



# SOUTHSIDE Advent

## BREAD FOR THE WAITING

An Advent Baking Guide

Four Weeks of Bread, Devotion & Togetherness

**Southside Church**

## Introduction

Bread is one of the oldest foods on earth. It's simple, just flour, water, sometimes yeast, and salt. Yet it has fed families and communities for thousands of years. In Scripture, bread is more than food. It's a symbol of provision, presence, and promise.

Jesus called Himself the "Bread of Life." He multiplied loaves to feed those who were hungry. He broke bread with His disciples on the night before He died, and again after He rose. When we gather around bread, we gather around something sacred.

This guide invites your family to bake together during Advent, one recipe per week, each connected to the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. As you measure, mix, and wait for the dough to rise, you'll have time to talk, reflect, and remember that some of the best things in life require patience.

## How to Use This Guide

- **Choose a day each week** when your family can bake together. Sunday afternoons work well, but any day is fine.
- **Read the devotion together** before you start. Let the meaning settle as you work.
- **Bake slowly.** Let the kids help with measuring, kneading, and shaping. The mess is part of the memory.
- **Use the conversation prompts** while the bread bakes or as you eat it together.
- **Share the bread.** Consider giving a loaf to a neighbor, a friend, or someone who could use a reminder that they're loved.

*Even here, in the dark, the Light is coming.*

## **WEEK ONE: HOPE**

### *Simple Unleavened Bread*

#### **The Devotion**

*"The people who walk in darkness will see a great light." — Isaiah 9:2*

For centuries, God's people waited for the Messiah. Generations came and went, clinging to promises that seemed impossibly far away. They ate simple unleavened bread because they were always ready to move, always hoping for deliverance.

This week, we bake bread without yeast (unleavened bread). It's humble and quick, yet honest. It reminds us that sometimes hope doesn't look impressive. Sometimes it's just a simple thing. Sometimes it's a promise whispered in the dark or a meal shared with people you love.

As you make this bread, think about what you're waiting for. What are you hoping God will do?

#### **The Recipe: Simple Unleavened Bread**

##### *Ingredients*

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup warm water

##### *Instructions*

1. Preheat your oven to 425°F (220°C).
2. In a large bowl, mix the flour and salt.
3. Add the olive oil and warm water. Stir until a dough forms.
4. Turn the dough onto a floured surface and knead for 3-5 minutes until smooth.
5. Divide the dough into eight pieces. Roll each piece into a thin circle or oval.
6. Place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.

7. Bake for 8-10 minutes until lightly golden and slightly puffed.
8. Serve warm with butter, honey, or olive oil.

### **Conversation Prompts**

- What's something you're hoping for right now?
- What does it feel like to wait for something important?
- How do you think God's people felt, waiting for the Messiah for so long?

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## WEEK TWO: PEACE

### *Olive Oil Focaccia with Herbs*

#### **The Devotion**

*"You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!" — Isaiah 26:3*

Olive oil is a symbol of peace and blessing throughout Scripture. Kings were anointed with it, and lamps were lit with it. It was pressed slowly, patiently, from olives, the fruit crushed until it gave up something precious.

Focaccia is a bread that welcomes olive oil generously. It's soft, fragrant, and meant to be shared. As you dimple the dough with your fingers and drizzle oil over the top, think about the peace that God offers, not the peace the world gives, which depends on circumstances, but a more profound peace that comes from His presence.

Where do you need God's peace today? Let your hands in the dough be a prayer.

#### **The Recipe: Olive Oil Focaccia with Herbs**

##### *Ingredients*

3 cups all-purpose flour  
1 packet (2¼ teaspoons) instant yeast  
1½ teaspoons salt  
1½ cups warm water  
4 tablespoons olive oil, divided  
1 tablespoon fresh rosemary (or 1 teaspoon dried)  
Coarse sea salt for topping

##### *Instructions*

1. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, yeast, and salt.
2. Add warm water and two tablespoons of olive oil. Stir until a shaggy dough forms.
3. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let rise for 1-2 hours until doubled.

4. Coat a 9x13-inch baking pan with one tablespoon olive oil.
5. Transfer the dough to the pan and gently stretch it to the edges. If it springs back, let it rest 10 minutes and try again.
6. Cover and let rise another 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C).
7. Drizzle the remaining olive oil over the dough. Use your fingers to press deep dimples all over the surface.
8. Sprinkle with rosemary and coarse sea salt.
9. Bake for 20-25 minutes until golden brown.
10. Let cool slightly, then slice and serve warm.

## **Conversation Prompts**

- What does peace feel like to you? What does it look like?
- Is there something you're worried about that you could give to God?
- How is God's peace different from the "peace" the world offers?

