

Recapturing Advent!

The time sandwiched between Thanksgiving and Christmas in modern times seems to have been taken over by the retail world. It starts off with a bang on Black Friday (the big shopping event the day after Thanksgiving) and is then measured by how many shopping days are left until Christmas. Newspapers often have the countdown on the front page of the paper—just to make sure you buy all your gifts in time.

I think it's about time we redeem this time and use it as God intended us to. In the Christian calendar, this time is called Advent. Did you know that it is actually the start of the new calendar year for the Christian calendar? While I'm sure that many of us are familiar with Advent, I know in my life it has often been overshadowed by the busyness of December.

How can we recapture some of the purposes of Advent that God intended for this time?

First, let's look at what Advent means. The word *Advent* comes from the Latin word *adventus* and it means "coming" or "arrival." In Advent, we are to focus on the coming of Jesus as Messiah. Traditionally, the music, scripture readings and prayers of Advent have focused not only on Jesus' coming to earth as a baby, but also includes a focus on Jesus' eventual second coming. That is why an Advent devotional includes scriptures from both the Old Testament about the birth of the Messiah and New Testament scriptures about Jesus' second

coming.



God designed this time of Advent for us to prepare our own hearts for our Savior. We can celebrate His birth, and we can look forward to His return to Earth. So, practically in the busyness of the season, how can we go about preparing our hearts?

- **Introspection.** Advent is a good time for introspection. Prayerfully ask God what needs to go—in your heart, in your life—so that you have room for the Savior. We don't want to be like all the innkeepers in Bethlehem who had no room for the Savior. What do we need to weed out so that we have the time to spend with Jesus this Advent? Can you make room in your schedule so that each morning or evening you take some time to pray, read and prepare your heart for Jesus?
- **Advent wreath.** Can you do add some Advent activities to do with your family? One suggestion would be to have an Advent wreath on your kitchen table and light a candle on each of the Sundays of Advent and on Christmas Eve. Have a family member read a verse of scripture as the candle is being lit and then share a prayer together.
- **Jesse tree.** How about making a Jesse tree with your children? Click on this link for information on how to do this: [Jesse Tree ideas on Pinterest](#)
- **Advent calendar.** You could also purchase an Advent calendar in a Christian bookstore with scripture for

each day. Children (and adults I admit!) love opening a door every day.

- **Music.** Play some of the beautiful music of Advent. I discovered this year that Advent music is different than Christmas music.

So this year, let's have our focus be not on the number of shopping days left until Christmas, but on the moments we are able to spend with our Savior. It's my prayer that this Advent season will be a blessed time of preparation for our hearts. Pray on!