

The Advent Guide

four weeks of looking up, for youth groups and local churches

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A letter before we begin

Hello nyi,

Christmas is approaching, and as I come to you right now, I'm writing this on a laptop, with my phone buzzing beside me, and thirteen browser tabs open that I need to deal with. Do NOT ask me about my inbox. I tell you this so you can please hear all of this as an invitation from someone who needs it as much as you do, not a lecture from someone who has it all figured out.

We are more connected than any generation before us, but many of us have never felt more tired, more distracted, or more alone. We can see what's happening on the other side of the world in seconds and still miss what God is doing in our own lives or neighbourhoods.

But the Christmas story is full of people who noticed. Shepherds on a night shift who looked up. A tax collector who listened and heard his name. Wise travellers who watched the sky so carefully they noticed a new star. A young mother who treasured and pondered the season of life she was blessed with. All of them had to stop, look, listen, and respond.

So this Advent we're trying something together. For four weeks we'll **disconnect to connect**:

- Disconnect from the noise, to connect with God.
- Disconnect from online-only connection, to connect with real people.
- Disconnect from busy-ness, to connect with the Creator through creation.
- Disconnect from misplaced priorities, to connect with our purpose in Christ.

Our invitation - to all of you, NYI Eurasia - is to make this season authentically yours. Take a month-long break from AI and google and looking up the answers. Don't copy someone else's ideas from the internet. Trust that the God who breathed life into Adam, who gave Bezalel creative skill, who painted every sunset, can speak to you and through your imagination. Your scribbles are welcome here. Your beginner reflections and creations and drawings are welcome here. Your honest "I sat there for ten minutes, and nothing happened" is welcome here.

I can't wait to hear what God shows you all, and what He shows us together.

With love, from wherever I am this week,

Amy Warner

Regional Youth Coordinator, NYI Eurasia

How to use this guide:

What's in it

- **Sunday teaching:** a talk for the youth leader (or a young person) to give, either in youth group or in the main church service. Take time to make it your own and add local stories.
- **Group session:** a 60–75 minute plan for your youth group that week.
- **The challenge:** the practice everyone tries during the week.
- **Daily readings:** a short scripture and a prompt for every day of Advent.
- **Get your church involved:** ideas to bring the whole church along, not just the young people.
- **Reflection page:** questions for journalling at the end of each week.

The **Printables** at the back include a commitment card, a senses walk sheet, an invitation card and a collage guide.

The weekly rhythm

Day	What happens
Sunday	Teaching and launch of the week's challenge
Monday to Saturday	Daily reading and prompt. Do the challenge.
Youth group night	Group session: share stories, go deeper, practise together
Saturday	Write/create your reflections and send it in

The four-week overview

Week	Theme and scripture	Challenge
1 · 29 Nov	**Digital Sabbath** Luke 2:1–20	Daily time alone with God. No phone, no inputs.
2 · 6 Dec	**Real Life Connection** Luke 5:27–32; John 13:34–35	Make an invitation. Connect with someone in person, especially someone on the edges.
3 · 13 Dec	**Creation and the Senses** Matthew 2:1–12; 1 Kings 19:9–13; Psalm 19:1; Luke 5:16	Spend time in creation every day using all five senses.
4 · 20 Dec	**Purpose in Christ** Matthew 1:21–23; 1 Samuel 7:12; Isaiah 43:18–19	Make a handmade collage: looking back on God's faithfulness, looking forward to his vision.

Sharing reflections

We'd love young people to send in what God shows them: a few written lines, a photo of a notebook page, a drawing, a voice note or a photo of their collage. Send these to jhaddad@eurasiaregion.org

With permission, we may share some (anonymously if preferred) to encourage others across the region. Please make sure young people know:

- Sharing is completely optional.
- They can share without their name or face.
- Under 18s need permission from a parent or guardian to have their words or image shared publicly. All (every age!) need to fill out the GDPR form. (http://eurasiaregion.org/consent)

Making it work where you are

Our region stretches from Europe through the Middle East and Central Asia to South Asia. No two contexts are the same, so please adapt freely.

- **Phones aren't always optional.** Some young people need their phone for work, for family safety or because it's their only Bible. Encourage them to switch on aeroplane mode, turn off notifications, or use a paper Bible for the quiet time. The goal is fewer distractions, not perfection.
- **Not everyone can go outside safely or easily.** In Week 3, a window, the sky, a pot plant, a pet or a piece of fruit all count. Young women and younger teens in particular shouldn't walk alone somewhere that doesn't feel safe, especially after dark. Go in pairs or groups.
- **Hosting and inviting may carry risk in some places.** Where gathering openly is sensitive, follow the wisdom of your pastor and local leaders.
- **Calendars differ.** In some places Christmas falls on 7 January, or isn't a public holiday, and Advent may be a school or exam season. Shift the dates to fit.
- **Materials.** The collage in Week 4 can be made from anything: old magazines, packaging, fabric, leaves, newspaper, hand drawing. No special supplies needed. If you don’t have items and need to make digitally, try not to simply copy what you find online.
- **Language.** Translate and adapt freely. Please send us your translations so other churches can use them. (nyi@eurasiaregion.org)

Keeping everyone safe

- In Week 2, young people under 18 should meet new people in public places, in groups or at church, and always tell a parent or leader. Visits to older or housebound people should be done with an adult leader.
- Silence and reflection can bring up hard feelings. Let young people know who they can talk to. If anyone shares something that worries you, follow your church's safeguarding policy.

