

An Advent Devotional Guide



**A Project of the
Christian Education Ministry**

Friendship Baptist Church

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Table of Contents

Greetings

What is Advent? History and Meaning

An Advent Prayer

Humble Preparation

Jesus is the Reason for the Season

Our Saving Grace

Hope on a Silent Night

Letting Your Light Shine

Matthew 5:16 Scripture

The Greatest Gift

Waiting for the Son

Waiting for the Shepherd

Waiting with Joy

The Real Joy of Christmas

The Unwrapped Gift

Silent Night, Holy Night

A Starry Night

While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night (lyrics)

Our Waiting is Over

A Savior is Born

The Prince of Peace

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Emmanuel, The Everlasting Gift

Joy to the World, The Lord is Come (lyrics)

O', What a Wonderful Child!

Sweet Little Jesus Boy (lyrics)

Go Tell It on the Mountain

Go Tell It on the Mountain: A Song of Celebration

Advent Bible Reading Plan

Abbreviations Key for Bible Versions

Abbreviations Key for Devotional Writing Contributors

Greetings

With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Board of Christian Education wants to share with you devotions on various topics that will depict the true meaning of the Advent season.

Advent means coming or arrival. It is about waiting for the first coming, the birth of Jesus, and also about waiting for the second coming, to make all things right in the end.

As we enter the Advent season of Christmas gatherings with family and friends, let's not forget the true meaning of the season. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11) [KJV] Let's worship and praise God for his unselfish gift of Jesus.

We pray that you will enjoy reading what the Lord has put on our hearts to share--the real *Reason for the Season*.

Thank you God for Jesus. Amen

BJH

What Is Advent? History and Meaning

For many Christians unfamiliar with the liturgical year, there may be some confusion surrounding the meaning of the Advent season. Some people may know that the Advent season focuses on expectation and think that it serves as an anticipation of Christ's birth in the season leading up to Christmas. This is part of the story, but there's more to Advent.

The word "Advent" is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming," which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*. Scholars believe that during the 4th and 5th centuries in Spain and Gaul, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God's incarnation represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1), his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (John 1:29), and his first miracle at Cana (John 2:1). During this season of preparation, Christians would spend 40 days in penance, prayer, and fasting to prepare for this celebration; originally, there was little connection between Advent and Christmas.

By the 6th century, however, Roman Christians had tied Advent to the coming of Christ. But the "coming" they had in mind was not Christ's first coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but his second coming in the clouds as the judge of the world. It was not until the Middle Ages that the Advent season was explicitly linked to Christ's first coming at Christmas.

Today, the season of Advent lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. Advent 2022 begins on Sunday, November 27, and ends on Saturday, December 24. As we prepare during this Advent season, let us thank God for the greatest gift, Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for the atonement of all humankind.

—Holcomb

Christianity.com

An Advent Prayer

This Advent, Lord, come to the manger of my heart.
Fill me with Your presence from the very start.
As I prepare for the holidays and gifts to be given,
Remind me of the gift You gave when You sent Your Son from Heaven.

The first Christmas gift, it was the greatest gift ever.
You came as a baby born in a manger.
Wrapped like the gifts I find under my tree,
Waiting to be opened, to reveal Your love to me.

Restore to me the wonder that came with Jesus' birth,
When He left the riches of Heaven and wrapped Himself in rags of earth.
Immanuel, God with us, Your presence came that night.
And angels announced, "Into your darkness, God brings His Light."

"Do not be afraid," they said, to shepherds in the field.
Speak to my heart today, Lord, and help me to yield.
Make me like those shepherd boys, obedient to Your call.
Setting distractions and worries aside, to You I surrender them all.

Surround me with Your presence, Lord, I long to hear Your voice.
Clear my mind of countless concerns and all the holiday noise.
Slow me down this Christmas, let me not be in a rush.
In the midst of parties and planning, I want to feel Your hush.

This Christmas, Jesus, come to the manger of my heart.
Invade my soul like Bethlehem, bringing peace to every part.
Dwell within and around me, as I unwrap Your presence each day.
Keep me close to You, Lord. It's in Your wonderful Name I pray.

~Renee Swope, "The Manger of My Heart"

from Proverbs 31 Ministries



Humble Preparation

Key Verse: Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 1 Peter 3:8 [ESV]

Read: Ephesians 4:1-6; Colossians 3:12; Micah 6:8

The season of Advent is a time for examining ourselves as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus, God's greatest gift to us. We often rush toward Christmas, and we don't take the time to prepare our minds and hearts to embrace the core significance of what it meant for Jesus to come into this world in human form to live among us.

Advent allows us—through meditation, prayer, and affirmation—to think of ways to share our gifts of hope and faith, peace, love, and joy. Thinking on these things helps us to assess our Christian character. In our preparation, we should ask ourselves, “What kind of Christian am I?” “Is my faith connected with my actions?” “Am I doing what the Lord requires of me?”

