

INFANTUM

World Vision

ADVENT GUIDE



Welcome to Advent season!

We invite you to join us in preparing your heart and mind for this season of sentiment and celebration by intentionally leaning into the incarnation story.

WATCH VIDEO

Or scan this code with your phone's camera to watch the video. ✓

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Like all adventures, trekking with a companion makes all the difference. So we hope you grab a friend or two as you begin this four-week journey—it's perfect to do with kids too! Each week we'll explore a theme from the Christmas story—seven days of saturating in a concept will draw us more deeply into the reality of the incarnation, and also into the spirit of Jesus' way in the world.

In this guide you'll find:

- › Spiritual practices you can use any time during the week (even repeatedly)
- › A daily prayer based on the theme of the week
- › Access to a **YouVersion reading plan** for a daily infusion of the themes
- › Conversation starters to take the impact of your musings to the next level through community
- › Kid-friendly activities to do with the children in your life

KID-FRIENDLY

Are you in community with kids? Taking an Advent journey with kids can be a serious upgrade! We've created a multi-generational **YouVersion reading plan** using the same themes as the adult reading plan. All you need to do is invite a kid or two, have them invite a friend or two (and have them bring an adult with them), and you're off to a grand advent-ure!

Week 1

BEHOLDING BEAUTY

INTRODUCTION Our ability to open up to and receive the beauty of God’s incarnational presence with us is dependent on how well we see. Do we have hearts that are surrendered, curious, and open to perceive God’s dwelling with us in everyday moments? Listen to Bette Dickinson, an artist and writer, as she invites us into beholding beauty through the wonder of the incarnation.



WATCH VIDEO

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SPIRITUAL EXERCISE: Visio Divina

(Best for ages 10 and older, see page 5 for younger version)

Visio Divina is Latin for “divine seeing.” It is an ancient practice of meditating on a piece of art as a way of prayer. In Visio Divina, we simply create space to encounter Jesus. The art becomes a tool to help us focus our attention on Him. We invite you to do a Visio Divina practice with the painting “Making Room for Wonder” by Bette Dickinson (guided audio on pg. 4).

Prompts:

- > Begin with a few deep breaths, then let your eyes move through the painting.
- > What catches your eye? Focus on that portion of the work and sit with it for a minute.
- > What thoughts or feelings does this painting evoke? Become aware of God’s loving presence toward you right now. Is there something He wants you to see? To hear?
- > What kind of prayer rises within you as you ponder this work? Go ahead and express that to God now.



"Wonder" from Making Room in Advent by Bette Dickinson

Taken from *Making Room in Advent* by Bette Dickinson. Copyright ©2022 by Bette Dickinson and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515, USA. ivpress.com

Week 1: **BEHOLDING BEAUTY**

REFLECT: Conversation starters

- > What do you find beautiful? When you encounter something beautiful, how does it make you feel?
- > What are some ways we can make space to encounter God through beauty this week?
- > The shepherds responded to God's beauty by sharing the story with others. When have you experienced awe at who God is? How can you share this story with others this week?

You can also use this 12-minute guided Visio Divina:



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WATCH VIDEO

Week 1: Beholding beauty daily prayer

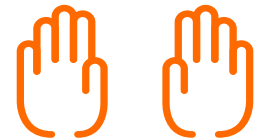
SURRENDER

Beginning posture:
Clenched fists



Lord, we confess that we have allowed hustle, busyness, and worry to keep us from perceiving your beauty all around us. We confess the ways we have tried to keep a grip on control instead of surrendering to Your plans to partner with us in bringing beauty into the world.

Surrender posture:
Hands open and raised



Instead, we choose a posture of surrender, opening ourselves to receive Your beauty that awakens and transforms us. We let go of control and ask that You hover over the chaos within us to create something beautiful through us.

GENEROSITY

Beginning posture:
Fists closed in front of you



Lord, we confess the ways we have held onto things the world deems beautiful instead of receiving the beauty of Your eternal kingdom.

Generosity posture:
Hands open in front of you



We open our hands to receive with awe and wonder the beauty of Your love and presence. And we keep our hands open to allow this beauty to spill out onto the world.

MISSION

Beginning posture:
Arms folded over your chest



Lord, we confess the ways we self-protect and constrict amid the suffering of the world—refusing to lavish Your beauty in ways that heal and restore.

Mission posture:
Arms open for an embrace



We open our arms to receive Your beauty through the last, the lost, and the least. We extend our arms to lavish the world with the beauty of Your kingdom.