Keep it handmade

Please encourage your young people, and yourself, to:

- Write by hand where possible, use paper bibles if they can, enjoy the tangible again.
- Use their own words and stories, not AI or other people's content/ideas. We aren’t giving anyone a hard time about AI, but the goal of this advent season is to be discipled by the work of our hands and the real-life creation around us.
- Make things with their hands: drawings, notes, collages, meals, invitations.
- Trust that God speaks to them personally, in their imagination, relationships and surroundings.



Week 1: Digital Sabbath

Sunday 29 November to Saturday 5 December 2026

Disconnect from the noise. Reconnect with God.

Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Sunday teaching: The Night Shift

Read Luke 2:1-20 aloud before you begin. Read it slowly. If you can, turn the lights down.

Let's start with a question, and I want you to be honest. **How long can you sit in silence before you reach for your phone?**

[LEADER NOTE: SHARE YOUR OWN SCREEN HABITS HONESTLY. YOUR SCREEN TIME, WHAT YOU REACH FOR FIRST IN THE MORNING, A TIME YOU MISSED SOMETHING BECAUSE YOU WERE DISTRACTED etc.]

The Christmas story begins with a lot of noise. Look at verse 1. The Roman Emperor has ordered a census. The whole world is on the move. Roads are crowded, inns are full, everyone is busy, stressed, and travelling. It sounds a lot like December madness, doesn't it?

In the middle of all that busyness, the most important thing that has ever happened takes place quietly in a barn in Bethlehem. God comes into the world as a baby. Most people completely miss it. But not everyone.

Out in the fields, there's a group of shepherds working the night shift. These aren't important people. They aren't religious leaders or wealthy families. Shepherds were often looked down on. They're doing what they do every night: watching sheep, keeping warm, staying awake.

And God chooses them to hear the news first.

Suddenly the sky fills with light. An angel says: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." Then a whole choir of heaven joins in.

What strikes me is that the shepherds were awake, outside, and paying attention. **They weren't distracted.** When God spoke, they heard.

Then look at what they do. Verse 15: "Let's go to Bethlehem and see." They don't just have a nice spiritual moment and go back to sleep. They respond. They go. They find the real Jesus. And then they go back to the same fields, the same sheep, the same night shift, completely changed, praising God.

I don't think God has become quiet. I think we have become noisy.

We fill every gap: The bus ride, The queue, The bathroom, The ten minutes before we sleep. There is never a moment without input (someone else's voice, someone else's opinion, someone else's life). We have so much noise coming in that there's no space for God's voice to break through.

And then we consider Mary. Verse 19 says that while everyone else was amazed, "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." Everyone else said "wow" and moved on, but Mary held on to it. She kept thinking about it. She gave it space to amaze her, and to change her.

So - That's what we're going to practise this week.

This isn't about hating technology. Phones are brilliant. They connect us to people we love, and many of us read our Bibles on them. You may even have received this on your phone. But anything good can start to crowd out what's best. God's people have always practised fasting: giving something up for a while to make space for God. This week we're fasting from input.

The challenge is simple, and it's hard. Every day this week, spend at least 30 minutes alone with God with no inputs. No phone. No music. No podcast. No devotional app. Not even someone else's sermon. Just you, a Bible, maybe a notebook to write things down, and God.

It might feel awkward. It might feel boring. Your brain might go a bit wild for the first few minutes. That's normal. Keep going. You're not trying to make God show up. God is already here. He was here before you noticed. You're just making space to notice him.

[LEADER: IF YOU'VE ALREADY TRIED THE CHALLENGE, SHARE WHAT HAPPENED. BE HONEST IF IT WAS HARD.]

Let's pray.

Lord, thank you that you came quietly into a noisy world. Forgive us for filling every moment with noise. This week, help us to stop. To listen. To go and see what you're doing. Speak, Lord. We're listening. Amen.



Group session

Time: 60–75 minutes

You'll need: a basket or box for phones, paper, pens, a candle (or torch), Bibles, copies of the commitment card (see Printables)

WELCOME (10 MINS)

As people arrive, collect phones in the basket (leaders first!). Play a quick game: **Guess the Screen Time.** Before the phones go in, everyone writes down their guess of their weekly screen time, then checks. Biggest gap between guess and reality wins a prize.

TALK IT THROUGH (20 MINS)

Read Luke 2:8–20 together. Discuss:

1. Why do you think God told the shepherds first?
2. Most of Bethlehem slept through the birth of Jesus. What might we be missing because we're distracted?
3. What do you reach for when there's silence? Why?
4. Mary "treasured and pondered." What's one thing you'd like to have space to think about?

TRY IT TOGETHER (15 MINS)

Turn the lights down and light a candle. Explain that you're going to try ten minutes of silence together. Read Luke 2:19 slowly, twice. Then sit in silence for ten minutes. (Yes, really. Set a timer and don't speak.)

Afterwards, ask: What was that like? What did you notice? Did anything come to mind?

COMMIT (10 MINS)

Hand out commitment cards. Each person writes down when and where they'll do their daily quiet time this week, and where their phone will be. Pair people up as encouragement partners to check in with each other (in person!) during the week.

PRAY AND SEND (5 MINS)

Pray for each other. Return phones last.

The challenge: 30 minutes, no input

Every day this week, spend time alone with God with no inputs.

A simple pattern:

1. **Settle.** Put your phone in another room (face down on the table doesn't count). Sit somewhere comfortable. Take three slow breaths.
2. **Read.** Read today's verse slowly, twice. Out loud if you can.
3. **Ponder.** What word or phrase stays with you? Think about it.
4. **Listen.** Sit quietly. If your mind wanders, gently come back to the word.
5. **Respond.** Say something honest to God. Write at least one line in a notebook.

