

A NOTE TO PARENTS

To children, Advent can seem endless. While we parents moan and lament that we have so little time to get everything done before Christmas, it seems to children as if Christmas will never come. Adults rush around, desperately trying to finish one task after another; children wait in impatience, anticipation, and hope.

And it is the children's experience that the Scriptures commend. The Bible is always telling us to be ready, but rarely does it seem to mean that we have to put out a huge effort to finish this and accomplish that, so that everything is in apple pie order when the Savior comes. We are told to "prepare the way of the Lord"—to *make space, get the obstacles out of the way* for God to come to us. Overwhelmingly, the Scriptures' images for readiness are those of watchfulness: we are (in last week's reading) like servants waiting for the master's return; we are like sentries on a city wall; we are to be poised and alert and awake and eager and joyful.

God comes into our lives as a *gift*. We can learn much from the children, who unabashedly look forward to Christmas because of the presents they will receive. Of course, we need to teach our children to love giving to others. But equally, we adults need to rediscover that special eagerness with which children wait and wait for a wonderful thing that has been promised by those they love and trust. C. S. Lewis, in *The Weight of Glory*, remarks that "nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we follow Christ, contains an appeal to desire ... Indeed ... it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak."

Of course, it is God, not Christmas, that is our heart's desire. But longing for Christmas is one of the ways children learn to long for God. They cannot yet make the distinction, and adult cynicism about Christmas as a commercial scam only confuses and worries them. But neither do we need to work ourselves to death for the "perfect" Christmas. Pick a few family traditions, and do them with loving care. Be ready: God will do the rest.

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ADVENT

John the Baptist said, "Get ready!
Prepare the way of the Lord!"

MARK 1:3



We call John "the Baptist" because he baptized people.



John wore rough clothing. He lived in the desert, and ate grasshoppers and wild honey.

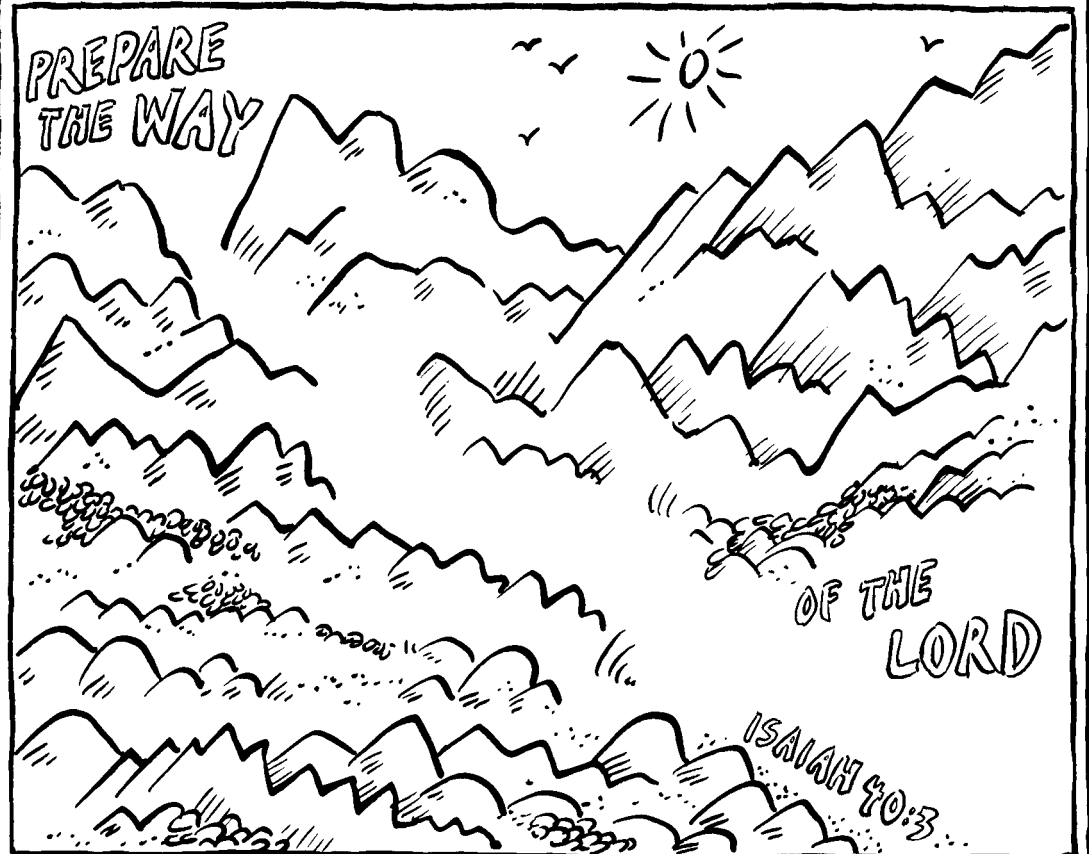


John told people to get ready for God's own special leader, the MESSIAH.



John said, "The Messiah is much more special than I am! He is coming soon!"

Advent is a time for getting ready. We get ready for Christmas. We put up decorations, and cook special food, and plan what presents we will give. In Advent, we also get ready in our hearts, for God to come to us. The Bible says we need to CLEAR A ROAD for God to come to our hearts!



Draw a nice smooth road through the middle of this wilderness!