sunrise will begin just after 7 AM. Choose the earlier, the later, or something in between to anticipate the coming of the dawn.

## 04 WAIT FOR DAWN

The primary activity of this practice is waiting. Resist the temptation to fill the space with lots of other things. **Wait with prayerful purpose.** We've provided a simple liturgy to enter and exit the waiting.

## 05 PROCESS THE EXPERIENCE

### Share with others

Schedule a time with a spiritual coach here



# A Simple Liturgy for Entering Advent's Waiting

WEEK

01

DECEMBER 1 - 7

## READ SLOWLY, MEDITATIVELY 3-4X

Psalm 130:5-6

*I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;  
my soul waits for the Lord  
more than watchmen for the morning,  
more than watchmen for the morning.*

## READ OR SING

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear.

## WAIT FOR THE DAWN

As you wait and hope for God's rescue in your life...  
Feel free to be silent...or to pray to God about the things you  
wait for and about others you know who are in waiting  
seasons...

## CLOSING PRAYER

O come, O come, Emmanuel. Amen

# A Simple Liturgy for Entering Advent's Waiting

WEEK

02

DECEMBER 8 - 14

## READ SLOWLY, MEDITATIVELY 3-4X

Lamentations 3:25-26

*The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him,  
to the one who seeks him;  
it is good to wait quietly  
for the salvation of the Lord.*

## READ OR SING

O come, O Branch of Jesse's stem,  
unto your own and rescue them!  
From depths of hell your people save,  
and give them victory o'er the grave.

## WAIT FOR THE DAWN

As you wait and hope for God's rescue in your life...  
Feel free to be silent...or to pray to God about the things you  
wait for and about others you know who are in waiting  
seasons...

## CLOSING PRAYER

O come, O Branch of Jesse's stem. Amen.

# A Simple Liturgy for Entering Advent's Waiting

WEEK

03

DECEMBER 15 - 21

## READ SLOWLY, MEDITATIVELY 3-4X

Psalm 27:1,5,13-14

*The Lord is my light and my salvation—  
whom shall I fear?*

*The Lord is the stronghold of my life—  
of whom shall I be afraid?*

*For in the day of trouble  
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;  
He will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent  
and set me high upon a rock.*

*I remain confident of this:  
I will see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living.*

*Wait for the Lord;  
be strong and take heart  
and wait for the Lord.*

## READ OR SING

O come, O Bright and Morning Star,  
and bring us comfort from afar!  
Dispel the shadows of the night  
and turn our darkness into light.

## WAIT FOR THE DAWN

As you wait and hope for God's rescue in your life...  
Feel free to be silent...or to pray to God about the things you  
wait for and about others you know who are in waiting  
seasons...

## CLOSING PRAYER

O come, O Bright and Morning Star. Amen.

# A Simple Liturgy for Entering Advent's Waiting

WEEK

04

DECEMBER 22 - 24

## READ SLOWLY, MEDITATIVELY 3-4X

Psalm 33:20-22

*We wait in hope for the Lord;  
he is our help and our shield.*

*In him our hearts rejoice,  
for we trust in his holy name.*

*May your unfailing love be with us, Lord,  
even as we put our hope in you.*

## READ OR SING

O come, Desire of nations, bind  
in one the hearts of all mankind.  
Bid all our sad divisions cease  
and be yourself our King of Peace.

## WAIT FOR THE DAWN

As you wait and hope for God's rescue in your life...  
Feel free to be silent...or to pray to God about the things you  
wait for and about others you know who are in waiting  
seasons...

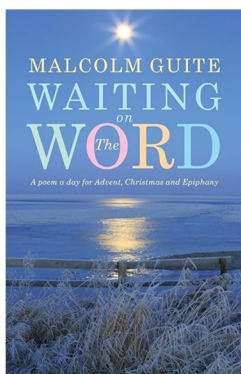
## CLOSING PRAYER

O come, Desire of nations. Amen.

## Questions to Reflect on your Waiting Practice

When we engage with any spiritual practice, we do so with open hands, trusting that God honors our offering and multiplies its impact by the power of the Spirit. We can also further the possible impact of our practice by reflecting on what we're experiencing. So, regularly this Advent, note your responses to questions like these in a journal...and consider setting up a conversation with a spiritual coach to share and interact over them.

- What do you notice happens in you as you watch darkness turn to light with the dawn? Do you notice shifts in your body? Thoughts in your mind? Feelings present with you? What are those experiences communicating to you?
- What are the things you are waiting for in this season?
- How does waiting for these things feel for you? In your body? In your thoughts? In your emotions?
- How do you feel about waiting on God specifically? How do you feel about God in this space of active waiting?
- How connected do you feel to the wait for Jesus' return to set all things right? What changes for you in light of that ultimate hope? (Sit with this one, if you can. Aim to own your answer vs. to give an answer you may think God expects from you.)
- What is the gift for you in practicing waiting this Advent season?



For those who appreciate a devotional guide for the Advent season, we recommend Malcolm Guite's Waiting on the Word, which is an anthology of poems, one for each day of Advent. You could also read the day's poem as you settle into the space of waiting.