If you need your phone: put it on aeroplane mode, turn off notifications and use a paper Bible if you can.

If nothing happens: that's OK. You're building a practice, not chasing a feeling. Faithfulness in the quiet matters, and we will persist until god speaks.

At the end of the week: send us (regional nyi) a short reflection on how it went or what God said.

Daily readings

Day	Read	Notice and do
Sun 29 Nov	Luke 2:1-7	The whole world was busy and on the move. What's crowding your days? **Do:** choose your time and place for this week's quiet time. Decide where your phone will go.
Mon 30 Nov	Luke 2:8-12	God spoke into an ordinary night shift. **Do:** take your first quiet time. Afterwards, write down one thing you noticed, even if it's "I was bored."
Tue 1 Dec	Luke 2:13-15	"Let's go and see." The shepherds responded. **Do:** ask God, "What are you inviting me to go and see?" Sit with the question.
Wed 2 Dec	Luke 2:16-20	Mary treasured and pondered. **Do:** write out verse 19 by hand. Keep it somewhere you'll see it.
Thu 3 Dec	Mark 1:35	Jesus prayed early, before the day began. **Do:** try your quiet time first thing, before you check your phone. How was it different?

Day	Read	Notice and do
Fri 4 Dec	Psalm 46:10	"Be still, and know that I am God." **Do:** breathe in slowly praying "Be still." Breathe out praying "and know." Repeat for two minutes.
Sat 5 Dec	1 Samuel 3:1-10	Samuel learned to recognise God's voice. **Do:** pray "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." Consider how you recognise Gods voice, and what he has said this week. Write your reflection for the week and send it in.

Get your church involved

- **Ask for silence.** Ask your pastor if the church could hold two minutes of real silence in this Sunday's service, introduced by a young person.
- **Create a quiet corner.** Set up a prayer space at church with candles, scripture cards, paper and pens. No screens.
- **Phone basket.** Put a basket at the church door for anyone who wants to leave their phone for the service.
- **Invite the whole church.** Encourage every age to take the digital sabbath challenge this week.
- **Prayer partners.** Pair young people with older church members who will pray for them this week, and ask the older members how they learned to pray.

Reflection page

At the end of the week, take some time with a notebook and these questions.

- What was it like to switch off?
- What did I reach for when I felt the urge to fill the silence?
- When did I sense God's presence this week?
- What did God say, show or remind me of?
- What do I want to keep doing?



Week 2: Real Life Connection

Sunday 6 December to Saturday 12 December 2026

Disconnect from online-only connection. Reconnect with real people.

Scripture: Luke 5:27-32; John 13:34-35

Sunday teaching: Dinner at Levi's House

Read Luke 5:27-32 aloud.

How many followers do you have? Now here's a harder question. How many people could you call at two in the morning if something went really wrong?

For lots of us, those two numbers are very different. We can have hundreds of online connections and still feel deeply lonely. We can be in fifteen group chats and still have no one who really knows us.

[LEADER: SHARE A TIME YOU FELT LONELY DESPITE BEING "CONNECTED", OR A TIME SOMEONE INVITED YOU IN WHEN YOU WERE ON THE OUTSIDE.]

Let me introduce you to Levi.

Levi was a tax collector. In Jesus' time, that meant he worked for the Romans, the occupying power, collecting money from his own people. Tax collectors often took extra for themselves. People saw them as traitors and cheats. Levi was probably wealthy and very lonely. Not someone you'd invite to your birthday.

Then one day, Jesus walks past Levi's booth. Verse 27 says Jesus "saw" him. Others looked past Levi or glared at him. **Jesus actually saw him.**

Jesus says two words: "Follow me."

Not "clean up your life." Not "here's a list of rules." It's an invitation. Come and be with me. So Levi gets up, leaves everything and follows.

Then here's my favourite part. Verse 29: Levi throws a huge party at his house for Jesus. And who does he invite? Lots of other tax collectors - All his friends. The people nobody else would eat with.

The first thing Levi does with his new faith is open his home and make an invitation. He's been invited, so now he invites. Then of course, the

religious people complain. "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" And Jesus says: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Jesus did this all the time - He welcomed children when his disciples tried to send them away, and He talked with a Samaritan woman at a well when no one else would. He made contact with people others wouldn't touch. He built a community out of random, diverse strangers (fishermen, tax collectors, zealots and doubters) and invited them to follow him together.

And think about Christmas. God could have just sent a message from heaven but instead, he came in person. John 1:14 says the Word became flesh and lived among us. **Christmas is the greatest "in real life" moment in history. God didn't love us from a distance. He showed up.** On the night before he died, Jesus said to his friends: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples." People will know we follow Jesus not by our posts, our T-shirts or our worship playlists, but by real, lived out, love that can be seen.

Most of us are waiting for someone to invite us. But what if this week, you were the Levi? What if you made the invitation?

The challenge this week is to be the one who reaches out. Invite someone for tea, a meal, or a walk. Start a small group. Ask someone a real question and listen to the answer. And think especially about the people on the edges. Who's new? Who's lonely? Who sits on their own? Who's different from you? Online messages are fine for setting it up. But the connection happens face to face. It might feel awkward or you might even get turned down. That's OK. Jesus' invitations weren't always accepted either.

Let's pray:

Jesus, thank you for seeing us and inviting us to follow you. Thank you for coming close, in person. Open our eyes to the people around us who are waiting for an invitation. Give us courage to make it. Make our love visible. Amen.



Group session

Time: 60–75 minutes

You'll need: food to share (a simple meal is ideal), a table, paper and pens, invitation cards (see Printables)

WELCOME (15 MINS)

Make this session a meal. Set a table, even if it's just biscuits and tea. As usual - Phones in the basket. Set one extra empty place at the table and leave it there all evening.

