



**FOLLOW**  
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**STAR**



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**2017 ADVENT PRAYER JOURNAL**



# FOLLOW THE STAR

## MATTHEW 2:1-12

Do you hate to wait? Whether it's instant oatmeal, high-speed Internet or the express lane at the grocery store, we want it now. And the weeks leading up to Christmas only accelerate the pace of life. Yet the rhythm of real relationship with the God of eternity cannot be rushed.

This year we hope you'll join us on an advent prayer journey. Like the wise men of scripture who followed the star in search of the Christ-child, we'll seek to personally encounter the King. The centuries-old practice of Advent invites us to embrace the waiting as we align our hearts to the true north of Christ's coming.

In these pages you'll find a thought and a scripture for each day. There's space to jot down whatever God brings to mind as you talk with Him. We trust that the Lord will meet us in transformative ways as we spend a few minutes each day reflecting and praying through these themes. We know Christmas is a special time for children, so at the end of each week we've added a fun advent activity to do with the kids in your life.

This year as we wait in expectation for the arrival of Christ, let our souls join the refrain of God's people throughout the centuries proclaiming, "Come, Lord Jesus. Come."



# **EARN TRUST**

**JAMES 5:12**

# TRUST

Dec. 3

God's word invites us to trust Him — to place our lives at His mercy and surrender our own agenda. It can be a scary thought. But because in Christ, God became one of us, fully experiencing the hurts of humanity, we can be sure that we have a Savior who is worthy of trust. Write down a circumstance where you need to more completely trust God. Invite Him into this part of your life.

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Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

**Proverbs 3:5**



Dec. 4

# MAGI

The Bible tells us of Magi who came from the east, following the star in search of a newborn King. We get just a glimpse of their story, but we know they acted with wisdom, foresight and perseverance to achieve their God-ordained purpose. Are there life-situations where you need supernatural wisdom? Write a prayer asking in faith for God to provide it.

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If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God,  
who gives generously to all without reproach,  
and it will be given him.

**James 1:5**

# SLOW

Dec. 5

Tradition holds that Mary rode to Bethlehem on a donkey. However they traveled, for Joseph and Mary the journey must've seemed to last forever. Even through uncertain circumstances, they had no choice but to practice patience and let events unfold in God's timing. How will you intentionally slow down and wait on Christ this advent season?

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Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, ... to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. **Luke 2:4-6**



Dec. 6

# SERVANT

Mary was forced to find her way through a maze of  
dismaying circumstances. Yet in the midst of the  
unknown, she chose to serve the Lord through her  
faith and obedience. As you prepare for the coming  
of Christ, the ultimate servant, ask God where you  
can serve in obedience in the days ahead.

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And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of  
the Lord; let it be to me according  
to your word."

**Luke 1:38**



# ETERNITY

Dec.7

God is the creator of time and He stands unbound by it. We are trapped inside a finite number of days. Yet God, in the person of Christ, stepped inside time, making a way for us to join him in eternity. Ask God to give you a focus on things that matter for eternity this day.

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He has made everything beautiful in its time.  
Also, he has put eternity into man's heart ...

**Ecclesiastes 3:11**



Dec. 8

# ROOM

When Mary and Joseph reached Bethlehem, the baby's arrival was imminent. They searched the bustling town for a place suitable for the coming Messiah, but there was no room to be found. This advent season, how will you make room for Christ to come and dwell?

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She gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

**Luke 2:7**

# FOLLOW

Dec. 9

Our society looks up to leaders. We're inundated with books, podcasts and conferences on how to lead. But we don't hear much about following. Yet Christ calls us to follow Him. Following can mean surrendering our plans and our comfort. Ask God today for ways to better live life as a follower.

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While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers ... And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets & followed him.

