

**T**ake a minute to think of all the ways in which time affects our lives:

Watches with alarms chime on the hour. VCRs tape TV shows when we're asleep. Microwave ovens beep that food has been cooked. Clock radios gently wake us to music or the morning weather forecast.

Our lives often are organized according to timetables and schedules.

Sometimes we even want to put God on a timetable.

## Advent Keeps Us on Time

If we're sick, we may pray to God to get us well right away. When we have a decision to make, we may ask God to give us the answer immediately.

More than any other time of year, Advent involves looking at watches, clocks, and calendars to keep us on time as we get ready for the Christmas holidays. Yet Advent says to us:

"Time out!"

Advent is the four Sundays before Christmas and the weekdays that follow them. This can be a time filled with so much rushing to get ready for Christmas that we feel ragged. Advent reminds us to take time out to consider what Christmas is all about . . . and how best to prepare for it.

## God's Timetable

To think about Christmas, start by remembering that God's timetable can differ from ours. God's people of the Old Testament waited not weeks but centuries for the promised Savior to be born. That was the first and longest Advent, from the promise to Adam to the birth of our Savior!

When God's timetable was right it happened. "When the time had fully come," the apostle Paul writes to the Galatian Christians, "God sent his Son" (Galatians 4:4). Jesus left the eternity of heaven to come into our time. That's what we're getting ready to celebrate at Christmas. In fact, the word "Advent" is the English form of a Latin word meaning "coming."

## Jesus Is the Focus

As Jesus grew, he was very much aware of time . . . and God the Father's timetable. First, Jesus went through the trials and temptations that we face as human beings. When he had perfectly kept God's Law, he told his Father: "The hour has come."

Then he suffered and died on the cross. Because all his life he had been perfect, his suffering was not as punishment for his sins, but for ours. Because he died in our place, God has forgiven all our sins. In a very short time after he died—three days—he rose from the dead to proclaim that God's life and love have triumphed over the forces of evil.

"Time out!" That's what Advent tells us.

Because of the Baby born at Christmas, we can remember God's timetable . . . and give thanks. We can use opportunities for worship to pause in the hustle-bustle of the season . . . and focus on the Person whose birthday we are about to celebrate. We can hear carols while shopping . . . and praise Jesus. We can see twinkling lights . . . and remember the birth of the Light of the world, who shines in our lives with his forgiving love.

"Time out!" It's Advent!

The following Bible readings will tell you more about Advent:

- Isaiah 9:6–7
- Luke 1:26–38
- Galatians 4:4–7

Advent is the four Sundays before Christmas and the weekdays that follow them.

Advent, which means “coming,” points us to the coming of Jesus Christ at Christmas, his coming to us today, and his coming at the end of time.

Advent provides opportunities to pause in the pressure of the season to worship Jesus.

Advent reminds us to celebrate Christmas as the “birth of the Light of the world, who shines in our lives with his forgiving love.”



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