TABLE QUESTIONS (15 MINS)

Over food, go round the table with real questions (not "how was your week?"):

1. Who's someone who made you feel like you belonged? Who makes you feel seen?
2. What's the best invitation you've ever had? A party or conversation you will never forget?
3. When have you felt lonely, even with people around you? What makes you feel lonely?

TALK IT THROUGH (15 MINS)

Read Luke 5:27–32. Discuss:

1. Why do you think Levi's first response was to throw a party?
2. Who are the "Levis" in your school, college, work, or town?
3. What makes our youth group/church easy or hard for someone new to join? Be honest. What do we need to change to be more welcoming?
4. Look at the empty place at the table. Who should be sitting there?

MAKE IT REAL (15 MINS)

Hand out invitation cards. Each person writes a real invitation by hand to someone they'll invite this week. Talk through practical plans: who, what, when, where. Share ideas with each other.

PRAY AND SEND (5 MINS)

Pray over the empty seat, for the people who will be invited this week.

The challenge: make the invitation

This week, be the one who makes an invitation and builds a real connection.

Ideas (choose one or more):

- Invite someone for tea, coffee, or a meal.
- Ask someone a purposeful question and really listen: "What's been the hardest part of your year?" or "What are you hoping for next year?"
- Start a small group, Bible study, games night, or walking/running group. Get creative!
- Reach out to someone who is new, different from you, lonely, struggling, or on the edges.
- Visit an older person from church (with a leader) and build a friendship.
- Write a handwritten note to someone to connect and encourage.

Keep it in person. A text can set it up, but the time together happens face to face, with phones away.

Stay safe. If you're under 18, meet new people in public places, in groups or at church, and always tell a parent or leader.

Reflect: How did God show up? How did the connection change your day? What did you learn about God through other people? Send your reflections.

Daily readings

Day	Read	Notice and do
Sun 6 Dec	Luke 5:27-32	Jesus saw Levi. Levi threw a party. **Do:** make a list of three people who might need an invitation. Pray for each one.
Mon 7 Dec	Genesis 2:18	"It is not good for the man to be alone." We're made for each other. **Do:** make your first invitation today.
Tue 8 Dec	Mark 10:13-16	Jesus welcomed the children others sent away. **Do:** notice who gets overlooked where you spend your days. Say hello to them.
Wed 9 Dec	John 4:4-10	Jesus crossed cultural lines to talk to a Samaritan woman. **Do:** have a real conversation with someone from a different background or generation.
Thu 10 Dec	Acts 2:42-47	The early church ate together with glad and sincere hearts. **Do:** eat a meal with someone, with phones away.
Fri 11 Dec	Romans 12:9-16	"Practise hospitality." "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."

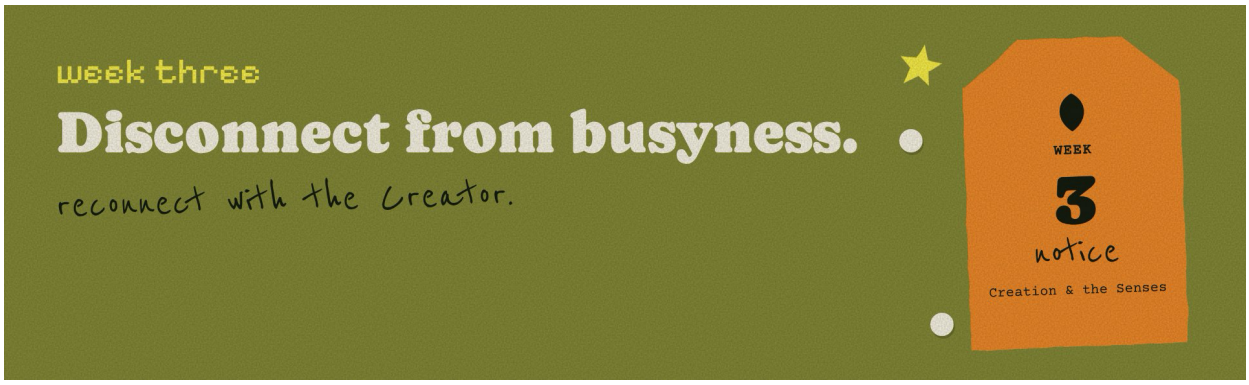
Day	Read	Notice and do
		Do: write a handwritten note of encouragement and deliver it.
Sat 12 Dec	John 13:34-35	Love that can be seen. **Do:** write your reflection on the week and send it in.

Get your church involved

- **An Advent table.** Host a simple shared meal after church on Sunday. Ask every young person to invite one person.
- **The empty chair.** Ask your pastor to place an empty chair at the front of church as a reminder to pray for and invite someone this Christmas.
- **Welcome team.** Young people welcome newcomers at the door this Sunday and sit with anyone on their own.
- **Visits.** Young people and leaders visit housebound or elderly members with handmade Christmas cards.
- **Across the generations.** Host a game or story night with older church members and young people together.
- **Reach out.** Connect with a local compassion project (or Nazarene Compassionate Ministries if there's one near you) serving people who may be isolated this Christmas.

Reflection page

- Who did I reach out to this week? What happened?
- What was hard about making an invitation?
- Where did I see God in another person this week?
- How did real-life connection change my days?
- Who do I want to keep investing in?



Week 3: Creation and the Senses

Sunday 13 December to Saturday 19 December 2026

Disconnect from busyness. Reconnect with the Creator.

