

# ADVENT

A 2025 DWELL DEVOTIONAL GUIDE



**Park Cities**  
BAPTIST CHURCH

IN HIM WAS  
LIFE, AND THAT LIFE  
WAS THE LIGHT OF  
ALL MANKIND. THE  
LIGHT SHINES IN THE  
DARKNESS, AND THE  
DARKNESS HAS NOT  
OVERCOME IT.

JOHN 1:4-5





## WELCOME TO THE ADVENT 2025 DEVOTIONAL GUIDE!

Advent marks the beginning of the Christian year — a sacred season of anticipation and preparation for the celebration of Christ’s birth. During these four weeks leading up to Christmas, we remember that Jesus, the Light of the World, has come to pierce the darkness with hope, peace, and joy.

The word Advent comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning “coming” or “arrival.” It reminds us to look back with gratitude at Christ’s coming in Bethlehem and to look ahead with expectation for his promised return. In both, we celebrate that Christ is the Light who has come — and who still shines in and through us today.

Our 2025 Advent Devotional Guide invites you to prepare your heart for the radiant joy of Christmas. Each day features a beloved (or perhaps new) Christmas carol or hymn, Scripture readings, space to write a reflection, and a link to a beautiful performance — all pointing us to the Christ-Child, our Light and our Hope.

We’d like to invite you to join us all year as we read scripture every day through our Dwell Journal. If you are new to us and haven’t taken part in Dwell, you can try it during the last week of the year by reading the daily scripture passages and journaling how God speaks to you (starting on page 57). Then be sure to pick up our January 2026 Dwell Journal or follow along at **[pcbc.org/dwell](https://pcbc.org/dwell)**.

May this season fill you with his light and love — and inspire you to share it with everyone around you.



SCAN TO LISTEN TO OUR  
DAILY ADVENT PODCAST!

# COME, THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

*Day 1*

NOVEMBER 30

So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,  
cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals!  
You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.  
And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring  
and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

GENESIS 3:14-15



When sin shattered Eden, God spoke a promise he had already prepared: the seed of the woman would crush the serpent. The very first Christmas promise wasn't wrapped in lights or music, but in hope whispered into the darkness.

Advent begins here – with God declaring that evil will not win. Jesus was the answer God had already prepared to heal our brokenness. Into humanity's darkest moment, God spoke His promise of abundant hope that would come through the Light of the World.

GENESIS 3:14-15

*Where do I most need to see  
God's promise of hope in my  
brokenness today?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

#### FAMILY ACTIVITY

Bake Christmas cookies and deliver them to neighbors — don't miss out on looking at Christmas lights together!

## Day 2

DECEMBER 1



The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

GENESIS 12:1–3

God told Abraham his family would bless the whole world, not just one nation. That blessing is fulfilled in the person of Jesus, who brings life, peace, and salvation to every people group and every nation. Advent reminds us that Christmas — Christ’s presence — was never meant to stop with us; it’s meant to flow through us. The God who blessed you with the gift of salvation in Christ wants you to pour out that blessing upon others.

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### REFLECTION

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*How might God want to bless others through my life this season?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN



JOY  
TO THE  
WORLD

O COME, O COME,  
EMMANUEL

*Day 3*

DECEMBER 2

Later, the Lord sent this message to King Ahaz: “Ask the Lord your God for a sign of confirmation, Ahaz. Make it as difficult as you want — as high as heaven or as deep as the place of the dead.” But the king refused. “No,” he said, “I will not test the Lord like that.” Then Isaiah said, “Listen well, you royal family of David! Isn’t it enough to exhaust human patience? Must you exhaust the patience of my God as well? All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’).”

ISAIAH 7:10–14



The sign God promised was shocking — a virgin would give birth to Emmanuel, God with us. God. Not distant, not detached, but here — present — breathing our air.

Advent is the season where we remember that God didn’t just send a message — he came himself. Jesus entered the ordinary to show us that we are never alone.

He is always with us. He is with you right now, fully present in every beat of your joys and your trials. We are never without hope!

