

16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire; 20 do not treat prophecies with contempt. 21 Test everything. Hold on to the good. 22 Avoid every kind of evil.

23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. (NIV84)

THE CHRISTIAN'S RECIPE FOR A HAPPY ADVENT

The smell of cookies will fill the kitchens of many, many homes in these coming weeks. Bowls full of dough and batter will turn into cookie sheets full of goodness and delight! That is provided that the recipes are followed! Assuming that the right ingredients and the right amounts of them are put together in the right order and baked for the right amount of time at the right temperature, then they'll turn out! (This by the way is why I don't bake or cook!) If you don't do it right or do it out of order it won't turn out! If you use cups instead of ounces, tablespoons instead of teaspoons, baking soda instead of baking powder it's not going to work (I'm actually not positive on that last one, but I'm guessing they are different for a reason.

Recipes are really instructions toward happiness, aren't they! You put in a lot of effort and you want the finished product to be good! You promised the kids cookies, and they want cookies that look and taste like cookies! If they are burnt or if you forget to put in the sugar, they won't be happy! But if you follow the recipe, the house will be filled with a pleasant aroma and smiling, chocolatey faces! And I don't know about you but that is a joyful thing to me!!

Today Paul gives us a recipe to be happy! And though there aren't chocolate chips in this recipe, it promises us greater happiness than even the smell and taste of warm cookies can bring. Paul gives us **The Christian's Recipe for a Happy Advent!** As we prepare to celebrate another Christmas, as we look for and long for the second coming of our King, Paul shows us how to be happy – even in the face of hardship and sorrow. Follow the recipe, and it will turn out with happiness and joy. Follow the recipe and joy everlasting will be yours when Christ Jesus returns.

The Christians Recipe for a Happy Advent Begins: ***16 Be joyful always; 17 pray continually; 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.***

19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire; 20 do not treat prophecies with contempt. 21 Test everything. Hold on to the good. 22 Avoid every kind of evil.

It might seem like a pretty basic list at first glance! Be happy, pray, give thanks! Do good, don't do evil, don't ignore the Bible but read and learn it! Those are kind of simple concepts, right. Sort of Sunday School answers in a way, right? But let's look a little closer. Are you following the recipe?

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, These are all present tense verbs. So in other words, keep on being joyful, be active in prayer, keep on being thankful! This is starting to be a little deeper than Sunday School, isn't it? And then the adverbs that are attached, **Be joyful always**; even the world is sad and depressing. Even when bad news comes your way or tragedy strikes. Always is a big word. **Pray continually**; Keep on being in prayer. Be active in your prayer life bringing all your doubts and concerns, your fears, your hopes and dreams, your desires for yourself and your requests of aid for others. Always pray. Live your life with an attitude of "Your will be done!" Continually – without ceasing!! **Give thanks in all circumstances**, even when there's coal in your stocking! Even when hardship is the norm, even in difficult, trying, testing times – give thanks!

This is a pretty hard recipe, isn't it? **Do not put out the Spirit's fire;** The Holy Spirit put faith in your heart. Don't hide it under a bushel basket. Let it shine! Let it grow! How you might ask? Paul continues **Do not treat prophecies with contempt.** Be in the Word – don't treat the Bible with contempt. Don't treat it like it's a story book that the pastor will read to you for 20 minutes each week! Study the Word, digest the Word, gain strength from the Word of God! Keep the fire of faith growing as you fan the flame of faith through the gospel. **Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.** Look at everything through the lens of Christian love. Strive to serve one another. Strive to be kind and compassionate and generous in everything!

And though we do some of those things some of the time, or maybe even a lot of them a lot of the time, we certainly cannot follow the recipe exactly as we are commanded, and that means that the finished product will not turn out! It's the **Recipe for a Happy Advent** but because we cannot follow it, we can't have happiness and peace! Actually our Advent should be one that's filled with fear and trembling! Jesus is coming, coming to judge and we've not lived up to the standards that he's set! We haven't followed the recipe. That means that his return shouldn't be a happy day for us! Rather we should expect judgement and damnation for our sinful lives.

The 4 year-old child wants so badly to bake the cookies. "It's so easy in the play kitchen, how much harder in the big person kitchen can it be!" they must think! But if they are left to try baking on their own. It will be a disaster! But if momma comes and helps them – then they will turn out the way the should.

That's what our Savior does for us! We have even less chance of a Happy Advent on our own than the 4 year-old has of successfully baking cookies on their own – but Jesus comes and helps us! And when Jesus is involved, it's always a successful venture!

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

God sanctifies us through and through. God makes us holy, even though we are riddled with sin! God the Father claimed us to be his own! God the Spirit put the gospel into our hearts through Word and Sacrament. Jesus Christ lived as our substitute and then became the sacrifices we needed to be at one with God! Our triune God loved us too much to let us spoil the recipe! He loved us too much to do this on our own! He loved us so much that he stepped into our world, into our lives, into our hearts! He

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

loved us so much that he did all that was needed for us to spend an eternity with him! He followed the perfect recipe and now as a result We can have a **Happy Advent!**

Those things are not a burden or a reminder of failures anymore!

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances. We can do them and more with Jesus in our hearts. We can live our lives to worship God and serve others. We can tell of Jesus' love that others might have a Happy Advent! We can equip those in our lives to cling to Jesus – to his perfection, to his sacrifice, to his love! They might join us as those who can have a Happy Advent! And Happy Advent will turn into Happy Eternity at Jesus side forever in heaven!!! Amen.