Daily YouVersion reading plan: infinitumlife.com/2022advent
Family-friendly YouVersion reading plan: infinitumlife.com/2022advent

KID-FRIENDLY spiritual practice

Kids' prompts:

- › What do you see in the painting?
- › What are some clues from the picture about who is in the painting?
- › Why do you think the shepherds wanted to come see Jesus?
- › When you look at this painting, what does it make you think?
- › What does it make you feel?
- › What do you think is beautiful?
- › What do you feel when you see beautiful things?
- › What makes Jesus beautiful?

Close in a prayer thanking Jesus for what is beautiful.

An example of Bette leading Visio Divina with her kids:



Or scan this code with your phone's camera to watch the video. ♥



WATCH VIDEO

If you'd like to continue practicing beholding beauty this Advent, check out Bette's book:



Making Room in Advent: 25 Devotions for a Season of Wonder is an invitation away from the chaos and into a space where God is at work. Each page has an original painting to help fill you with hope and wonder during the Advent season. The 25 devotionals offer spiritual practices, breath prayers, and reflection questions that allow you to truly make room for God's work in your life, your community, and the world.

Another way to practice beholding beauty:

- › Create beauty to share. Ask God to bring to mind a few people you can share His beauty with (like the shepherds when they shared the story). Draw them a picture and ask God, "What do You want to say to this person through this image?" Share that with those who come to mind.



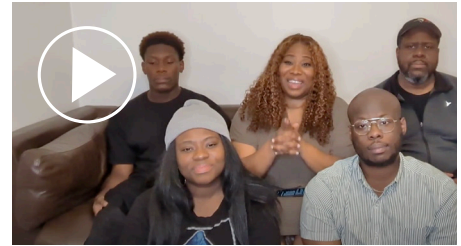
2022 Advent Beholding Beauty Bonus Podcast: buzzsprout.com/133343/11552556

Listen to Danielle Strickland and Bette Lynn Dickinson as they talk about ways of seeing the world differently through the lens of art.

Week 2

BREAKING BARRIERS

INTRODUCTION Did you know that generosity can break barriers? In a world where we have become so isolated and divided, the act of generosity can connect us in intentional and deep ways during this Advent season. Generosity, as a gift, is not only a reflection of the heart of God the Father, but of a heart filled with gratitude for His faithfulness in our own lives. Join speaker and social justice advocate Cheryl Nembhard and her family as they share personally how generosity has challenged and changed their hearts—and how it can transform us all for the better.



WATCH VIDEO

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SPIRITUAL EXERCISE: Ideas that break barriers

- > Invite someone outside of your normal circles to share a meal with you sometime this season.
- > Have your children consider valuable toys they're willing to part with that they can give to another child in need.
- > Consider volunteering at a food bank or shelter this Advent.
- > Write a letter of appreciation to someone who often goes unnoticed in your community.
- > Spend time with elderly people in your community or church.

REFLECT: Conversation starters

- > As you practice generosity, what barriers do you see breaking in your life?
- > How can you connect on a deeper level, outside of gift giving, with others during this season?
- > In what ways are you being challenged around invitation and welcome?
- > Generosity can have a big impact even with small acts—and it doesn't have to be a physical thing we give. What do you have that you could give generously today without giving anything tangible away (example: words of encouragement)? Can you name five non-thing "things" you could be generous with?
- > Consider by yourself or discuss with others the barrier of convenient, at-hand technology. What are some ways we could change how we engage with technology that would break down barriers between us and others?

Week 2: Breaking barriers daily prayer

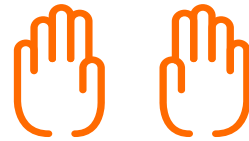
SURRENDER

Beginning posture:
Clenched fists



Lord, we confess that we have allowed worry, anxiety, and lack of trust to keep us from living the life of generosity You've called us to. We confess the ways that we have doubted Your provision and care in our lives.

Surrender posture:
Hands open and raised



Instead, we choose a posture of surrender, opening ourselves to receive Your peace and comfort knowing that as we give generously, it will be given back to us. We trust You with all we have, God.

GENEROSITY

Beginning posture:
Fists closed in front of you



Jesus, we confess the ways we have not been generous in our giving, whether in time, talent, or treasure. Forgive us for the ways we have not been good stewards of what has been given to us.

Generosity posture:
Hands open in front of you



We open our hands to receive the overwhelming joy that comes from giving freely, without agenda. Help us to seek out opportunities and spaces where we can give of our time, talent, or treasure and foster deeper connections with our community and loved ones.