Reading Micah 6:8 can help us with our thinking on these questions: “He has shown you, O Mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” [NIV]

As we prepare with great anticipation and gift-giving to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us not forget to walk humbly towards that day with the gifts that God has already prepared and placed within us to share with others—hope, faith, peace, love and joy.

Prayer: Dear Lord, make the path that I walk lead straight to you.

Thought of the Day: Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. (James 4:10)

DS

Jesus is the Reason for the Season

Key Verse: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11 [KJV]

Read: Luke 2

As Christmas is rapidly approaching, we should take time to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas. For believers of Jesus Christ, Christmas is a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. During Christmas, the true reason for the season is Jesus was born and God's purpose for Him was to die willingly for our sins on the cross. So amid the presents, cookies, parties, shopping, decorations, cards, bells, movies, trees, stars, and lights, remember, "**Jesus is the reason for the season,**" and acknowledge that He is the best gift we can receive at Christmas. **Jesus, God's precious gift to mankind is the true meaning of Christmas.**

Below are scriptures that take the focus off of the worldly expressions of the Christmas season to encourage believers to focus, edify, honor and praise Jesus for who He is and for why He was born to be our Lord and Savior:

- **Matthew 1:23:** "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").
Jesus was born so that God could be with us. Remember the next time when we feel sad, depressed, frustrated, hurt or disappointed, we are not alone ... God is with us!
- **John 3:16:** "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."
Look at how much God loves us! He sacrificed His one and only Son! What have we sacrificed for God lately? That's something to remember and act on at this time of the year.
- **James 1:17:** "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."
Every time we see Christmas lights, remember that God is the Father of heavenly lights and that every good and perfect gift is from Him. Cite this scripture from **Matthew 5:16:** "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven."
- **1 Peter 3:15:** "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." We should always be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks us if Jesus is our reason for the Christmas Season. At some point during this Christmas season, we have to know that everyone around us does not know the real reason for the season. We must be ready when the opportunity arises for us to tell somebody about Jesus, our Lord and Savior.
- **Luke 2:1:** "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." During this time of the year, we should especially celebrate, acknowledge, thank, and glorify Jesus for being the true reason for the season.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for your gift of Jesus. We are thankful for Jesus' love for us!

Thought of the Day: God gave us His only begotten Son, born of the Virgin Mary to bring redemption for the rest of the world. Christmas is not only celebrated to acknowledge Jesus' birth, but also to accept God's purpose driven life for Jesus and accept His gift to us and be encouraged to become a disciple and follow Him. Yes! "**Jesus is the Reason for the Season!**"

KR

Our Saving Grace

Key Verse: For by grace, you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.
Ephesians 2:8 [NKJV]

Read: Acts 15:11; Titus 2:11; Romans 3:24

Our saving grace is the grace that God imparts to those of us who receive him as our savior when we are born again. God has given each of us the freedom to choose him or the world. It is also the power and righteousness given to us by unmerited favor from God. Our saving grace results in our sanctification, the process by which God conforms us to be the image of Christ. He promised to never forsake his children. God is our saving grace and his dying on the cross is what saves us. Our saving grace is expressed by God's forgiveness of our sins and through his blessings given to all which includes peace and fulfillment in our lives and in the life to come. Our faith and trust in knowing God is our saving grace.

Prayer: Heavenly father, I praise and thank you for your great mercy and grace which you have bestowed upon me each day of my life. Thank you for dying on the cross to save me. Amen.

Thought of the Day: Our lives have been filled with broken pieces, terrible choices and very ugly truths. But our lives have also been filled with major comebacks, peace in our souls, and grace from GOD who saved us.

DRM

Hope on a Silent Night

Key Verse: For nothing will be impossible with God. Luke 1:37 [ESV]

Read: Luke 1:26-56

Dr. Tony Evans defines hope as a confident expectation about the future based on the character and promises of God. We mindlessly put our hope in so many “things” that frequently let us down when our hope belongs in God. In Luke 1, Mary is visited by the angel Gabriel who tells her that she is going to have a baby even though she’s a virgin. Mary is then instructed to name him Jesus, and Gabriel tells her that her baby is going to be called the “Son of the Most High.”

Hope causes us to connect what we already know about God to what he is doing and going to do in our lives. Living in the patriarchal society of those times one could assume that Mary’s natural instinct would be fear for her reputation, and fear for her life. However, in Mary’s response to Gabriel, we don’t hear fear; we hear hope. Mary answers, “I am the Lord’s servant, may it be to me as you have said.” Mary couldn’t have been sure of how things would turn out, but she was sure about who God was. Her hope was in God’s love and not in man’s reaction.

When we place our hope in God, it takes the pressure off of us to have the answers and to be in the right place at the right time. Hope turns our eyes to God. We know that God is our strength, our provider, and our protector. We know God loves us. He has a plan for us and he’ll never leave or forsake us. We know that God can not lie and that he keeps his promises. In our darkest of nights, we must remember to put our hope in God, remember who he is and remember that he keeps his promises.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for being who you are in our lives and the lives of your people. When we are facing those dark, challenging moments, help us to remember to turn our eyes to you in hope. Amen.