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 5:16; 1 Kings 19:9-13; Psalm 19:1

Sunday teaching: Look Up

Before you read, ask everyone to close their eyes for thirty seconds and listen. Then ask: what could you hear? Then read Matthew 2:1-12 out loud.

When was the last time you really looked at the sky? A moment of focusing, noticing, reflecting at the heavens… For longer than ten seconds.

Most of us could describe our home screens in detail - Every app, every colour. You can probably even tell me the last few photos you posted, but we might struggle to say what the moon looked like last night, or what sunrise was like this morning.

[LEADER: SHARE A MOMENT WHEN SOMETHING IN CREATION STOPPED YOU IN YOUR TRACKS AND MADE YOU THINK OF GOD.]

I've been reading a book called *A Natural History of the Senses* by Diane Ackerman. She's a poet and a naturalist, and she writes about how our senses are the way we meet the world. One thing she points out is how much we depend on our eyes, and yet how rarely we truly **look**. We maybe see "tree" or "sky" or "bird," so we label it, but then we move on without ever noticing what's actually there. She also writes about how closely smell is tied to memory. One scent can carry you back years in a single second. And she writes about touch, and how much we need it - We were made to feel the world around us.As I have been reading it, I keep thinking: God made all of this. He made our eyes, our ears, our skin. He didn't make us as floating minds or souls. He made us as bodies, in a world full of colour and sound and texture and taste. And he called it very good.

Look at the Magi in Matthew 2. These were people who studied the sky. They watched it so carefully that when a new star appeared, they immediately noticed. Then they were changed by what they seen, and acted on it - even though it came at a cost. They followed it on a long, uncomfortable journey across deserts and borders. And when the star stopped over the place where

Jesus was, verse 10 says they were overjoyed. They bowed down and worshipped. **God used creation, a light in the sky, to lead people who didn't yet know him to Jesus.**

Psalm 19 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." Every sunrise is preaching. Every star is pointing. Creation is constantly saying to us “look, there's a Maker”. But it does it without words.

Now let’s look at Elijah in 1 Kings 19. Elijah was exhausted because he'd just been through a massive spiritual high, and then he crashed. He ran away from everything, and wanted to give up. Burnout isn't new to our generation! Let us notice what God did first. He let Elijah sleep and he gave him some bread and some water to fuel his physical body. He looked after him before asking him anything. Then God told Elijah to stand on the mountain, and a great wind came, tearing the rocks apart. Then an earthquake. Then a fire. And then came a gentle whisper. Some translations call it a "sound of sheer silence." And that's where Elijah met God.

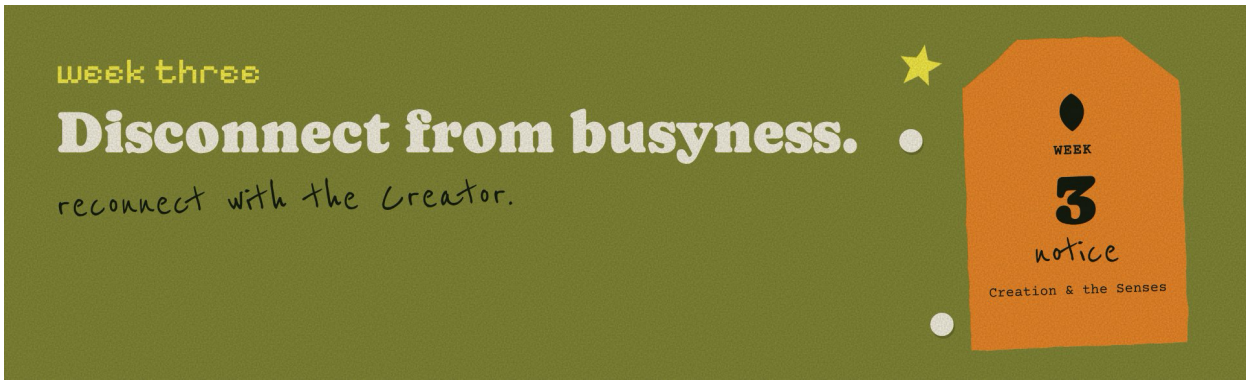
We also read in scripture that Jesus, in the busiest part of his ministry, "often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." (Luke 5:16)

We always expect God in the big, loud moments of our lives. And he is there sometimes. But very often he's in the quiet: the breeze, the birds, the stillness of an early morning, the quiet minutes of prayer in the evening, the frantic inward prayers on a sleepless night. Creation isn't God, and we don't worship it, but it points beyond itself to the One who made it, like a painting tells you something about the artist.

The challenge this week is to spend time in God's creation every day and use all five of your senses. Go to a park, a field, the sea, a tree on your street, a rooftop, somewhere you can get some space and notice creation. If you can't get outside, try a window, look to the sky, a plant or a pet. Slow down and reflect: What do you see? What can you hear? What can you smell? What can you touch? What can you taste? Stay longer than feels normal. Don't photograph it. Let your memory hold it. Then ask God: what are you showing me about you?

Let's pray:

Creator God, the heavens declare your glory and we so often walk past without looking. Open our eyes, our ears, our hands, our hearts. Quiet the noise inside us. Lead us, like the Magi, to Jesus. Amen.



Group session

Time: 60–75 minutes (take it outside if you can)

You'll need: paper, crayons or pencils, a bag of natural objects (pine cones, leaves, stones, bark, citrus fruit, herbs, spices), blindfolds, the senses walk sheet (see Printables)

WELCOME: THE SENSES GAME (15 MINS)

Blindfold volunteers and hand them natural objects to identify by touch, then by smell (cinnamon, orange peel, pine, coffee, mint, local foods and herbs). Finish with a taste (a clementine segment or a piece of bread for example). Ask: Which was easiest? Which surprised you?