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## WEEK THREE: JOY

### *Cinnamon Swirl Bread*

#### **The Devotion**

*"Don't be afraid! I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people." — Luke 2:10*

Joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness depends on circumstances. A good day, a gift, things going well, all are nice, but easily taken away. Joy is deeper. It's the quiet confidence that God is at work, even when life is hard. Joy can grow slowly, like bread rising in a warm kitchen, like cinnamon swirling through dough.

This week, we bake a bread that's sweet and warm and fragrant—the kind of bread that fills a house with comfort. As you roll the dough and spread the cinnamon sugar, think about where you've seen glimpses of joy this year. Even in difficult seasons, God scatters moments of goodness. Joy is learning to notice them.

Where is joy hiding in your life right now?

#### **The Recipe: Cinnamon Swirl Bread**

##### *Ingredients*

##### **For the dough:**

3½ cups all-purpose flour  
¼ cup sugar  
1 packet (2¼ teaspoons) instant yeast  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 cup warm milk  
4 tablespoons butter, softened  
1 egg

##### **For the filling:**

½ cup sugar  
2 tablespoons cinnamon

2 tablespoons butter, melted

### ***Instructions***

1. In a large bowl, combine 2 cups of flour, sugar, yeast, and salt.
2. Add warm milk, softened butter, and egg. Mix until combined.
3. Gradually add remaining flour until a soft dough forms.
4. Knead on a floured surface for 5-7 minutes until smooth and elastic.
5. Place in a greased bowl, cover, and let rise 1 hour until doubled.
6. Punch down the dough and roll it into a 9x15-inch rectangle.
7. Brush with melted butter. Mix the sugar and cinnamon, then sprinkle it evenly over the dough.
8. Starting from the short end, roll up tightly. Pinch seam to seal.
9. Place seam-side down in a greased 9x5-inch loaf pan.
10. Cover and let rise 45 minutes. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).
11. Bake for 30-35 minutes until golden brown and sounds hollow when tapped.
12. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from the pan. Slice and enjoy!

### **Conversation Prompts**

- What's something small that brought you joy this week?
- How is joy different from happiness?
- Where do you think joy "hides"? How can we learn to notice it more?

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## **WEEK FOUR: LOVE**

### *Braided Challah Bread*

#### **The Devotion**

*"So the Word became human and made his home among us." — John 1:14*

Challah is a traditional braided bread, often baked for the Sabbath and special celebrations. The braiding has meaning. The three strands woven together represent truth, peace, and justice. Or past, present, and future; or the unity of community.

For us this week, the braid reminds us of love that holds things together. God's love for us. Our love for each other. The way Christ wove Himself into our world, not staying far away, but coming close, close enough to be born. Close enough to be held. Close enough to die and rise again.

As you braid this bread, think about the people you love. Think about how God loves you. Think about how love binds things together that would otherwise fall apart.

#### **The Recipe: Braided Challah Bread**

##### *Ingredients*

4 cups all-purpose flour  
1 packet (2¼ teaspoons) instant yeast  
¼ cup sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
¾ cup warm water  
¼ cup vegetable oil  
3 eggs (2 for dough, 1 for egg wash)  
Sesame seeds or poppy seeds (optional)

##### *Instructions*

1. In a large bowl, mix flour, yeast, sugar, and salt.
2. Add warm water, oil, and two eggs. Stir until a dough forms.
3. Knead on a floured surface for 8-10 minutes until smooth and elastic.

4. Place in a greased bowl, cover, and let rise 1½ hours until doubled.
5. Punch down the dough and divide it into three equal pieces.
6. Roll each piece into a rope about 15 inches long.
7. Pinch the three ropes together at one end. Braid them: right strand over middle, then left strand over middle. Repeat until done. Pinch the ends together and tuck under.
8. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Cover and let rise 30-45 minutes.
9. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Beat the remaining egg and brush it over the loaf. Sprinkle with seeds if desired.
10. Bake for 25-30 minutes until deep golden brown.
11. Cool before slicing. Share generously.

## **Conversation Prompts**

- Who are the people who "hold you together"—who love you and support you?
- What does it mean to you that God loved us so much that He came to be with us?
- How can our family spread God's love to someone else this week?

*Even here, in the dark, the Light has come.*

## **A Final Word**

Thank you for baking through Advent with us. We hope these weeks of bread and conversation have drawn your family closer together and to God.

Jesus called Himself the Bread of Life. When we share bread, we share something of Him, provision, presence, love. May the bread you've baked this season remind you that God sees you, God feeds you, and God is with you.

The Light has come. Merry Christmas.

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