Thought of the Day: Putting our hope in God takes the pressure off of us.

DNH

Letting Your Light Shine

Key Verse: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matthew 5:16 [KJV]

Read: Matthew 5:13-16

When I was a child living in the South, I'd often take advantage of the warm and sultry summer nights to go outside with my siblings and neighborhood friends to catch fireflies. These "lightning bugs" as we called them would light up the night, and we'd run through the fields catching and placing them in jars that had holes punched in the lids. Later that night, we'd place the jars of lightning bugs on the nightstands in our bedrooms to watch their intermittent and comforting glow pierce the darkness as we fell off to sleep with the intention of releasing them back to the fields the next morning.

Lightning bugs light up to attract mates or to ward off predators through a chemical reaction in their abdomens. Their "shine" is only visible at night. But what about your shine? Do you have an inner glow of light that shines forth from you for all the world to see? Is your light visible at all times both day and night? Does it shine everywhere you go?

We sometimes have trouble seeing the light within ourselves and in others. When we accept Christ as our Savior, then our light through the Holy Spirit is within us. Jesus said to let your light shine before men. "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house." (Matthew 5:14-15) [NIV]

As we prepare during this season of Advent to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let's remember to let our lights shine through what we say and do, through how we treat others and in how we serve the Lord. We shouldn't hide our light within us, instead we should let it shine freely from us, so that it lights the path for others to find their way to Jesus and glorify Him.

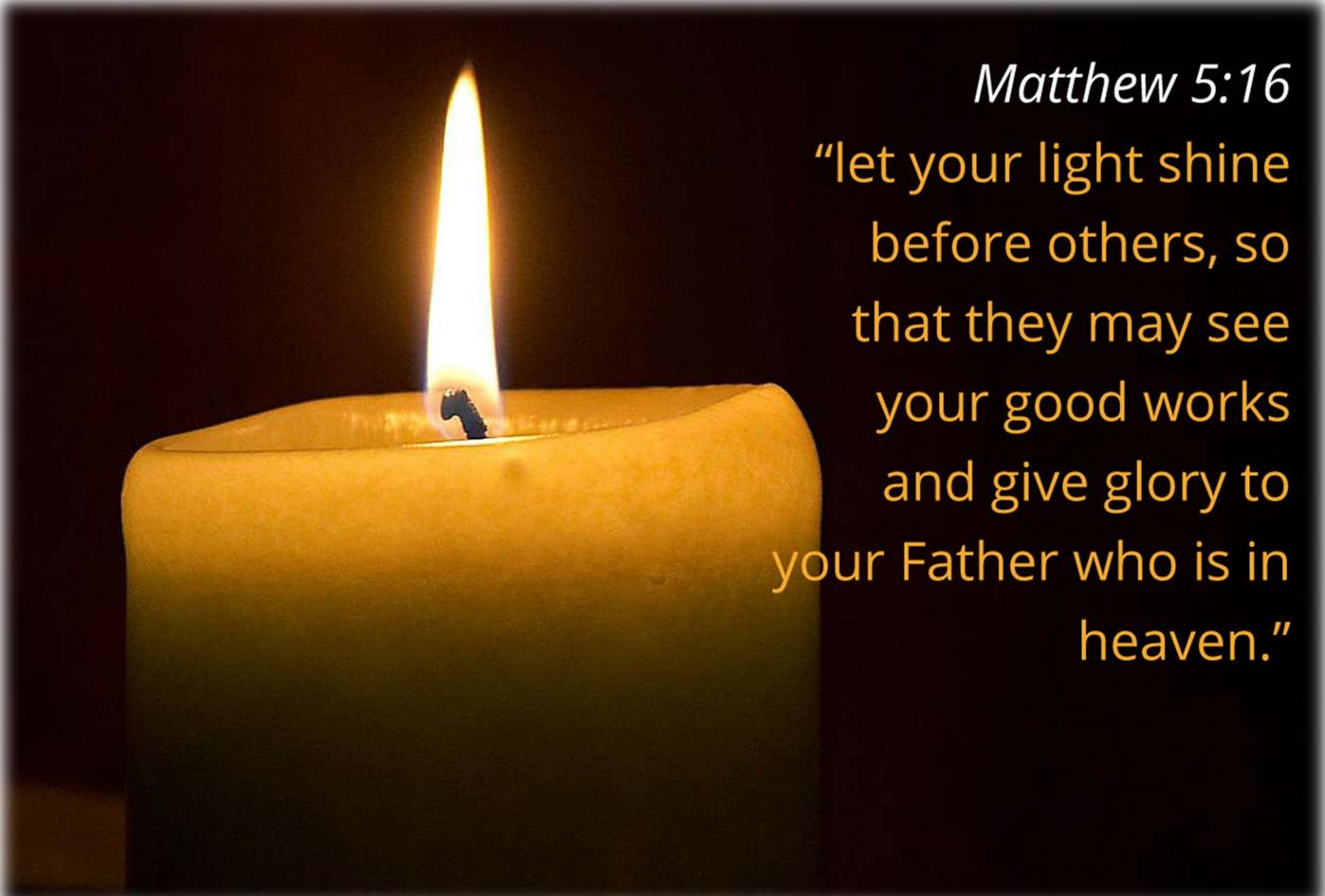
"This Little Light of Mine, I'm Going to Let it Shine.