ISAIAH 7:10–14

*How does knowing God is “with me” change how I walk through my day?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

# ✦ ISAIAH 9:2-7 ✦

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. You will enlarge the nation of Israel, and its people will rejoice. They will rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest and like warriors dividing the plunder. For you will break the yoke of their slavery and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders. You will break the oppressor's rod, just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian. The boots of the warrior and the uniforms bloodstained by war will all be burned. They will be fuel for the fire. For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!

Darkness was Israel's reality — war, fear, and despair was ever-present. But God promised a great light, one who would break the chains of oppression and bring peace that would last. That light is Jesus, whose names remind us that he is all that we need: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Advent invites us to step out of the shadows and live in the bright light of his resurrected reign. As followers of Jesus, we have been called out of the darkness of sin and death and transferred into the kingdom of righteousness and life!

*Which title of Jesus do I connect with the most during this Advent season?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN



*Day 4 / Dec 3*

FOR UNTO US,  
A CHILD IS  
BORN



Day 5  
DECEMBER 4



“For the time is coming,” says the Lord, “when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. And this will be his name: ‘The Lord Is Our Righteousness.’ In that day Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety.”

JEREMIAH 23:5-6

Earthly rulers promise justice but fail repeatedly. God promised a king — a righteous Branch from David’s line — who would reign with justice and righteousness forever. That king is Jesus, and his kingdom is unlike any other; a kingdom defined by righteousness, grace, love, forgiveness, and peace. Advent reminds us that our hope is not in politics or power, but in the powerful rule of the living Christ. As followers of Jesus, we are called to live our lives as citizens of the Kingdom of God.

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REFLECTION

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*In what ways can I live my life to reflect the high call to righteousness of the Kingdom of God?*

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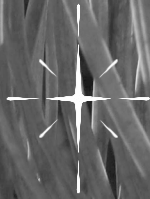


SCAN TO LISTEN

THE  
KING  
HAS  
COME

*Day 6 / Dec 5*

BECAUSE  
OF  
BETHLEHEM



## ✦ MICAH 5:2-5 ✦

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf. The people of Israel will be abandoned to their enemies until the woman in labor gives birth. Then at last his fellow countrymen will return from exile to their own land. And he will stand to lead his flock with the Lord's strength, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. Then his people will live there undisturbed, for he will be highly honored around the world. And he will be the source of peace. When the Assyrians invade our land and break through our defenses, we will appoint seven rulers to watch over us, eight princes to lead us.

God delights in using what the world calls "small." The tiny village of Bethlehem was largely overlooked, but from it came the light of the world, the Savior, Jesus Christ.

When we feel weak or unnoticed, small or insignificant, we can trust that Christ brings greatness to our world through humble beginnings. Verse 4a reminds us: *"And he will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God."* Hallelujah!

*How has God used something small or surprising in your own life to show his greatness?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

Out of the stump of David’s family will grow a shoot — yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord . He will delight in obeying the Lord . He will not judge by appearance nor make a decision based on hearsay. He will give justice to the poor and make fair decisions for the exploited. The earth will shake at the force of his word, and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked. He will wear righteousness like a belt and truth like an undergarment. In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all. The cow will graze near the bear. The cub and the calf will lie down together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. The baby will play safely near the hole of a cobra. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes without harm. Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord. In that day the heir to David’s throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, and the land where he lives will be a glorious place.

ISAIAH 11:1-10



Christ’s reign brings peace where there was hostility, and harmony where there was fear. Verse 6 says, “In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion, and a little child will lead them all.”

The Prince of Peace is not waiting for heaven to start his work. He begins his work in us today! Those of us who follow Jesus are called to live as peacemakers in his kingdom today.