MISSION

Beginning posture:
Arms folded over your chest



God, we confess the ways we isolate ourselves and place barriers around us that cause distance and disconnection with others. Forgive us for the ways that we've been self-centered in our view.

Mission posture:
Arms open for an embrace



We open our arms now to the least, to the lost, to those who have been seemingly forgotten. May they always find invitation and welcome with us, Lord. Help us to make space at our tables and in our hearts for those outside of our circles.



Daily YouVersion reading plan: [infinituallife.com/2022advent](https://www.youversion.com/2022advent)
Family-friendly YouVersion reading plan: [infinituallife.com/2022advent](https://www.youversion.com/2022advent)

KID-FRIENDLY spiritual practice

Breaking barriers with our local neighbors can be powerful. What do you have around your house that you could use to make a gift to give to your neighbor? Do you have the makings for chocolate chip cookies? Perhaps flowers in your yard for a bouquet? Or craft supplies to make homemade "I'm so glad we're neighbors" cards? Or maybe this is the year you **give your neighbor a Christmas gift!**

Week 3

MAKING ROOM

INTRODUCTION The story of Christmas reminds us that Jesus still seeks to be received by the world. In His birth story, His parents were looking for a room to rest even before Jesus was looking for space in our hearts. Today, part of how we receive God is by receiving His children and making room in our hearts and lives for them. The story of Christmas inspires us to be the kind of people who make room for others.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE: Map prayer

- › Take 15 minutes to sketch a basic map of your city or town from memory. (If you live in a densely populated area, draw your neighborhood instead.)
- › Pencil in local schools, popular stores, community centers, neighborhoods, favorite food spots, gyms, malls, etc.
- › As you draw, pray for the places and people that come to mind.
- › Each day this week, revisit the map for 10 minutes to let your imagination explore the image of Jesus entering those specific spaces.
- › At each place, imagine receiving Jesus, observe His interactions with the people there, and then make the intention to receive Him and those people into your heart.

REFLECT: Conversation starters

- › Using the map of your city or neighborhood, chat about some of the places that surprised you as you pictured Jesus arriving there.
- › The Bible says that how we love others is how we love God (see Matthew 25:31–46). Consider by yourself or discuss with others how this mystery might work and why.
- › Who are some people in your community who need to be received with love?
- › The shepherds received Baby Jesus by cheering and celebrating. Mary and Joseph received Jesus by wrapping Him in swaddling clothes and taking good care of Him. The men from the East received Jesus by protecting Him from Herod. Even in the littlest acts of love we can receive Jesus. What little acts of love showed Jesus you love Him yesterday? What opportunities will you have today to receive Jesus by the way you treat others?



WATCH VIDEO

Or scan this code with your phone's camera to watch the video. >



Week 3: Making Room Daily Prayer

SURRENDER

Beginning posture:
Clenched fists



Lord, we confess that the everyday demands of life distract us from receiving You. And even when You knock through the needs of others, we're tempted not to answer You because our focus is so consumed with making our own lives.

GENEROSITY

Beginning posture:
Fists closed in front of you



God, we confess that even when a need of Your children is made known to us, we're tempted to believe there is not enough to go around to meet it. We acknowledge this as an untruth and choose to become aware in this moment of the reality of Your abundant provision.

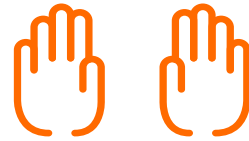
MISSION

Beginning posture:
Arms folded over your chest



Jesus, we confess our frequent failure to receive You well—to see You in the faces of our siblings.

Surrender posture:
Hands open and raised



But today we choose a posture of surrender to remind ourselves that our lives are not our own. You orchestrate our every breath and we pause now to welcome You in ... receiving You with each breath we take. *Take a minute to intentionally breathe deeply, focusing your awareness on God's presence.*

Generosity posture:
Hands open in front of you



Today, instead, we open ourselves to receive You and Your generosity. We want to live an open-handed life in a closed-fisted world, so we tune into Your abundance—*take a moment to remember some ways God has been generous with you*—and choose today to live and give out of Your abundance.