Let it Shine, Let it Shine, Let it Shine." *(Unknown Origin)*

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to be a beacon of light that lets people see the light of you within me.

Thought of the Day: Let your light shine!

DS

A lit candle with a bright flame, set against a dark background. The candle is yellow and the flame is bright orange and yellow. The background is dark, making the candle stand out.

Matthew 5:16

“let your light shine
before others, so
that they may see
your good works
and give glory to
your Father who is in
heaven.”

The Greatest Gift

Key Verse: If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 1 Corinthians 13:1 [ESV]

Read: | John 4: 7-21; John 3:16; Colossians 3:12-17; Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12: 28-34; Luke 10: 27; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

At this time of the year, the minds of children (and child-like adults) begin to think of the presents they will receive from others. Unfortunately, the “gimmie, gimmie” ailment taints the real spirit that should prevail at the time we celebrate the birth of Christ Jesus. The best and longest lasting gift that we can receive has already been given. It is the gift God, our Father, gave the world. We should not forget that God is love. In love, God gave us His son, Jesus, the Christ. It is His son whose blood washed us clean enough to approach God’s throne.

To be sure of what love is, remember Paul’s letter to the people of Corinth where he explains what love is and what it is not. He said love is above everything and is something that one should learn in order to truly live for Christ and help others around them. Out of the three virtues listed by Paul – faith, love and hope – love is the strongest of all. Love is the greatest gift to have and most important—to give. When John wrote that God is love, he referred to three things about love and God: He said loving one another is knowing God through love. He explained that if we love one another, God abides in us and is perfected in us. He commands obedience when he said he who loves God must love his brother as well.

Prayer: We thank you, Almighty God, for the blessings you shower upon us. We thank you for the forgiveness you give us and ask you to help us to forgive those around us. We pray that our hearts change to love as you love us. Guide us so that we show patience, kindness, caring, and love to those with whom our lives touch. Amen.

Thought of the Day: The Greatest gift that anyone could receive is the gift of kindness, understanding, and giving of yourself which translates into love. As Christians, we have been charged with delivering the gift of love.

MS

Waiting for the Son

Key Verse: The angel of the Lord said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son and shall call His name JESUS.” Luke 1:30-31 [NKJV]

Read: Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1

The wait had been in prophecy. No one knew the time nor the day, but there was anticipation of the divine arrival. Isaiah made it clear: “For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” [Isaiah 9:6 NIV]

The prophecy was fulfilled, and Jesus, the Son, was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King. Magi from the east bearing gifts followed a star to see him, and angels heralded his arrival to shepherds watching their flock in the fields. A baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger had arrived.

Oh what a glorious day that for was mankind. Without fanfare our Savior arrived, and nobody knew who he was. We wait again for his second coming when we will shout, “Glory, Glory to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. The Son of God has arrived!”

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your son, without whom we would have no hope of living out our eternal lives in heaven with you.

Thought of the Day: The presence of the Lord is here and within me.

CC

Waiting for the Shepherd

Key Verse: Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord. Psalms 27:14 [NIV]

Read: John 14:16; Jeremiah 29:11

Be patient in all things and wait on the Lord. The Lord said He would strengthen our hearts while we wait. Did He not say He would send a Comforter who would never leave or forsake us? While we are waiting, we must continue to pray and not become dismayed, for God's word is always true. The Lord, our God is never failing. Wait patiently on our God the Savior, for He comes in His time and not in our time.

We must be faithful while we wait. While waiting is not an easy task and patience is often hard to come by, waiting on God is a fulfillment like no other. Just think about all the stories that have been told of the Messiah who would come to save this world. The questions that are asked are "Will He soon to be here?" "When will He come?" The telling of the coming of the Messiah is the greatest story ever told, and we must wait until He appears. There is no need to fear or worry. God will fulfill His promise, for God has not given us the spirit of fear.

We must wait until our Savior comes. Blessings from the Lord are the greatest of gifts. The world seeks to satisfy us quickly, and the satisfaction we receive from those gifts leaves just as quickly. The presence and the pleasure of gifts from God are everlasting to everlasting and will never go away. Waiting on the Shepherd to come will not be easy, but by being patient, we are learning to trust in God. Putting our trust in God means we will have to wait patiently while He is working it out. The Savior who loves us will cause us no harm. Through Him we will prosper, but we must be faithful and wait. The time is almost here and soon our wait will finally be at an end. Thank You Jesus!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to be patient while I wait on you, for your will is greater than mine, and I trust you in all things even in my waiting. I know you will come in your time, and not mine, and I accept and believe that you will come right on time.