ISAIAH 11:1-10

*What one small step can you take today to be a peacemaker?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

# HE SHALL REIGN FOREVERMORE

*Day 7*

DECEMBER 6

# Day 8

DECEMBER 7



“Comfort, comfort my people,” says your God. “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and her sins are pardoned. Yes, the Lord has punished her twice over for all her sins. Listen! It’s the voice of someone shouting, “Clear the way through the wilderness for the Lord! Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God! Fill in the valleys, and level the mountains and hills. Straighten the curves, and smooth out the rough places. Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The Lord has spoken!” A voice said, “Shout!” I asked, “What should I shout?” “Shout that people are like the grass. Their beauty fades as quickly as the flowers in a field. The grass withers and the flowers fade beneath the breath of the Lord. And so it is with people. The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever. O Zion, messenger of good news, shout from the mountaintops! Shout it louder, O Jerusalem. Shout, and do not be afraid. Tell the towns of Judah, ‘Your God is coming!’ Yes, the Sovereign Lord is coming in power. He will rule with a powerful arm. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes. He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.”

ISAIAH 40:1–11

The God who speaks comfort also calls us to clear the way. In verses 3–5 we read, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: *‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough places smooth; the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.’*” Repentance is the road grader in our hearts, making a straight highway for Christ to reign supreme in us! Advent is not just remembering his coming. It’s preparing our hearts to welcome him afresh.

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## REFLECTION

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*What rough places in your heart need to be made ready for Jesus?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

## FAMILY ACTIVITY

Write Christmas cards for friends or neighbors and pray for their families.



HOPE  
OF  
ISRAEL

*Day 9 / Dec 8*

GO, TELL IT  
ON THE  
MOUNTAIN



## ✦ ISAIAH 52:7-10 ✦

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns! The watchmen shout and sing with joy, for before their very eyes they see the Lord returning to Jerusalem. Let the ruins of Jerusalem break into joyful song, for the Lord has comforted his people. He has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has demonstrated his holy power before the eyes of all the nations. All the ends of the earth will see the victory of our God.

The gospel is not advice. It's great news! Verse 9 says, *"Burst into songs of joy together... for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem."* God has acted in grace and mercy to save us!

At Christmas, heaven's unprecedented announcement breaks straight into the despair of a broken world.

Our gracious God reigns! If our feet carry his peace, our voices will ring out with the joy of his hope.

*Who in your own life most needs to hear this joyful good news during this season? Will you ask the Lord to provide a clear opportunity for him to empower you to share it?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

# Day 10

## DECEMBER 9



Who has believed our message? To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm? My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. He was despised and rejected — a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all. He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word.

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave. But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands. When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

ISAIAH 53:1-12

The cradle points to the cross. The Christ child wrapped in swaddling clothes would one day be wrapped in our sin. Verses 5-6 remind us, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all ... by his wounds we are healed." Incredible! Our advent joy grows even deeper when we see Bethlehem's manger in the shadow of Calvary's cross.

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### REFLECTION

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*This Advent season, how does remembering the cross deepen your joy in Christ's birth?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN



WHAT  
CHILD  
IS THIS?

# HOSANNA, PRAISE IS RISING

*Day 11* | DECEMBER 10

Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey — riding on a donkey’s colt. I will remove the battle chariots from Israel and the warhorses from Jerusalem. I will destroy all the weapons used in battle, and your king will bring peace to the nations. His realm will stretch from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.

ZECHARIAH 9:9-10



Jesus doesn’t show up on a warhorse; he shows up on the colt of a donkey. That’s his way of saying his kingdom doesn’t run on force, but on peace.

We keep trying to win by controlling every situation, but Advent is about letting go and letting him be King.

What if instead of holding things tighter this season, instead of attempting to control all the brokenness that surrounds you and your family, you trusted him enough to let the humble Christ reign?

ZECHARIAH 9:9-10

*Where in your life are you clinging to control instead of receiving the peace of King Jesus?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

## ✦ MALACHI 3:1-4 ✦

“Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal, or like a strong soap that bleaches clothes. He will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the Lord. Then once more the Lord will accept the offerings brought to him by the people of Judah and Jerusalem, as he did in the past.”

God’s refining fire isn’t about burning us down; it’s about burning away the rubbish that keeps us from clearly reflecting him to a broken world all around us. Waiting on God is never wasted; it’s in the waiting that he shapes us.