SENSES WALK (25 MINS)

Go outside together (or gather around a window). Hand out the senses walk sheet. Spend the first five minutes in complete silence, then work through each sense. Encourage people to sketch, do bark or leaf rubbings, or write descriptions rather than taking photos. Get creative!

TALK IT THROUGH (15 MINS)

Read Matthew 2:1–2, 9–11 and 1 Kings 19:11–13. Discuss:

1. What did you notice on the walk that you'd normally miss?
2. Which sense helped you feel closest to God?
3. Where do you usually expect to find God: in the loud or the quiet?
4. What might creation be saying about the One who made it?

PRAY AND SEND (5 MINS)

Hold a natural object each (a stone, a leaf) while you pray. Thank God for one specific thing you noticed.

The challenge: five senses, every day

Spend time in creation every day this week. Use all five senses. Listen for what God reveals.

Each day, give 10–15 minutes to one sense (see the daily readings below), and notice the others too:

- **See:** pick one thing and look at it for two full minutes. What do you see in the second minute that you missed in the first?
- **Hear:** close your eyes. Listen for the furthest sound, then the closest.
- **Smell:** breathe in slowly. Does a smell bring back a memory?
- **Touch:** feel bark, stone, grass, water, soil. What's the temperature? The texture?
- **Taste:** eat something slowly, like a piece of fruit. Notice every part of it.

Then ask: **God, what are you showing me about you?**

Keep a record by hand: sketch, write, press a leaf, do a rubbing. Try not to photograph it. Send in your reflection at the end of the week

Can't easily get outside? Use a window, the sky, a plant, a pet, the rain, your food. Creation is closer than you think.

Daily readings

Day	Read	Notice and do
Sun 13 Dec	Matthew 2:1-12	**SEE.** The Magi noticed a star. **Do:** at dusk or after dark, look at the sky for five full minutes. What do you notice?
Mon 14 Dec	Psalm 19:1-6	**SEE.** The skies proclaim God's glory without words. **Do:** watch a sunrise or sunset (or the light moving across a wall). Sketch it.
Tue 15 Dec	Luke 12:24-28	**HEAR.** "Consider the ravens… consider the lilies." **Do:** find somewhere with birds or wind. Close your eyes and listen for ten minutes.
Wed 16 Dec	1 Kings 19:9-13; Luke 5:16	**HEAR.** God in the gentle whisper. **Do:** find your own "lonely place." Sit in as much quiet as you can find. What do you hear underneath?
Thu 17 Dec	Psalm 34:8	**TASTE.** "Taste and see that the Lord is good." **Do:** eat one piece of fruit as slowly as possible. Thank God for every part of it.
Fri 18 Dec	Genesis 2:7; 2 Corinthians 2:14-15	**SMELL.** God breathed life into us. We carry the aroma of Christ. **Do:** go outside and breathe slowly. What can you smell? What memory does it bring?
Sat 19 Dec	Job 12:7-10	**TOUCH.** "In his hand is the life of every creature."

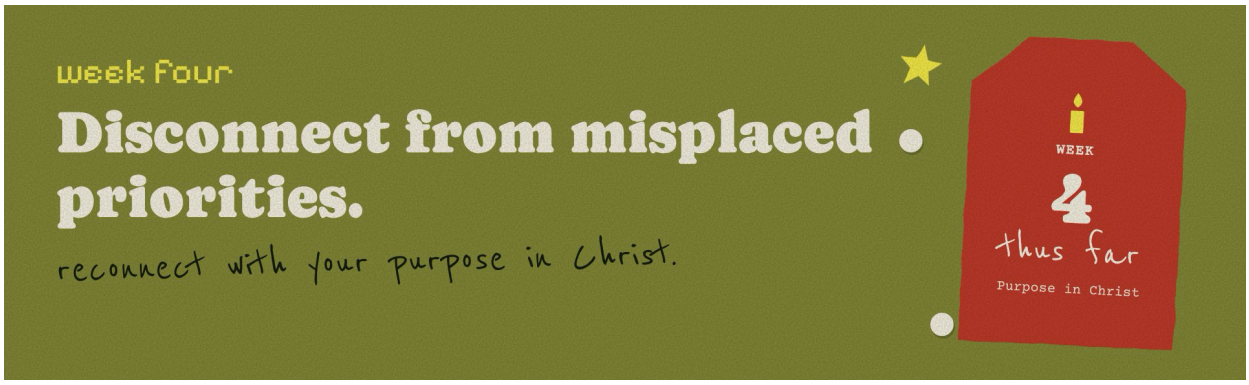
Day	Read	Notice and do
		Do: hold something natural: a stone, a leaf, soil, water. Write your reflection for the week and send it in.

Get your church involved

- **Prayer walk.** Organise a prayer walk around your church's neighbourhood, noticing and praying for what you see. How might God be asking you to help his creation flourish around you?
- **Bring creation in.** Ask young people to gather natural materials (branches, pine cones, leaves, stones) to decorate the church for Christmas.
- **Senses in the service.** Ask your pastor if young people can lead a short reflection in the Sunday service using light, scent, or sound.
- **Care for creation.** Organise a litter pick, plant something, or clean up a shared space near the church. Look for other local groups that do this and join them.
- **Wisdom from older members.** Ask older members to share a place in nature that has been special in their walk with God. You may want to consider any members with a passion for hiking, fishing, creation, gardening etc.