**Matthew 4:18-20**



## CHRISTMAS STAR FOR KIDS

Christmas is a wonder-filled time for children. Whether you're a mom or grandpa, or a babysitter for your neighbors, each week we'll share a kid-friendly craft or idea to help introduce the littles in your life to Advent. Let's get to it for week one.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Christmas Star template download at [bit.ly/homefrontstars](http://bit.ly/homefrontstars)

Yarn or twine (approximately 25 feet for each star)

Cardboard, cotton balls or batting, glue gun & glue sticks, hole punch, scissors

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Download and cut out the Christmas Star template.
2. Trace the star onto cardboard and cut around the edges.
3. If you're using batting, cut two pieces of star-shaped batting per ornament.
4. Make a hole in one of the points of the cardboard star with the hole-punch.
5. Loop a small piece of twine through the hole. This will be your ornament hanger.
6. Hot-glue the batting or cotton balls to both sides of the star-shaped cardboard.
7. Place a small drop of hot glue on the tip of one the star points to attach one end of the twine or yarn and begin wrapping the star.
8. Continue wrapping the star, periodically placing hot glue in spots where the twine or yarn may slip.
9. Once the star is completely wrapped, use a small drop of glue to secure the end of the twine or yarn.

More info and ideas at [woodmenvalley.org/journal](http://woodmenvalley.org/journal)  
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# PRAY MORE

JAMES 5:13-18

Dec.10

# PRAY

If God was only lofty and Holy, we'd wonder if He could empathize with our longings and sorrows that are part of what it is to be human. If He was merely a man, we would doubt His power and authority over circumstances that overwhelm us. In Christ, He is fully God and fully human, so we have a sovereign and friend with whom we can trust our deepest prayers. Talk to Him today.

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I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

**Isaiah 57:15**

# WAIT

Dec.11

A child awaits Christmas day with an expectant heart, anticipating joy and good things to come. When the day finally arrives, it is made sweeter by the waiting. As you wait this advent season, write down a few things you're eagerly hoping and anticipating that Christ will bring to pass. Invite the Lord to encourage your heart in the waiting.

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Be strong and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!

**Psalm 31:24**



Dec.12

# LIGHT

The Bible talks a lot about light. God is light and as His people we are carriers of that God-light. There are many ways to spread His light. This week, one way could be to invite friends or family to church on Christmas Eve to experience the light of Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit who He might lead you to invite to join you in worship this year. Then make the invitation and trust God with the outcome.

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"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden."

**Matthew 5:14**



# STAR

Dec.13

Was it a comet, an alignment of planets or something entirely supernatural? The Bible doesn't give us the astronomical details, but we know that God chose a light in the night sky to herald the birth of His Son. The book of 1st John tells us God Himself is light. What areas of darkness in your life need to be illuminated by His light today?

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For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**2 Corinthians 4:6**



Dec.14

# WORSHIP

When the wise men set eyes on Christ, they immediately fell into a posture of worship. Their long-awaited moment of worship came at a personal price. They carried lavish gifts, traveled far from home and risked defying an earthly ruler. Their story reminds us that prioritizing worship often involves sacrifice. As you anticipate the birth of Christ, how will you make worship a priority even if it carries a cost?

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They saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

**Matthew 2:11**

# WITH

Dec. 15

What's in a name? One of the names given to Christ in the scriptures is Immanuel, which comes from a Hebrew phrase meaning, "God with us." This name conveys the miracle that in Christ, the creator of the universe chose to come close, to dwell with you and me. Write a prayer inviting God to be present with you in the joys and suffering you will face today.

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"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel."

**Matthew 1:23b**



Dec.16

# ARRIVAL

Through Advent we look back at Christ's coming as a Bethlehem babe. Yet at the same time, we look forward to His second coming. Let us wait eagerly, expectantly for a glimpse of His coming glory, like a child trying for a peek at her presents before Christmas morning. Reflect on Christ's return today. Thank Him in anticipation for what is to come.

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So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

**Hebrews 9:28**

## **KIDS' CHRISTMAS CARD PRAYERS**

1. Find a spot to display Christmas cards from friends and family as they arrive. Spend time enjoying and reading the cards with the kids.
2. Take the cards down in January when things aren't so busy. Place them in a basket or napkin holder where you will see them daily, perhaps at the kitchen table.
3. With the children, pick one card or letter each day and pray for the sender.
4. Optional: Send a note, text, or email to your friends and let them know you and the kids prayed for them. Don't let this step keep you from praying if you don't have time to write a note!
5. Ask God which people or situations He's laying on your heart. In addition to praying, is there a way to include the kids in providing help, lending a listening ear, or sharing the joy with your friends?
6. Include the kids in thanking God for the people He's brought into your life!