Thought of the Day: Wait patiently on the Lord, and He will give you strength

LJ

Waiting with Joy

Key Verse: And it will be said in that day, “Behold this is our God for whom we have waited that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited. Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation. Isaiah 25:9

Read: Psalms 16:11; Psalms 37:4; Psalms 118:24; Philippians 4:4

When I was a child, waiting with joy at Christmas time meant waiting for Santa Claus to come and bring toys, because I had been good all year. It was about waiting with joy to eat the ribbon candy and candy canes and the good food my mom would prepare. The anticipation was almost too much to bear. As I have now grown in my faith and trust in the Lord, I am waiting with joy to be a part of God’s kingdom, knowing that the only way to do that is by going out showing and telling his people of his greatness. I now know that God is the reason that we have true joy in our lives. Look at how he wakes us up each day. I am now waiting with joy and expectation for the day that I will be able to see his face—to be a part of his heavenly home. I am waiting to be able to walk with God in all his glory.

Prayer: Father I thank you for allowing me to grow in my faith. I trust in the Lord and know that one day, I will no longer have to wait. That is my joy. Amen.

Thought of the Day: Maybe it would be less stressful to focus on the good, the true and the beautiful things in our lives right now and experience a little peace and joy while waiting.

DRM

The Real Joy of Christmas

Key Verse: I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (ESV)

Read: John 3:16-17; Colossians 3:12-15; John 14:6-7

Anticipating the season, we put up trees, hang lights, play carols, and spend lots of money. But that's not the true meaning or spirit of this special time. Understanding the real joy of Christmas is exciting all by itself! The miracle of Christmas is that our God became a man in order to save us. There is also the wonderful miracle of the virgin birth. God did not reveal the truths of Christmas to us because of anything special in us. God revealed the truths of Christmas to us because he chose to love us. Paul said that we are "God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved" (Colossians 3:12). He also says that we "were called to peace" (Colossians 3:15). It is a wonderful special privilege that God chose us to receive his love. He sent us that gift of the Holy Spirit to work faith in us. We are holy because of what Christ did for us. We have peace with God. We have the peace of forgiveness and eternal life.

Instead of January 1 being set as the time to "restart" our commitment to life improvement, it really should be December 25th that we set new year resolutions to study His word, practice His teachings, and meditate on the depth, width, and height of His gift to us all. That is when we celebrate the beginning of our salvation.

This is the time to commemorate the birth of Jesus and to remember that His coming signals our best chance to embrace the greatest love, the clearest life instructions for living, and our most precious present, His life. The real joy of Christmas is knowing that we can unwrap and enjoy every second of our lives because God gave us His son to teach us, to love us, to show us the best possible way to live life. And in believing in His life and message, God gave us a way to Him. He gave us our Savior. He gave us the only way to enter His kingdom.

Prayer: Father, I pray that you will turn our hearts toward you as Christmas approaches. Let us not get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season this year and miss the chance to celebrate the gifts of hope, peace, joy, love, that you sent to us on that first Christmas. Thank you, Father, for your immeasurable gift. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen

Thought of the Day: The real, lasting, and true joy of Christmas is not in receiving the *presents*; it is receiving, accepting, and sharing the *presence* of Jesus. See: <https://www.trinitybelleplaine.org/the-real-joy-of-christmas/>

MS

The Unwrapped Gift

Key Verse: “This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Luke 2:12 [NIV]

Read: Luke 2:8-12 [NIV]

During advent we are in such a hurry to make sure we have the perfect gifts for our loved ones. We search the internet and browse the stores, leaving no stone unturned to please them. Our purchased items are gift-wrapped with brightly colored Christmas paper then topped off with fancy ribbons and nametags. We might hide them or put them under the tree as we wait for Christmas day to see the joy and excitement on the faces of our loved ones when they unwrap their gifts.

We go all out unwrapping our gifts while never giving it a second thought that the best gift we have ever received is a gift that couldn't be purchased in stores or wrapped in fancy paper and ribbons. This special gift is the “unwrapped gift” of the birth of the Messiah. Our Messiah didn't come into this world adorned in purple and lying in a palace. Instead, Mary gave birth to her first born, a son. She wrapped him in cloths, and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for him. Luke 2:7 [NIV]

Jesus Christ is the unwrapped gift that keeps on giving. He walked the earth for 33 years, healing the sick, raising the dead, making the lame walk and the blind to see. He bore our sins and died on Calvary. He was buried in a borrowed tomb and rose on the third day with all Power in His hands.

Prayer: Thank you God for being the giver of this awesome unwrapped gift, our Lord and Savior.

Thought of the Day: The gift that keeps on giving is Jesus Christ!

BJH

Silent Night, Holy Night

Key Verse: And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. Luke 2:7 [NIV]

Read: Matthew 6:33

The holiday season is arguably the busiest time of the year for many of us. We travel, cook, take vacations, spend time with family, buy gifts, and celebrate, celebrate, celebrate. All of this busyness can make it difficult to stay connected to Christ through the Christmas season.

