

# Advent Examination of Conscience

## Do We Find Joy In Our Relationship with God?

*Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid..." (Matthew 1.20)*

Am I close to God, or do I have trouble seeing God in my life?  
Do I try to convince God through prayer to give me what I want?  
Can I enter into a relationship with God, trusting that God can work through me?

*The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon you; a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength.... (Isaiah 11.2)*

Can I be sure in my trust in God?  
Can I embrace the joy of the Holy Spirit within me while also carrying the troubles in my life at this moment?  
Do I remember to call upon and give thanks and praise to God, who is the source and sustainer of my life?

In what way(s) could I grow or change in my relationship to God this Advent?

## Do We Recognize Ourselves As Children of God?

*Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel. (Isaiah 7.14)*

Do I have a healthy relationship with myself?  
Do I believe I carry the life of Christ within me?  
Do I believe that I can birth Christ at each moment, that through my actions and words he can take flesh and be manifest to the people around me?

*Let us walk in the light of the Lord! (Isaiah 2.5)*

Do I take good care of myself?  
Do I believe that my physical body is good and holy and has been created out of divine love?  
Can I let the joy and the awe of this great mystery of our faith shine through me?  
Has my life been changed in a way that leaves me without hope, or feeling very alone?  
If illness or tragedy has left my body weak, or an outside force injured me physically, can I accept the blessings I have and give thanks for the blessings I used to have?

In what way(s) could I grow or change as a child of God this Advent?

## Do We Listen to God's Call in Our Lives?

*Prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight his paths. (Matthew 3.3)*

Do I live in thankfulness for what God has given me instead of desiring what others have?  
Can I measure my life's successes by loving faithfulness to God's call rather than by material success and human praise?

*Brothers and sisters: You know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. (Romans 13.11)*

Do I forgive myself when I make a mistake?  
Do I try to learn and grow from my experiences?  
Do I follow through on my commitments in joyful fashion or do I resent my responsibilities?

*On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. (Isaiah 11.1)*

If a relationship comes to an unwanted and painful ending, can I stand in that emptiness of loss, of being left behind, of hitting rock bottom?  
Can I find my grounding in God once again, knowing that there is an even deeper love and comfort that will come after this pain?

*So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come. (Matthew 24.44)*

Do I numb myself with alcohol, drugs, food, gambling, sex, pornography, technology, possessions, shopping?  
Do I avoid the "still, small voice" within?

In what way(s) could I improve how I listen to God's call in my life this Advent?

### **Do we joyfully "give flesh" to the Gospel in our relationships with others?**

*Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God. (Romans 15.7)*

Do I hide behind social media instead of creating face-to-face relationships?  
Have I developed patterns of judging or blaming people or giving criticism that is not meant to be helpful?  
Am I hurtful toward others in actions, thoughts or words?  
Do I judge or criticize people who are different from me?

*May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus. (Romans 15.5)*

In my family, do I communicate my love and care in a sincere and direct way?  
Do I allow others in my family circle to grow into the people God created them to be?  
Do I celebrate the success of family members without jealousy or envy?

*That with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15.6)*

In my own way, do I consciously strive to make peace a reality, to embody peace in the world around me?  
Do I use my gifts and talents to work for justice?

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. (Isaiah 61.1)*

Do I help fill the essential needs of others, as Jesus did?  
Do I feed the hungry and give water to those who thirst?  
Do I clothe the naked? Do I visit the sick and the imprisoned?  
Do I help provide shelter for the homeless?  
Do I assist and protect those in their last days of life?  
Do I support public policies which aid the vulnerable, poor, and marginalized?

In what way(s) could I improve my relationships with others this Advent?

## Do we joyfully care for God's creation?

*The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom. They will bloom with abundant flowers, and rejoice with joyful song. (Isaiah 35.1-2)*

What can I do in my life to remember that I am standing on holy ground, that the elements of earth, air and water are great gifts that need good stewardship--the responsible care of all who live on the earth.

*The Lord's are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it. For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. (Psalm 24.1-2)*

Do I base my purchases on the principles of basic responsibility to the earth, such as  
--the vehicle I drive?  
--the products I use?  
--the amount of recyclable materials I use?  
--the quantity I acquire?

*Crowned with everlasting joy; they will meet with joy and gladness, sorrow and mourning will flee. (Isaiah 35.10)*

Do I pay attention to the well-being of all with whom I share the earth?  
Am I aware of the sustainability needed to keep a harmonic balance in all of nature?  
Do I support public policies which encourage and enforce sustainable stewardship of natural resources?

In what way(s) could I improve my care for God's creation this Advent?

## How Are We Growing this Advent?

Take a few minutes today to review the insights you have gained from this examination of conscience:

In what way(s) could I grow or change in my relationship to God this Advent?  
In what way(s) could I grow or change as a child of God this Advent?  
In what way(s) could I improve how I listen to God's call in my life this Advent?  
In what way(s) could I improve my relationships with others this Advent?  
In what way(s) could I improve my care for God's creation this Advent?

## Advent Prayer

We thank you and praise you, Word-Made-Flesh,  
for your presence within us, around us, and through us;  
for making our world a hallowed, holy place,  
for giving a human touch to grace.  
Fill our hearts with joy as we enter into the celebration of your birth,  
as we welcome you once again,  
and as we joyfully await your final coming in glory!  
Amen.