Mission posture:
Arms open for an embrace



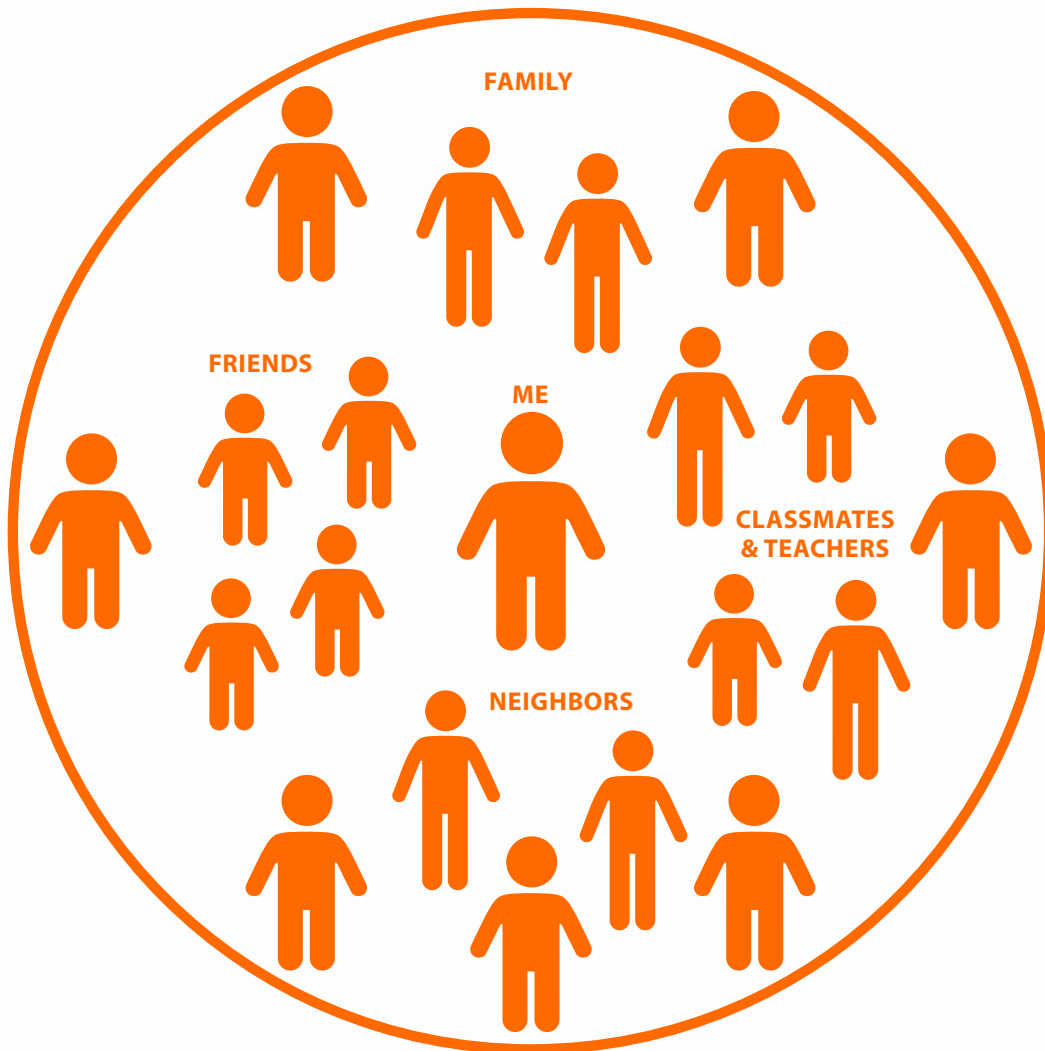
Today, we ask that You reveal Yourself to us in even the smallest of interactions. Draw our eyes to the faces of those we pass so that we may receive You over and over again throughout this day.



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KID-FRIENDLY spiritual practice

- › Grab some coloring supplies and a big piece of paper.
- › Draw a simple portrait of yourself in the center of the page with a big circle around yourself.
- › Along the lines of that circle, draw pictures of your closest friends (make sure to leave lots of extra room around them!).
- › In open spaces on your circle, draw a couple of kids and teachers from your school who you know could benefit from you making room in your heart for them.
- › Talk about how you could make room for these people in your daily interactions. Consider how you might inspire your friends to make room in your lives for them.
- › Then chat with Jesus about these ideas, asking Him for help in creativity and courage.
- › Lastly, tell Him your thoughts about what it means to make room for Him in your heart.



Week 4

SURPRISED BY GOD

INTRODUCTION The Christmas story is full of surprises and reminds us that God's ways are not our ways. Tuning into the surprises in the plotline can help us practice postures that support God's kingdom and not our own expectations.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISE: Beholding prayer walk

Go on a beholding walk together with friends or family. Look for ways God is working already in your neighborhood and ask how you can join God—instead of asking God to bless your plans.