The upbeat tunes of many Christmas songs puts us all in a good mood, but I have always loved the slow, quiet tune of "Silent Night" [Gruber & Mohr]. In the midst of all of the chaos of the Christmas season, Silent Night is a reminder for us to slow down and embrace the quiet as we receive Christ, our Savior. Christ was not born in the midst of a big celebration, parades or fireworks. Mary gave birth to Jesus in a manger with no fanfare.

Let us all embrace the quiet moments of the season of Advent and use that time to focus on God's voice.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the privilege of celebrating the birth of your Son Jesus. Help us not to get so caught up in the celebrations that we forget who we are celebrating. Speak to us in the quiet moments so that we can hear your voice and be better followers of your word.

Thought of the Day: Silence is golden when you're basking in the love of God.

ZT

A Starry Night

Key Verse: “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel...” Numbers 24:17 [NIV]

Read: Isaiah 7:14; Numbers 24:17-19; Matthew 2:1-2; Matthew 2:9

*Twinkle, twinkle little star, how the world wondered what you are
on a starry night set to tell the epic story
of a child who came to save the world.*

God chose and designed the best night for his son to be delivered into this world of sin. The world had turned away from the love of God and his teachings. God gave of himself and came to us in human form to save the world. Isaiah had already prophesied that this child, our Savior, would be God's son. Three wise men (also known as the Magi) were guided by a star on this faithful night to see the Savior who had been born. Look up into the sky and see the stars shining there. Do you see the magnificence of our Savior?

Take the time to think about the birth of Christ, and what it means to you. What a wonderful gift for those who dare to believe—a Savior sent to save everyone, including you and me. Transform yourself to that starry night and feel the blessings of God. Let us remember and remind others to remember to keep Christ in all things during these days of Advent that lead up to the celebration of our Savior's birth.

Prayer: God our Father, God of peace, God of love, and God of mercy, thank you for coming to save us from ourselves. Thank you for coming into this world to claim us as your children forever and forever. Amen.

Thought of the Day: God, our solemn Savior, came to this world free from sin to save a dying world lost in sin. We should never forget His sacrifices for us, His children.

LJ

While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

“Fear not!” said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind;
“Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

“To you, in David’s town, this day
Is born of David’s line
A Savior, who is Christ the Lord,
And this shall be the sign:

“The heav’nly Babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid.”

Thus spake the seraph and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels praising God on high,
Who thus addressed their song:

“All glory be to God on high,
And to the Earth be peace;
Good will henceforth from heav’n to men
Begin and never cease!

—Tate

Scripture Reference: Luke 2:8



Our Waiting is Over

Key Verse: Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace." Luke 2:28 [NIV]

Read- Luke 2: 22-35

The more I experience in life, specifically with God, the more I've grown to realize that my senses are not a reliable source to determine the events of my life. Typically, what we see we equate to facts; if we don't see it, we don't believe it. We find it hard to believe we will be healed when we are sick. We find it hard to believe we will be blessed with a new job when we submit job applications. yet we aren't getting any job interviews. We find it hard to believe we will ever be married and have a family when we are single. Neither God nor his promises are restricted by what we see.

In Luke 2, we are introduced to Simeon who is waiting on the Lord's Christ to be born. I'm curious as to why God revealed this to Simeon, what had Simeon learned or heard about the one to come? He was waiting because the Holy Spirit revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Savior of the world for himself. Think about all the babies, firstborn males, that Simeon must have seen brought into the temple. I wonder if Simeon ever questioned the words of the Holy Spirit. It was the same Holy Spirit that led Simeon to the temple courts that particular day as recorded in Luke 2. We don't know how much time had passed. What's important for us to know is that God kept this promise to Simeon. The Bible tells us that as soon as Simeon saw Jesus, he picked him up and went into praise saying, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation." Simeon's wait was over. On that day he saw the Lord's Christ for himself.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for being a faithful promise keeper. Lord help us to remember that while we're waiting, you are not restricted by what we see. Amen

Thought of the Day: What are you waiting for God to do in your life? He's faithful, he cannot lie and he will keep every promise made to you. Do not trust in what you see, trust in God's word.

DNH

A Savior is Born

Key Verse: And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:9-11 [NKJV]

Read: Luke 1: 28-3; Luke 2: 1-17; Matthew 2:10-11

Luke 2: 1-20 tells the story of the birth of Christ our Savior. What good news! How do you think Mary felt? She was actually carrying the world's Savior inside of her. Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David. It was time for him to register with Mary his betrothed wife, who at that time was with child. There were many other people who traveled to Bethlehem to be registered. Because of this, the city was very crowded and there was no room in the Inn for Joseph, Mary and our Savior. While they were there Mary's time came to deliver our Savior. Scripture says, "She brought forth her firstborn Son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger." (Luke 2:7) [NKJV]

Like this inn, the hearts of many have become crowded with sin or worldly cares, worldly pleasures, and human wisdom that is not always wise. No room is left for the Savior.

