

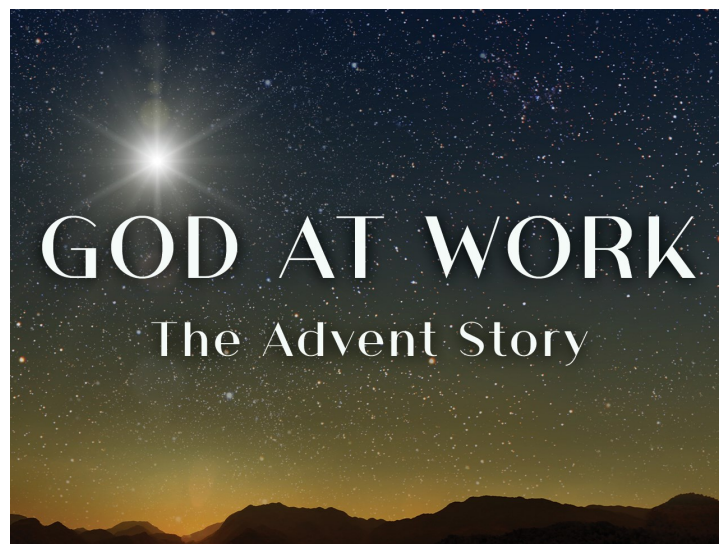
ADVENT INVITATION

You are invited to read the scripture texts we have chosen for this Advent season each week paying attention to the heart of the people who are encountering God. Where is their heart in relation to God before the encounter described? What about during and after the encounter? How would you describe each encounter with God? What is revealed about God? What is revealed about each person? How is their heart shaped through this encounter?

Consider your own heart as you encounter God at work in and around you through these scriptures and your life events during this season. What is nurturing your love of God, passion for Jesus and desire for the Holy Spirit? What is God revealing to you? What is God inviting you to?

Along with asking yourself the questions above, here are some other suggestions for how you might engage with God through these weekly scripture readings:

- Notice what people in the scripture stories are feeling. Imagine your self in the scripture stories. Journal about what you might have felt or experienced; how you might have reacted. Write a prayer to God.
- Keep a list of what God promises and blesses in these scriptures. Note how you are a recipient of these promises and blessings. Turn these into a prayer of praise and thanks each week.
- The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Where do you see at least one of these characteristics in each scripture story? Ask the Spirit to cultivate that characteristic in you this week. What is a related action you can take to be a vessel of the Spirit this week?
- Light your Advent Wreath and read the weekly scripture story with others in your household, and/or invite guests to join you. Noting how light reveals things in the darkness, share with one another what you see is being revealed in this story. Tell each other how you see Good News in this revelation. Draw a picture of each story and place it near your Advent Wreath.



Advent Story Part 1: Luke 1:1-25

A priest named Zechariah is the main character in this part of the story. Other characters include his wife Elizabeth and the people of their community.

Advent Story Part 2: Luke 1:26-38

This part of the story is about Mary finding out that she will become the mother of Jesus.

Advent Story Part 3: Luke 1:39-56

The characters in this part are Elizabeth and Mary. Their unborn children, John and Jesus, are also mentioned. How God is encountered is a bit more subtle in this story compared to the first two. Where do you see it?

Advent Story Part 4: Luke 1:57-80

This part of the story is about Zechariah, Elizabeth, their son John, and their neighbors and relatives.

Advent Story Part 5: Luke 2:1-20

We'll read this part of the story on Christmas Eve. It's about the birth of Jesus and includes Joseph, Mary, and a group of shepherds. It also mentions characters who didn't realize they were even in this story: Emperor Augustus, all Roman citizens, Quirinius the governor of Syria and descendants from the house and family of David. Consider other characters we have included in telling of this part of the story as we have imagined it over time.