

- Living through crises
- Personal transitions
- In your community (school, church, workplace):

What practical habits help people stay attentive to what really matters?

Encourage simple, grounded stories — not abstract answers.

Group Response

Invite participants to name one small practice for the coming week that will help them stay awake spiritually:

For example

- pausing for 30 seconds before speaking,
- lighting a candle each evening,
- choosing a daily act of kindness,
- walking slowly for five minutes,
- practising gratitude,
- setting down the phone at certain times,
- noticing beauty intentionally.

Write these on a shared board or in a chat. Share these insights with whoever is preaching or leading worship in your faith community.

Closing Prayer

Christ who comes quietly,
Wake us from distraction
And help us see your presence
In the small, ordinary,
holy moments of our lives.
Keep us watchful for
the signs of love,
Alert to the needs
of our neighbours,
Open to your unexpected grace.
Make us ready –
Not with fear,
But with hope.
Amen.



www.heartedge.org

Image: Ground Picture (Envato.com)



HeartBeat

Staying Awake to the God Who Comes

Sunday 30th of November

Lectionary Reading:
Matthew 24:36–44

Welcome

Advent begins with unsettling words – not angels or shepherds, but warnings and wake-up calls. Matthew's Gospel invites us to pay attention, not to feel afraid. This is the season of becoming alert to God's presence already stirring in the ordinary.

Ice breaker "Unexpected Moments"

Invite people to share in pairs or small groups:

Tell us about a moment in your life when something unexpected changed your perspective – maybe a surprise kindness, a sudden insight, a moment of beauty, or a situation that jolted you awake.

Allow a few volunteers to share back with the whole group.

Opening Prayer

Christ our Light,
You come in the moments
we least expect,
Breaking through routine,
distraction, and fear.
Wake us again to your presence
In our lives, our communities,
and our world. Amen.

Hearing the Scripture Twice

First Reading: Matthew 24:36–44

Invite people simply to listen and
notice which word or phrase stands
out

Silence

Second time Reading.

Invite people to listen again for what
God may be saying to you or your
community today.

Ask: What did you hear this time that
felt different?

Scaffolding for Learning

The Context:

Advent Begins with Urgency

Jesus speaks these words on the
Mount of Olives in the final week of
his life. The disciples ask about “the
end,” and Jesus redirects them:

No dates
No timetables
No secret knowledge
Only a call to stay awake.

Matthew wants us to hear urgency
without fear.

“No one knows...”

— Not Fear, but Freedom

Early Christians expected Christ’s
return soon. But by the time Matthew
wrote his Gospel, decades had passed.
The world had not ended.

So “end” (Greek telos) began to
mean not destruction but purpose,
fulfilment, God’s future.

Jesus asks us to release control and
remain attentive.

Noah and Ordinary Life

Jesus emphasises ordinary routines:
eating, drinking, marrying, working.
Not sin. Not wickedness. Just
distraction.

The flood caught people unaware
because their attention was
elsewhere.

Advent asks: Where have our lives
become so full that there is no space
left for God?

Hiddenness : The Quiet Arrival of Grace

Two people working side by side
can have very different levels of
awareness.

God’s presence is often: subtle, quiet,
easily missed.

Grace comes “like a thief in the night”
– not to harm, but to surprise us into
wakefulness.

Keeping Awake

To “keep awake” is not panic or fear.
It is: noticing beauty, making space
for compassion, listening deeply,
practising attention, expecting God in
the ordinary.

The Major Question: Is Jesus Talking About the End of the World?

A brief theological thread:

- Early Christians: The end means
God’s future – the fulfilment of
creation.
- St Augustine: Apocalyptic
language is symbolic, not a literal
countdown.
- Medieval/Traditional Church:
Judgement was part of spiritual
imagination, not prediction.
- Modern liberal theology
(Moltmann, Johnson, Tillich):
- “The end” is God’s ultimate
purpose — healing, justice,
reconciliation, the renewal of all
things.

So in Matthew 24, Jesus is not
forecasting destruction.

He is calling us back to the purpose of
creation: Love, justice, compassion,
and attentiveness to God.

Advent readiness is not about fear
of judgement but about opening
ourselves to divine presence.

Wonderings

- I wonder what it feels like to live
awake rather than distracted.
- I wonder what “the end” means
when we understand it as purpose
rather than catastrophe.
- I wonder where God might be
quietly breaking into our ordinary
routines.
- I wonder what keeps me
spiritually asleep — busyness,
fear, disappointment, exhaustion?
- I wonder how it would feel to be
ready not out of fear, but out of
hope.

Earthed Examples & Group Sharing

Invite participants to connect the
Gospel to lived experience:

- Where have you experienced a
sudden “wake-up” moment – a
moment of clarity, compassion, or
realisation?
- What parts of everyday life make
it hardest for you to notice God?
- Emails? Rushing? Anxiety?
Overcommitment?
- Can you think of a time God
“came unexpectedly” – through a
stranger, a piece of music, a crisis,
a moment of forgiveness?
- How does this reading speak into
our world today?

Examples:

- Climate urgency
- Social injustice
- Peace work

INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITY:

Signs of God's Coming

THEME:

Staying awake and noticing God in ordinary life.

AIM:

To help children, young people, and adults practise Advent attentiveness through a shared, physical activity.

MATERIALS:

Everyday objects (toy, flower, stone, cup, photo, blanket, mobile phone, bread, mirror, lightbulb, etc.)
Small bell or chime
Paper stars or footprints
Pens or crayons
Tape or string (optional)

Part 1: Waking Up

Invite everyone to sit quietly.
Say: "Advent begins in waiting, in quiet, in watching."

Ring the bell softly.
Say: "The bell reminds us to wake up and notice that God is near."

Invite everyone to stand, stretch, and shake out their hands.

Say: "Staying awake means being ready to notice kindness, beauty, and God's presence in ordinary things."

Part 2: Seeing God in the Ordinary

Place the everyday objects around the room.
Invite everyone to walk around and choose one object that reminds them of God's nearness or hope.

Gather in a circle.
Invite each person (or family group) to show their object and finish one sentence:

"This reminds me that God is near because..."

or

"This helps me stay awake to God because..."

Part 3: Making a Path of Watchfulness

Give each person a paper star or footprint.

Invite them to write or draw one way they will "stay awake" this week.

Examples:

"Look for kindness,"
"Say thank you,"
"Help someone,"
"Notice beauty,"
"Pause before speaking."

Place all stars/footprints in a line on the floor or wall to form a path.

Say together:

"We will stay awake for the God who comes."

Part 4: Closing Prayer

God of surprises,
You come when we least expect it.
Help us keep our eyes open to your light
and our hearts awake to your love.
Amen.

Children's Mini-Session (10–15 minutes)

Story Summary

"Jesus told his friends to stay awake—not because they were tired, but because God often comes in little surprises. When we listen, help, share, or forgive, we are ready for Jesus even if we don't see him coming."

Activity: Ready or Not

Hide a small object such as a heart, star, or cross.
Invite the children to find it.
When it is found, say together:
"God surprises us with love!"
Repeat a few times, hiding the object in different places.

Children's Reflection Question

"Where do you think Jesus might surprise you this week?"

Children's Prayer:

Jesus, help me
to stay awake
to kindness, to joy,
and to your love.
Amen.