The message given by the angel was not just for the shepherds, but for all people. "Behold, a Savior is born." When we accept Christ as our personal Savior, our lives will be changed forevermore.

Prayer: Most holy and righteous Father, I come thanking you for blessing us and for allowing your one and only son to become the Savior of the world. Amen.

Thought of the Day: Trust and believe; Jesus is all I need.

PJS

The Prince of Peace

Key Verse: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6 [NIV]

Read: Isaiah 9:6-9

There was a song back in the day during the Vietnam War titled “There Will Never Be Any Peace (Until God is Seated at the Conference Table),” performed by the Blind Boys of Alabama, and also by the Chi-Lites. There is so much truth to this song. The Prince of Peace has been eliminated from the conference table.

As we embark upon the Advent season, we are experiencing chaos and darkness in the world that we know today. Our democracy is at stake. Politicians and world leaders are in a power struggle to see who can be the most ruthless. We make our own rules as we go. Right is wrong and wrong is right. We are encountering devastation with hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and massive fires all over the world. We are living in dark days.

Isaiah 9:6-9 revealed to us that in our darkness, God will send a great light into a dying world. The birth of Christ would deliver all people from their enslavement in sin.

1. He is the Wonderful Counselor who provides us with the right advice, if we listen and take heed.
2. He is the Mighty God because He is God himself.
3. He is the Everlasting Father because He is timeless, and lastly.
4. He is The Prince of Peace because He is for justice and peace.

As we prepare during this Advent season for special celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, may the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, to those whom his favor rests.” Luke 2:14 [NIV]

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may the Prince of Peace dwell within our hearts and minds forever. Amen.

Thought of the Day: Remain focused on the Prince of Peace, Christ Jesus!

BJH

Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

Key Verse: Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” Luke 2:13-14

Read: Luke 2

About two-thirds of three hundred million Americans identify as Christians. That number seems impressive until you realize it means that over one hundred million Americans do **not** know Christ as their Lord and Savior. That is one hundred million people who do not know God’s unfailing love—one hundred million people who have not experienced God’s grace and mercy.

In Luke 2, the announcement of Jesus’ birth is made to shepherds keeping watch over their flock in the field. The announcement is followed by the singing of Angels praising God. Can’t you just imagine the shepherds saying, “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing!” Immediately following this announcement and praise, the shepherds went to find Jesus.

One hundred million lost souls need to hear the good news of Jesus just like shepherds the did. In the Bible, the angels made the announcement, but today that announcement needs to come from God’s people. In this season of Advent, we need to be loud in our praise and loud in our pronouncement of Jesus’ birth.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for your Son Jesus, and we thank you for those who led us to Christ. Help us to be like those Herald Angels and to be loud in our praise and lead others to you. Lord, we know that the greatest gift anyone can receive is salvation through Jesus Christ. Give us the courage and the opportunity to offer that gift to those who have not received it.

Thought of the Day: The greatest gift anyone can receive is salvation through Jesus Christ.

ZT

Emmanuel, The Everlasting Gift

Key Verse: Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Matthew 1:23 [KJV]

Read: Matthew 1:18-23 [KJV]; Matthew 2 1:13 [KJV]

Christmas is a time of joy, grateful hearts, visiting loved ones, breaking bread at the table, festive gatherings, or just enjoying family and friends. We hear on the news of babies being born on Christmas Day. The parents of believers are filled with joy to have their little ones born on the day that we observe as Jesus's birthday. What a blessed occasion. What a blessed gift. But let's pause for a moment and reflect on how we would feel knowing that our bundle of joy was born to save all mankind. How does one come to grips with that situation? To save all mankind! Now that is really something to take pause and think about.

The baby Jesus had haters even before he could utter a word or walk. He had a bounty on his head. Herod was already plotting to kill baby Jesus by attempting to use the Magi to locate his whereabouts. (Matthew 2:1-6) [KJV] You know the story. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream warning him to take the young child and his mother and flee to Egypt. The plot was foiled!

So as we prepare to celebrate Christmas and all that it has to offer, don't forget about the main reason for the season--our everlasting gift, Emmanuel. There is a song titled "Emmanuel" that I love to hear the Praise Team sing during Advent. The song was recorded by Norman Hutchins and the lyrics begin with the words *Come, come let us adore Him, kneel down before Him, worship and adore Him.* It continues with *Emmanuel, Emmanuel, Emmanuel, we worship you. We Worship You!*

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the birth of your son, Jesus, who was born to save all mankind. Amen

Thought of the Day: Thank you, Emmanuel for your gift of eternal life.

BJH

Joy to the World, the Lord Is Come!

Joy to the World, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

Joy to the World, the Lord is come!

--Isaac Watts



O' What A Wonderful Child!