Advent isn’t just a countdown to Christmas; it’s a space for God to do deep work within us. The question is, will we let him refine us, or will we continue to cling to those things that hold us back and make it harder for others to see Christ in us?

*What do you sense God wanting to refine in your heart this Advent season?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN



*Day 12 / Dec 11*

# REFINER'S FIRE





HARK,  
THE  
HERALD  
ANGELS  
SING

# Day 13

## DECEMBER 12



The Lord of Heaven's Armies says, "The day of judgment is coming, burning like a furnace. On that day the arrogant and the wicked will be burned up like straw. They will be consumed — roots, branches, and all. But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture. On the day when I act, you will tread upon the wicked as if they were dust under your feet," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. "Remember to obey the Law of Moses, my servant — all the decrees and regulations that I gave him on Mount Sinai for all Israel. Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord arrives. His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers.

Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse."

MALACHI 4:1-6

Before silence fell, God left his people with both a warning and a promise. Judgment was coming, but so was healing and reconciliation. Advent reminds us that we live in the tension of the "already and not yet," meaning Christ has come, and he will come again. That means that every day is a chance to get ready, not with fear but with a hope that will not be dimmed.

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### REFLECTION

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*How can you live today with hope and readiness for Christ's return, instead of living in fear or distraction?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

BE BORN IN ME

*Day 14*

DECEMBER 13

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!” Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!” Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.” The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. For the word of God will never fail.” Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” And then the angel left her.

LUKE 1:26 - 38



Mary’s whole world flipped upside down in a single conversation. She didn’t have answers, but she said “yes” anyway: “*Let it be to me according to your word.*” That’s the very definition of faith.

Advent isn’t just about looking back; it’s practicing that same yes when God interrupts our plans.

Where is he asking you to trust him right now?

LUKE 1:26 - 38

*In what area of your life is God asking you to say “yes” to him, even if it doesn’t make sense right now?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

*Day 15 / Dec 14*

# THE MAGNIFICAT



# ✦ LUKE 1:39-56 ✦

A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said." Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever." Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.

Mary's song wasn't about her situation; it was about God's faithfulness. Joy doesn't come from easy circumstances; it comes from remembering who he is and what he's done.

Advent joy is rooted in God's character, not what's under the tree. When was the last time you stopped and spent time praising him for his goodness? What if you and/or your family practiced this before opening a single gift from beneath your tree?

*When was the last time you paused to praise God simply for who he is, not for what he's done for you?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

## FAMILY ACTIVITY

Make a hot chocolate bar then watch your favorite Christmas movie!

# HERE COMES HEAVEN

*Day 16*

DECEMBER 15



Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy: “Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people. He has sent us a mighty Savior from the royal line of his servant David, just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago. Now we will be saved from our enemies and from all who hate us. He has been merciful to our ancestors by remembering his sacred covenant— the covenant he swore with an oath to our ancestor Abraham. We have been rescued from our enemies so we can serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness for as long as we live. And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins. Because of God’s tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.”

LUKE 1:67–79



The Holy Spirit filled Zechariah, just as he had filled Elizabeth. He enabled the priest to prophesy. Zechariah went on to recite a psalm of praise. Zechariah praised God for his faithfulness in fulfilling ancient prophecies by sending a Savior to redeem His people. Note that Zechariah’s earlier doubt and his loss of speech did not mark the end of his spiritual journey or ministry. He was subjected to God’s discipline, but now he praises God and serves him. Earlier, Mary rejoiced that she was blessed; now Zechariah blesses Yahweh, the God of Israel. We can find encouragement in knowing that God’s discipline, though painful, also ushers in a new season of blessing and praise.

LUKE 1:67–79

*Where have I experienced God’s discipline, and how might He be using it even now to usher me into a new season of blessing?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

# Day 17

## DECEMBER 16



This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet: “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’” When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

MATTHEW 1:18 – 25

Joseph was described as “righteous,” and the essence of that word is that he was diligent in obeying the law. During that period, the law mandated ending engagements if adultery was involved, with stoning as the punishment. Nonetheless, Joseph’s desire to avoid publicly shaming Mary also reflected his merciful nature. As recipients of God’s mercy and grace, how can we reflect these qualities in our relationships with others?