Reflection page

- Where did I spend time in creation this week?
- What did I see, hear, smell, touch and taste?
- What did I notice that I usually miss?
- What did creation show me about the Creator?
- How did slowing down change my days?



Week 4: Purpose in Christ

Sunday 20 December to Friday 25 December 2026

Disconnect from misplaced priorities. Reconnect with your purpose in Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:10-11; 1 Samuel 7:12; Isaiah 43:18-19

Sunday teaching: Thus Far, and Further

Read Matthew 1:18-23 aloud.

It's nearly the end of the year, and if you've been on social media at all, you'll have seen it. The "year in review" posts, The highlight reels, The best photos, trips, achievements, glow-ups. And somewhere inside, a little voice starts comparing: was my year good enough? How can I make my life look as good as theirs?

[LEADER: SHARE HONESTLY ABOUT YOUR YEAR. SOMETHING YOU'RE THANKFUL FOR, AND SOMETHING THAT WAS HARD.]

But nobody posts the 3am worries, or The friendship that ended. We don't photograph the exam that went badly, or make a story about the prayer that's still unanswered. We hide the family stuff no one else knows about.

The good news we remember at Christmas is that God was there for all of it.

When the angel spoke to Joseph, he said Mary's baby would be called Jesus, "because he will save his people from their sins." His name means "the Lord saves." His name is his mission. And he'll be called Immanuel, which means "God with us." The angels told the shepherds: "A Saviour has been born to you." We don't just celebrate a cute baby in a manger at Christmas. We celebrate the start of a rescue mission. That manger leads to a cross and an empty tomb. Jesus came so that we could be forgiven, restored and brought back home to God. The manger is the beginning of a much bigger story.

So what's at the centre of our lives?

Jesus once said: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Our priorities quietly drift. Not usually towards terrible things, but towards lesser things: grades, likes, looking like we've got it together, what other people think of us. And slowly, Jesus moves from the centre to the edges.

This isn't about guilt. It's more like tuning a guitar. When a string goes out of tune, you don't throw the guitar away. You bring it back to the right note. (however, don’t ask me anything else about guitars… this is all the wisdom I have!) This week is about bringing Jesus back to the centre.

There's an amazing moment in 1 Samuel 7. After God helped his people, the prophet Samuel took a big stone, set it up, and named it "Ebenezer," which means "stone of help." He said: "Thus far the Lord has helped us." It was a physical reminder. Something people could see, touch and point at. "Why's that stone there?" "Let me tell you what God did." He didn't say "Thus far everything has gone perfectly." He said "Thus far the Lord has helped us." God's faithfulness doesn't mean nothing went wrong. It means he was there.

And then in Isaiah 43, God says: "Forget the former things… See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" God isn't finished. He's already doing something new.

The challenge this week is to make your own Ebenezer: a handmade collage or mood board. Not on Pinterest. Not with AI. With your hands. Paper, glue, photos, ticket stubs, leaves, fabric, words, drawings.

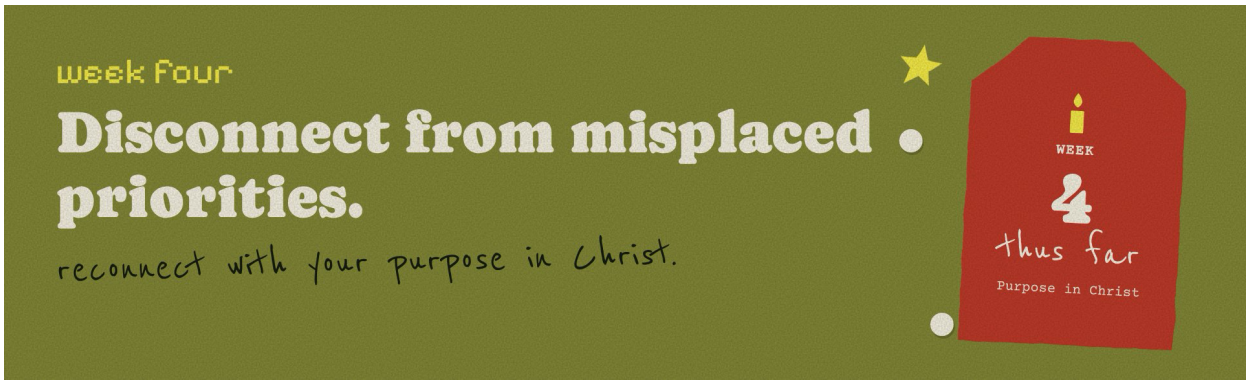
One side: look back. Where has God been faithful this year? Include the hard bits.

The other side: look forward. Ask God, what are you inviting me into next year? Who are you inviting me towards?

Then put it somewhere you'll see it in January.

Let's pray.

Jesus, thank you that you came on a mission to save us and bring us home. Thank you that you were with us in every part of this year. Forgive us for the times we pushed you to the edges. Come back to the centre. Thus far you have helped us. Lead us further. Amen.



Group session

Time: 75 minutes (this is a making session)

You'll need: large sheets of paper or card, old magazines, newspapers, packaging, scissors, glue, tape, pens, paint, fabric scraps, natural materials, string, candles. Ask everyone to bring photos, tickets or objects from their year.

WELCOME (10 MINS)

Phones in the basket. Play music on a speaker if you like (one person controls it, no one else touches a screen). Spread all the materials on tables.

LOOK BACK (25 MINS)

Read 1 Samuel 7:12. Invite everyone to start the "looking back" side of their collage. Prompt with questions:

- Where did God show up this year?
- What are you thankful for?
- What was hard? Where was God in that?
- Who did God use in your life?