REFLECT: Conversation starters

- › In what ways do you see God at work in the world?
- › Who are the people most qualified to do God's work? Why?
- › Who do you know who demonstrates God at work in the world in a way that's different than you might think?
- › How does the way God enters the world surprise you?
- › What do you need to surrender to learn how God is working right now?
- › In what way can you bless someone by being generous with your praise? How can you let someone know the way you see God in them?
- › Would you have picked an old woman or a young girl to be the stars of the Advent story? Why or why not?
- › How would you feel if you were Joseph? Or if you were Zechariah?
- › What were they afraid of?
- › What are you afraid of?
- › How can you commit to joining God in His mission? What if it doesn't make you the hero? How can you get out of the way?



WATCH VIDEO

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Week 4: Surprised by God daily prayer

SURRENDER

Beginning posture:
Clenched fists



God, we confess that the pace of life often makes us blind to Your activity in the world. Like Zechariah, we need You to silence us, still us, so we can see Your work.

Surrender posture:
Hands open and raised



So today, we choose a posture of surrender, opening ourselves to being surprised by You. Help us look beyond our expectations to see Your activity. We surrender to Your ways and means.

GENEROSITY

Beginning posture:
Fists closed in front of you



Lord, we confess our temptation to look to our own needs first. Too often we only look to our own needs. It can be so difficult to fight against a mentality of scarcity: Time, resources, energy, and sleep can all feel scarce. It's too easy to forget Your faithfulness and provision.

Generosity posture:
Hands open in front of you



But today we embrace the examples of Elizabeth and Mary who lived in mutuality—both blessing and receiving from the other. We pause now to receive from You what we need—*take a moment to make your needs known*—so that as we move through the day, we're able to give out of that receiving. We choose to embrace the wisdom of Elizabeth and Mary by living in mutuality today.

MISSION

Beginning posture:
Arms folded over your chest



Jesus, we confess to a short-sighted view of the suffering in the world—being forever tempted to see our own pains and struggles first or only.

Mission posture:
Arms open for an embrace



So today, we take our cues from Joseph and get out of the center of the story in order to make ourselves available to the needs of others. We will not settle for this short-sighted vantage point. Give us Your eyes, Jesus, and then move our hearts and hands today.

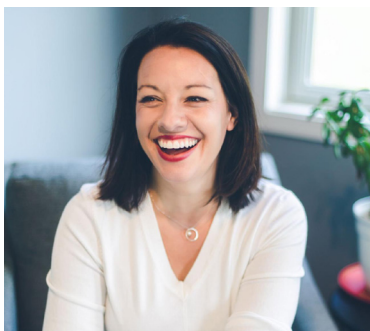


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KID-FRIENDLY spiritual practice

Surrender: Try being silent for one minute together ... Was it hard? Why? What makes silence difficult? In what ways might learning to be silent be connected to learning to surrender?

CONTRIBUTORS



Bette Dickinson is a prophetic artist, writer, and speaker who invites audiences to connect with God through visual parables of the spiritual journey in her ministry, *Awakening the Soul*. Bette earned her MDiv through Grand Rapids Theological Seminary and has worked with ministries like InterVarsity, World Vision, Infitum, and Kensington Church to awaken the soul through beauty and wonder. Bette and her husband live in Traverse City, Michigan, with their two boys.



Cheryl Nembhard is a dynamic international speaker, author, podcast/TV host, and social justice advocate. Her dedication to community service includes working with at-risk youth, former gang members, sexual assault victims, and teenage mothers. CBC Canada has recognized her as one of 150 women who are making Canada a better place.

Cheryl is co-host of *See, Hear, Love*, a nationally televised women's talk show and host of *On the Path w/ Cheryl Nembhard*, both on YES TV.



Rob Perry is the cofounder and director of operations for International Association for Refugees—walking alongside refugees both in Canada and around the world. Prior to this work, Rob spent 20 years in youth work, incarnational community life, and establishing urban faith communities in Canada.



Danielle Strickland is a spiritual leader, justice advocate, communicator, and peacemaker. Danielle's aggressive compassion has served people firsthand in countries all over the world: from establishing justice departments and church plants, to launching global anti-trafficking initiatives, to creating new initiatives to mobilize people towards transformational spiritual life. Danielle trains, advocates, and inspires people to live differently.