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### REFLECTION

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*In what situations this week can I choose both obedience to God’s ways and mercy toward others?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

A black and white photograph of holly leaves and berries, serving as the background for the text.

*Day 17 / Dec 16*

O COME,  
ALL YE  
FAITHFUL



# Day 18

## DECEMBER 17



At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee.

He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them. That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior — yes, the Messiah, the Lord — has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!

And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others — the armies of heaven — praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

LUKE 2:1–20

In Luke 2, the author emphasizes Jesus' humble birth by contrasting it with the grandeur of a powerful Roman emperor and depicting his arrival in simple, unpretentious circumstances. The story emphasizes that the Savior of the world and the king of the universe was born into poverty in a lonely manger, hinting at his mission to serve the poor and outcasts. The small town of Bethlehem, the manger, and the stunning angelic announcement to the shepherds are all part of this incredible narrative. As Luke tells the story of Christ's arrival in Bethlehem, God is at work shaping the story of Christ's arrival in your heart — so that through it, others might be drawn to the Christ.

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### REFLECTION

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*How can I follow the example of Jesus by embracing humility and serving those who are overlooked?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

SILENT  
NIGHT

# THE FIRST NOEL

*Day 19*

DECEMBER 18

# MATTHEW 2:1-12



Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him.” King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?” “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they said, “for this is what the prophet wrote: ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’” Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. Then he told them, “Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!” After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

Israel knew the Scriptures, yet missed their king, while the Gentiles bowed in worship. The true king came to lay down his life, but Herod clung to his throne. The wise men offered worship; Herod was consumed by fear.

This season, what is the condition of our heart? Will we cling to the temporary things of this world, or will we let it all go and place it at the feet of our Savior and Lord?

*What can you learn from the Magi about pursuing Christ with intentionality and sacrifice this Christmas?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. God sent a man, John the Baptist, to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn — not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

JOHN 1:1-14



Just as God once dwelled with his people in the wilderness, so the living word came to dwell with us in Jesus. John draws on the rich biblical image of God “tabernacling” (dwelling) with Israel in visible glory. For John, “glory” (doxa) means both the radiant presence of God among his people and the honor he alone deserves.

And now, because Christ is with us in every season, the question remains: *are we giving him the honor he is due?*

JOHN 1:1-14

*How does remembering that Jesus is the Word made flesh change the way you approach him in prayer and daily life? How can you give him the honor he is due?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN



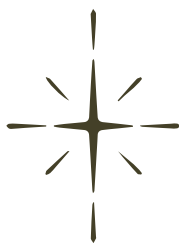
*Day 20 / Dec 19*

# MESSIAH



*Day 21 / Dec 20*

# A STRANGE WAY TO SAVE THE WORLD



## ✦ GALATIANS 4:4-7 ✦

But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

Our circumstances dictate a lot about what we do and how we live. In Galatians 4:4-7, Paul outlines the specific circumstances under which Jesus was born. He was born of a woman, under the law, to redeem those under the Law. We all have specific circumstances under which we encounter Jesus, especially during Christmas.

This Christmas, reflect on your circumstances, make a list, and pray about how you might more fully encounter Christ this year.

*How might your unique life circumstances be the exact place where Jesus wants to meet you this Christmas?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN



GRACE  
OF GOD  
WITH US

## Day 22

DECEMBER 21

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges ; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

What is something at which you excel? What's something that causes you to struggle? In our culture, we tend to highlight our strengths and minimize our weaknesses. But the Son of God, perfectly and completely exalted in heaven, humbled himself to rescue and redeem us. The incarnation of Jesus is an intentional decision by the Son of God to embrace weakness because he loves us. Today, look for something that highlights a weakness or deficiency in your own life so you can more fully love and serve a friend or neighbor with empathy and grace.

