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8 Ways to Immerse Yourself in Advent

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The Christmas season whirls around us with calendars overflowing, lofty expectations and to do lists bursting at the seams. It's overwhleming! It's a Christmas contradiction, actually. The gifts, the grandness and festive glitter of it all ironically darkens the spirit of the season as we rush towards the finish line only to arrive exhausted on Christmas morning.

If we're not careful, we can easily miss the miracle of the Christ's first coming and the ***expectant hope*** [1]we have for Him to return. And, I'm not sure what it is for you. But it's that very HOPE this season bears beaconing my soul to the deepest sense of satisfaction. *It's that HOPE that I don't want to miss amongst the hustle of it all!*

Oh, how I adore **Advent** **[2]**...the waiting, the hoping, the overwhelming sense of awe when we convince ourselves to simply slow down to savor the coming of our Savior, to realize the real reason for the season. *Is your soul aching to simplify Christmas, too?*

Let's try it together. Let's hold hands and hault the hustle. ***Let's simplify Christmas as we celebrate Christ's coming!***

Make today until December 25th all about the coming of the Christ-Child and allow each day to build in anticipation as we slowly, peacefully unwrap the greatest gift ever given!

If you're already feeling the whirl of the world around you sweep you off your feet, if you already anticipate the exhaustion, ponder these points. Here are some ways to slow your season down and seek the only gift that can ever save you…a quiet baby in a dirty manger, the Christ-child.

1. **Mark your days during Advent with messages from Scripture and not sweets.** Use Advent Calendars that are really only about Advent. Light candles as you pray each day for God to soften your heart to the miracle coming in Christ's birth. Write the name of someone you love on a star each day, hang it on the tree and take time to pray they feel the awe of Christ's coming. Whatever you do, mark each day of Advent with actions in pursuit the awesome Christmas miracle!
2. **Make time each day for spiritual pause.** Morning, noon or night. Choose a time to consistently and unwaveringly sit in simplicity focusing on the peace of all His promises that were fulfilled with the birth and life of His Son. Pray. Praise. Give thanks. It's to those soft, simple moments where He's beckoning you this season. He's not in the noise and hustle, in the stores or glitzy scenes. But, yeah, the Spirit lives in your heart and He's begging you to listen and let go of the loudness to linger in His presence.
3. **Witness to the world through serving those around you.** God gave us the only gift worth unwrapping, the only gift FREE for our taking and the only gift we can give away by witnessing to the world around us. Instead of standing in complacency or focusing on cultural commodities, purposely serve *for your Savior*. It's simple: bring a food basket to someone grieving, send a note to someone lonely, smile at the person grimacing, visit a soup kitchen, create crafts [3] for nursing homes…the list goes on. ***Be creative as you witness through your words and actions.***
4. **Adorn your home with Christ centered decorations.** The sparkles of the scenes and Santa in a sleigh are fun but certainly not the centerpiece of the season. So, don't make them the focal point of your home either. Keep a Bible and Advent devotion on the coffee table, highlight the nativity scene and show off sparkly stars and angels as symbols of a Christ-centered celebration.
5. **Demonstrate the JOY of Jesus coming!** Find joy in every day. Actively focus on how your heavenly Father saved you through His Son. See it in His creation all around you. See it in yourself and those you love…because we were all created from His love *to show His love*. And one way to show His love is to emanate the joy of Jesus in you. Smile, say hello, express appreciation for the simplest things and give abundant gratitude for every moment of every day.
6. **Sing to Jesus Christmas morning.** Instead of waking up and rushing out or to the gift-adorned tree on Christmas morning, set up a manger scene away from the gatherings and gifts. Light a candle or perhaps even eat a morning treat after singing 'happy birthday' to our Savior. It's what we do and it feeds the desires of our hearts! So, try it for yourself. Start Christmas day with His birthday celebration.
7. **Read out loud to your kids…or to adults….** Read His Word or an Advent devotion to others. Bring His message alive with your voice. Make His message and the meaning of the manger heard from your mouth. Read Advent devotions to your children at bedtime or visit a nursing home and read the Christmas story. Speak of the coming Savior!
8. **Print Bible verses on your gift tags or cards.** Choose a favorite Christmas verse or two and adorn gift tags and your holiday cards with them. Show people, straight from the Word, why you go to the effort of giving during this season.



So, yeah, I hope this gives you some ideas of how you can celebration this season with your Savior at the centerpiece. Don't reach Christmas morning having missed the real miracle! It can be so simple. Just sit for a moment, every single morning asking God how you can give the message of His son away as a gift to someone else…in the form of a kind word, a gesture of love, an act of assistance. Just pause every single day to find quiet in a loud culture. ***Just open your heart, open your Bibles, and walk the path paved by Jesus.***

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