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Check more ideas at [woodmenvalley.org/followthestar](http://woodmenvalley.org/followthestar)



# **LOVE OTHERS**

**JAMES 5:19-20**

# LOVE

Dec.17

In the stable where Christ was born, it's likely that there was blood dripping to the ground. At the cross where he gave his life, blood was there too. The life and death of Jesus are marked by sacrificial love. We're called to emulate His example. Ask God if there are new ways He might call you to love in ways that are uncomfortable or sacrificial in the days ahead.

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Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

**John 15:13**



Dec.18

# THANKS

How do you express gratitude when you receive a Christmas gift? Sometimes heartfelt words are best, other times perhaps a hug or a Thank You card are called for. Christ is the free love-gift from God to us. As we prepare to celebrate this precious gift, what are some ways, through your thoughts, words and actions, that you can begin to express thankfulness for this ultimate gift?

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For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 6:23**



# WORLD

Dec.19

Christ drew in his first breath in Bethlehem more than two millennia ago. Although His life on earth was rooted in a specific time and place, His grace and love cover all of humanity throughout all time. We're called to reflect His care for people all over the world. Ask God to give you a heart for people across the globe and ways to actively demonstrate His heart for them.

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For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

**John 3:17**



Dec. 20

# PEACE

We live in a world where conflict seems constant and peace seems far away. Yet God's Word intertwines the idea of peace on earth with the announcement of Christ's birth. What reassurance does this bring to your heart? As a disciple of Christ, how might this influence your actions and attitudes?

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"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

**Luke 2:14**

# FEAR

Dec. 21

Angels changed the shepherds' world that night with the headline: The King of Love is coming! The angels opened their speech by telling the shepherds not to fear and the book of 1st John declares that God's perfect love casts out fear. What fears is the Lord calling you to cast aside this advent season? Write a prayer inviting God to take them from you.

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They were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

**Luke 2:9-10**



Dec. 22

# GATHER

When we think of the church, we often think of a building. But a clearer picture of the church is simply the people of God gathering in community. Christ is with us even when just a few of us gather. Perhaps the Magi worshipping Christ was the first Christian church service — messy and unconventional as it probably was. As you prepare to celebrate this Christmas, how will you focus on gathering with God's people?

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"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

**Matthew 18:20**

# REFUGE

Dec.23

Christ was born in a barn and buried in a borrowed tomb. Mary gave birth in Bethlehem because an occupying empire forced her to make the journey. Later, their family fled to Egypt as refugees. Today there are people in our city and around the world who are oppressed, poor and marginalized. Pray for them and ask God how He would have you intervene in their plight.

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An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."

**Matthew 2:13**



Dec. 24

# MANGER

Christ could have come to earth as a conquering warrior or an emperor with riches and fame. Yet He chose the path of a peasant, helpless and humble. In our culture, too often we find ourselves thirsting for prestige and drowning in comparison. Ask the Father to show you how you can emulate Christ's humility this Christmas.

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"And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

**Luke 2:12**

# **FOLLOW THE STARS**

## **WHAT YOU'LL NEED**

Glow-in-the-dark stars; Bible; Nativity set that includes Mary, Joseph, a donkey, other animals, an angel, a shepherd, wise men, and baby Jesus; a cake with a candle

## **PREP**

1. When the kids are in bed, make a trail of stars from their rooms to the Christmas tree.
2. Place different pieces of the nativity set along the path, ending with baby Jesus.
3. Place a cake (maybe angel food!) with a candle on top near the end of the trail.

## **CHRISTMAS MORNING**

1. When the kids wake up, help them follow the stars like the wise men did.
2. At the first stop, find Mary, Joseph and a donkey & read Luke 2:1-5. Collect the figurines as you go to the next stop.
3. Continue following the trail of stars to the animals and read Luke 2:6-7.
4. Find the angels and shepherds at the next stop and read Luke 2:8-20.
5. Follow the trail to where the wise men wait and read Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11.
6. Approach the tree and have the kids focus on baby Jesus as you light a candle on the cake. Remind the kids that Jesus is the light of the world and that His birthday is the reason we celebrate.
7. Finish the search with worship by singing "Silent Night" or "Happy Birthday" to Jesus. Then blow out the candle and enjoy the cake.

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Check more ideas at [woodmenvalley.org/followthestar](http://woodmenvalley.org/followthestar)

**Follow The Star  
with us on Christmas Eve**

**Worship services at all three campuses  
11 am, 1 pm, 3 pm, 5 pm, 7 pm**