LOOK FORWARD (20 MINS)

Read Isaiah 43:18-19. Invite everyone to start the "looking forward" side. Give space for quiet prayer before they begin. Prompts:

- What do you sense God inviting you into?
- What do you want to be at the centre of your life?
- Who do you want to invest in?
- What do you need to let go of?

SHARE (15 MINS)

In small groups, anyone who wants to can share one thing from each side of their collage.

PRAY AND SEND (5 MINS)

Light a candle in the middle of the room. Read Matthew 1:23 together. Pray for each other's year ahead.

The challenge: make your Ebenezer

Make a handmade collage or mood board: looking back at God's faithfulness this year, and looking forward to what he's inviting you into.

1. **Gather.** Collect materials from your life: photos, tickets, notes, receipts, pressed leaves, scraps of fabric, words cut from magazines, your own drawings.
2. **Look back.** On one side, reflect on what God has done this year. Include the good and the hard.
3. **Look forward.** On the other side, pray and ask what God is inviting you into next year.
4. **Centre it.** Put something in the middle that represents Jesus at the centre (a cross, a star, a word, a candle).
5. **Keep it.** Put it somewhere you'll see it in January.
6. **Share it.** Send a photo of your collage (no face needed) Talk it through with a leader or mentor you trust.

Daily readings

Day	Read	Notice and do
Sun 20 Dec	Matthew 1:18–25	Jesus' name is his mission. **Do:** start gathering materials for your collage.
Mon 21 Dec	Matthew 6:19–21, 33	Where your treasure is, there your heart will be. **Do:** write a list: what took up most of my time and attention this year? What do I want at the centre?
Tue 22 Dec	1 Samuel 7:12; Lamentations 3:22–23	"Thus far the Lord has helped us." **Do:** make the "looking back" side of your collage.
Wed 23 Dec	Isaiah 43:18–19	"See, I am doing a new thing!" **Do:** pray, then make the "looking forward" side of your collage.
Thu 24 Dec · Christmas Eve	Isaiah 9:2, 6–7	A great light in the darkness. **Do:** finish your collage. Light a candle beside it and give thanks.
Fri 25 Dec · Christmas Day	Luke 2:1–20; John 1:14	Immanuel: God with us. **Do:** keep your phone away for the first hour of Christmas morning. Read the Christmas story aloud with your family or friends. Thank God for coming close.

Get your church involved

- **A wall of "thus far."** Display young people's collages in the church foyer over Christmas (with permission).
- **Ebenezer stones.** Hand out small stones in the Christmas service for everyone to write or paint one word on, remembering God's faithfulness this year. Build a pile at the front of the church.
- **Testimonies.** Invite one or two young people to share what God showed them during Advent at the Christmas service.
- **All ages.** Invite the whole church, especially older members, to make a collage too. Then swap stories.
- **Carols.** Hold a candlelit carol service with screens off, using printed or handwritten song sheets.

Reflection page

- What did God do in my life this year?
- Where was God in the hard parts?
- What has been at the centre of my life? What do I want there?
- What do I sense God inviting me into next year?
- What will I keep from this Advent?



After Advent: keep going

Advent is four weeks but we hope these practices will become part of your life! Encourage young people:

- **Keep your daily quiet time.** Same time, same place, no inputs. Ten minutes is enough to start.
- **Keep making invitations.** One real-life connection a week.
- **Keep noticing.** Get outside. Look up.
- **Keep your Ebenezer.** Look at your collage in the new year. Add to it.

For leaders: we'd love to hear how Disconnect to Connect went in your church. What worked? What would you change? Send your feedback and stories to nyi@eurasiaregion.org. Your stories help us shape what comes next for young people across the region.



Printables

Commitment card

Print, cut out and give one to each young person in Week 1.

> **DISCONNECT TO CONNECT · ADVENT 2026**
> This Advent, I commit to spending _____ minutes alone with God every day.
> My time: _____ My place: _____
> My phone will be: _____
> My encouragement partner: _____
> "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." · 1 Samuel 3:10
> Signed: _____

Invitation card

Print, cut out and use in Week 2.

> **You're invited.**
> To: _____
> What: _____
> When: _____
> Where: _____
> I'd really love to see you. From: _____

Senses walk sheet

Use in Week 3. Fill it in by hand. Sketch, write or stick things on.

> **SEE.** Choose one thing. Look at it for two minutes. What did you notice in the second minute?
> **HEAR.** Close your eyes. What's the furthest sound? The closest?
> **SMELL.** Breathe in slowly. What can you smell? Does it bring back a memory?
> **TOUCH.** Find three textures. Describe them. Try a bark or leaf rubbing.
> **TASTE.** Eat something slowly. What do you notice?
> **ASK.** God, what are you showing me about you?

Collage guide

Use in Week 4.

> **Your Ebenezer: thus far, and further.**

> **Left side: looking back.** Where was God faithful this year? What am I thankful for? What was hard? Who did God use in my life?
>
> **Centre: Jesus.** A cross, a star, a candle, a word.
>
> **Right side: looking forward.** What is God inviting me into? Who is he inviting me towards? What do I need to let go of?
>
> **Materials:** anything! Photos, tickets, magazines, packaging, fabric, leaves, flowers, string, your own drawing and handwriting. No Pinterest, no AI. Just your hands, your story and your God.

Materials checklist for leaders

Week	You'll need
1	Phone basket, candle, paper, pens, Bibles, commitment cards
2	Food for a shared meal, table, extra chair, invitation cards, pens
3	Bag of natural objects, blindfolds, crayons, senses walk sheets, fruit, spices
4	Large card, magazines, scissors, glue, tape, paint, fabric, candles, small stones and paint pens