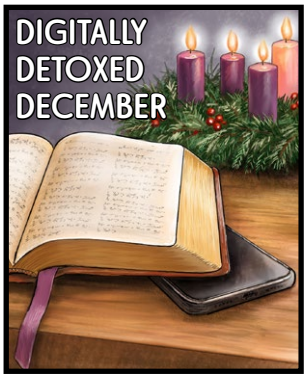
Advent Devotional 2026: A Digitally Detoxed December

WEEK ONE: SUNDAY, NOV. 29 – SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5: HOPE

This week, observe how your online viewing influences your hopes. Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales can make us hope for more for less – and make it harder to track whether that's actually true when making purchases. Then there's "doomscrolling," which is spending a lot of time scrolling through negative online content. If you find yourself doing this, check in when you're done – how hopeful do you feel? If you don't feel hopeful at all, maybe it is time for a digital detox from doomscrolling, and intentionally carving out time to focus on what's good in your life, in our creation, and in your relationships. Play with what you do online and IRL (in real life) noticing what makes you more hopeful, and what makes it harder to be hopeful. Then make a plan to get more hope in your real life!



Sunday, 11/29 – End Times and Hope (Mark 13:24-27)

24 "But in those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
25 and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
26 Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. 27 Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

The First Sunday of Advent begins a new liturgical Christian year and the season where we anticipate the arrival of the Messiah once again in Bethlehem. Paradoxically, Scripture also talks about the end times, when the Messiah comes again at the end of the world. How have you found hope when times end? Seasons, lives, relationships…why do you think we light the Hope candle at the same time we hear about the end times? Today, reflect on that paradox.

A prayer for the day:

Holy God, Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, in you we have life and life abundant. It's full of endings and beginnings. Each of them teaches us and grows us up in Christ. Give us the hope that sees more than loss in endings and more than vainglorious visions of the outcomes in beginnings. Help us to stay centered on you, Alpha and Omega. Amen.

Monday, 11/30 – Hope & Endings

Sometimes we really want something to end and can't wait for it to be over: a class we despise; a job that isn't fulfilling; a movie we don't like but our family does. Maybe you want Advent to end so then it will be Christmas Eve! We often turn to our phones when we are waiting in a doctor's office or for dinner to arrive at a restaurant because we want the experience of waiting itself to end. Today, embrace the times you have to wait. Are there strangers you could speak to instead of looking down at your phone? Or a walk you could take instead of waiting on the couch?

A prayer for the day:

Patient God, thank you for giving us the gift of time. It does indeed prevent everything from happening to us all at once. Waiting for what we don't have gives us the opportunity to see more clearly what we do have, through your endless generous love. Amen.

Tuesday, 12/1 – A.I. and Hope

We are all living in a world hyped up by the promise and threat of artificial intelligence. It may cure cancer and it may kill us all within ten years. Even as we hear of the potential impact on many jobs, even now many of us still use various A.I. chatbots as consultants to find out about many things. Today, instead of always using A.I., intentionally ask someone in your life for advice on something. It could be as small as picking out the right LED bulb to something as big as how they navigated a college or career choice. As Bono of U2 puts it, "A friend is someone who lets you help."

A prayer for the day:

Dear God, we live in the most amazing times. Our technologies put a world's worth of knowledge at our fingertips. They connect us to any place in the world we want. And yet, we need your help to keep rooted in the world where we live. Help us to value the wisdom of our friends and families and to seek it out, hoping that we can connect and love. Amen.

Wednesday, 12/2 – Real Life and Hope

People who find it hard to hope often find it hard to see anything good in themselves or their lives. Real life can sometimes feel like it doesn't measure up to what you see online. Even if you do everything your favorite influencer does, you end up feeling like you failed to create all the great stuff you thought you would in your life. Today, recognize how much the images on screens tempt us to compare our lives to the screen and find them lacking. Look for the precious little things in your room, your neighborhood, your family members, that no one else in the world can see. See if the more connected you get to what is in your real life, the easier it is to feel hopeful about it.

A prayer for the day:

Incarnate God, you chose to walk dusty streets, deal with difficult people, be misunderstood, and to follow your call anyway to heal, redeem, and love. Help us to get down on the ground with those who struggle with the holidays. Help us to appreciate the familiar carols and readings without being tempted to check our feed. Help us to be present this season with hope, rather than distraction. Amen.

Thursday, 12/3 – Hope and Endings 2

When someone loses a job, people often say to them, "Something better will come along, wait and see." It's hard to think anything better will come along when something ends that you didn't want to end. A loved one dies or breaks up with you. You have to go away to school. Or, you have to move from your family home and into assisted living. Precious things are lost and must be grieved. Today, acknowledge some of the losses you've experienced this past year. Did something better come along, or some learning or something new come into your life? Reflect on how that might impact your understanding of hope in the face of endings. As Rev. Bob Diets wrote in *Life After Loss,* "Life after loss will never be the same. But it can still be good."

A prayer for the day:

Almighty God, in Jesus you experienced the beginning and the end of human life. You experienced the beginning and the end of friendships and family, career and calling. And in your resurrection you sent us a promise that God has many beginnings and endings in store for us, and to hope in that God begins a life of peace, love, and joy. Thank you. Amen.

Friday, 12/4 – Hope and Waiting

Some version of the concept of waiting for God occurs some 50-60 times in the Bible. Examples include: Psalm 27:14 ("Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage"), Psalm 37:7 ("Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him"), Psalm 130:5 ("I wait for the Lord; my soul waits, and in his word I hope"), and Isaiah 40:31 ("but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength"). Passages that translate the exact same Hebrew for ***waiting*** verbs as **"hope in the Lord"** or **"look to the Lord"** (such as Psalm 33:22, Psalm 42:5, Lamentations 3:24–25, and Micah 7:7), as well as New Testament passages about waiting patiently for Christ or God's redemption (such as Romans 8:23–25 and James 5:7–8). Today, think of the experience of waiting at a stop light, in a checkout line, for a delivery, or for word about a diagnosis or prognosis, as an invitation to be still before the Lord. Memorize a verse from a Psalm to recite when you are waiting.

A prayer for the day:

Holy One, waiting is not my favorite thing. But I do notice that even when I get what I want as quickly as I want it, another want follows almost immediately after. Help me to wait before going after what I think I want. Help me to wait before I want to judge someone. Help me to put my hope in the good things that come out of waiting – your signs and wonders, your love revealed even as it was on that first Christmas morning. Amen.

Saturday, 12/5 – Hoping for a Good Ending

It's been said that every sick or lame person Jesus healed eventually died. We all do – even Jesus did. His resurrection tells us that dying to this life is one ending but not the ultimate ending, which belongs to God. We can either dread endings and deny they will happen, or we can accept that part of the gift of life on earth is knowing how precious each day is because there will be an ending to this life. Today, reflect on what you can do to realize your hope for a good ending. What preparations need to be completed for a good ending to Advent? To the year? To a season of life? To the end of life itself? Do you have a will, a funeral plan, and all the arrangements together? Planning for good endings is a sign of hope. Today, plan for something to end well.

A prayer for the day:

Eternal God, you live in eternity while we live in a time of changing seasons and lives. Keep us faithful to the hope that in every season and stage of life, your gifts will show us how to experience peace, love, and joy in you. Keep us connected to you, the source of every blessing, so that whether we live or whether we die, we are yours. Amen.