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### REFLECTION

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*Where is God inviting you to embrace humility so that you can love and serve others like Christ?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

### FAMILY ACTIVITY

Read the Christmas story from Luke 2, then play “Christmas Charades” with words from the Bible story.

For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.

TITUS 2:11-14



At Christmas we talk a lot about the immediate response of the shepherds to the appearance of the angels revealing Jesus’ birth, but what should our ongoing response be? How can we continue to respond to the incredible revelation that the Son of God has come to dwell among us?

Titus 2:11-14 tells us: *“Repent of the ways we worship other things, be self-controlled, wait patiently for the Lord, and be passionate about doing good.”*

TITUS 2:11-14

*Today, ask the Lord how you can respond to his glorious appearing.*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

# THE THRILL OF HOPE

*Day 23*

DECEMBER 22

*Day 24 / Dec 23*

# ARRIVAL





## ✦ HEBREWS 1:1-4 ✦

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names.

It is hard to believe that the baby laying in a manger was the *"exact imprint of God's nature."*

When we look at Jesus, we see God himself. All the things that God has done, all the things that God is, Jesus is, and Jesus will always be. Because of what Christ has done, we have direct access to God, and God is speaking directly to us.

Today, thank God that he has chosen to speak to us, make himself known to us, and that he invites us to know and serve him.

*What amazes you most about the reality that in Jesus, God speaks to you personally?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

# Day 25

DECEMBER 24

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance — an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold — though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. The reward for trusting him will be the salvation of your souls. This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward. They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen. So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.

1 PETER 1:3–13

Emmanuel, a name for Jesus that we generally only use at Christmas, reflects one of the central stories of the Bible: God wants to be with us. This is the story told in Revelation 21:1-7. In verses 3-4, the New Living Testament says, *"I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, 'Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.'"* The event we celebrate on Christmas day, God's coming to be with us, is one we get to enjoy every day throughout eternity. One day, every day will be Christmas as it was always intended to be. Those of us who are in Christ know that there is a greater Christmas coming where there will be no more sorrow and no more pain. This Christmas, celebrate and be glad!

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## REFLECTION

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*How does the promise of a greater Christmas to come give you hope and perspective in your present circumstances?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN

ALL IS  
WELL



# CHRISTMAS DAY

*Day 26*

DECEMBER 25

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.” And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega — the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.”

REVELATION 21:1–7



Every Christmas is full of traditions, many of which are common, and some that are unique to your family. As followers of Jesus, we should establish a regular tradition where we remember all that we have been given through Christ. Our trials and tribulations can make us forget the benefits that we have in Jesus, and if this is not a regular tradition in your life, then make Christmas Day an opportunity to start a new tradition. Spend time today recounting to him how grateful you are for all that he has so generously bestowed upon you.

REVELATION 21:1–7

*What blessings in Christ are you most thankful for this Christmas Day, and how can you make gratitude a tradition in your family?*

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SCAN TO LISTEN



*December 26-31*

# DAILY READINGS



# *Psalm 54*

DECEMBER 26

WRITE 2-3 KEY SCRIPTURE VERSES

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HEAR GOD'S VOICE

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OBEY GOD'S INSTRUCTION

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TELL A FRIEND

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DECEMBER 27

CATCH UP OR REREAD ANY DAYS THAT WERE ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL TO YOU, AND JOURNAL ABOUT THEM HERE.

[illegible]



# DECEMBER 28

## SERMON NOTES

# *2 Peter 1*

DECEMBER 29

WRITE 2-3 KEY SCRIPTURE VERSES

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HEAR GOD'S VOICE

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OBEY GOD'S INSTRUCTION

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TELL A FRIEND

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# *2 Peter 2*

DECEMBER 30

WRITE 2-3 KEY SCRIPTURE VERSES

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HEAR GOD'S VOICE

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OBEY GOD'S INSTRUCTION

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TELL A FRIEND

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# *2 Peter 3*

DECEMBER 31

WRITE 2-3 KEY SCRIPTURE VERSES

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HEAR GOD'S VOICE

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OBEY GOD'S INSTRUCTION

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TELL A FRIEND

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