Key Verse: And all who heard him were astonished at His understanding and answers. Luke 2:47

Read: Luke 2:41-52

O' What a wonderful Child! He left eternity to come to earth as a baby in human form. We had to have His birth before there was Easter. We had to have His birth before there was a Resurrection. O' What a wonderful Child! The only account we have in scripture of Jesus as a child is found in the book of Luke. Luke's emphasis is on the fact that Jesus demonstrated wisdom and was aware of His unique relationship to God the Father, even at an early age. LOOK at the young boy talking to these older men. They are teachers in the temple at Jerusalem. And the boy is Jesus. Now He is 12 years old. The teachers are very surprised that Jesus knows so much about God and the things written in the Bible. O' What a Wonderful Child!

When Jesus' parents found him in the temple, his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought You anxiously." (Luke 2:48) [NKJV]. His reply was, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49) What he said may have confused His parents, but even at the tender age of 12, Jesus knew that He had a unique purpose and a great mission in life. His wisdom and knowledge were far beyond other children His age. O' What a Wonderful Child!

Jesus, Jesus, oh, what a wonderful child. Jesus, Jesus, so lowly meek and mild. New life, new hope, new joy He brings. Won't you listen to the angels sing, "Glory, Glory, Glory, to the New Born King." (Traditional African American)

Yes, the angels sang of His coming and praised His holy name. He is our Alpha and Omega—the Beginning and the End.

Prayer: Most Holy Father, we rejoice at the birth of your awesome son, Jesus. O' What a Wonderful Child and Savior. There is no one like Him. Thank You for giving us your love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Thought of the Day: Let the Son shine in your heart today and allow Him to spread to others in your life.

PJS

Sweet Little Jesus Boy

Sweet little Jesus boy
They made you be born in a manger
Sweet little holy child
We didn't know who you were
Didn't know you'd come to save us Lord
To take our sins away
Our eyes were blind, we could not see
We didn't know who you were

Long time ago
You were born
Born in a manger Lord
Sweet little Jesus boy
The world treats you mean Lord
Treats me mean too
But that's how things are down here
We don't know who you are

You have told us how
We are trying
Master you have shown us how
Even when you were dying
Just seems like we can't do right
Look how we treated you
But please Sir forgive us Lord
We didn't know it was you



Sweet little Jesus boy
Born a long time ago
Sweet little holy child
We didn't know who you were

--Spiritual

Go Tell It on the Mountain

Key Verse: Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19 [NIV]

Read: Luke 2

During the devastating period of slavery in the United States of America, African American slaves, often labeled as uneducated people, were treated with unfair laws and harsh measurements of punishment which caused them to often long and pray for freedom. In spite of these hardships to survive, God was always visible and seemed to inspire them to produce soothing songs of hope. Music was an universal language for them. They echoed songs for comfort from the fields to small slave churches. Many of the songs were a spontaneous cry to God, created during hard times as struggle for survival seemed impossible.

John Wesley Work, Jr., an African American Church Choir Director in Nashville, Tennessee had a strong vision to pin some of the songs to paper and is credited for becoming the first African American Collector of Negro Spirituals. One of the few educated African Americans in the South, John Wesley Work, Jr. decided that the new generation of African Americans needed to know and learn the songs their ancestors sang during the days of slavery. In 1907, Work published the words for "Go Tell It on the Mountain." Acknowledging the power of God and desiring for freedom, this Negro Spiritual was inspired by Work to captivate the feeling of an unknown slave from whose heart these words sprang.

Work published his first book, *New Jubilee Songs as Sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers*. Strong in his religious belief and learning from the small slave church, this poet imagined the reaction of the shepherds as the great light from heaven shone around them. Work's creation of the song, "Go Tell it on the Mountain," fulfilled the same important task the angels gave the shepherds that first Christmas Night outside of Bethlehem, proclaiming that Jesus Christ was born. Little did the slave know that this song, expressing the wonder in his own soul, would eventually touch the hearts of millions.

Prayer: Dear God, during this Christmas season, thank you for your gift of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Thought of the Day: The first six letters of Christmas is the reason for the season, JESUS CHRIST!
Go Tell! Go Tell! Go Tell! No one is exempt.

KR

“Go Tell it on the Mountain”
(a Biblical Spiritual Song that Celebrates the Birth of Jesus)

Verse 1

*While Shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night;
Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.*

Luke 2:8-9 describes the Shepherds as they were keeping their flocks by night and that the glory of the Lord shone around them and an Angel appeared. The Angel's announcement of Jesus Christ's birth promoted the Shepherds to visit Jesus and tell others about Him (Luke 2:8-18).

Verse 2

*The Shepherd feared and trembled, When lo above the earth,
Rang out the Angels chorus that hailed the Savior's birth.*

Luke 2:9-10 describes the Shepherds' response to observing the heavenly hosts—a multitude of Angels. Yes, they trembled at the sight, promoting the Angel to say, “Do not be afraid.”

Verse 3

*Down in a lowly manger, the humble Christ was born
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.*

Luke 2:7 describes Mary giving birth to Jesus and placing Him in a manger. God intended from the beginning that Jesus, His beloved Son would be the Savior of the World!

Chorus

“Go tell it on the mountain; Over the hills and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain; That Jesus Christ is born.”

Do our hearts fill with such joy from Jesus' birth that Jesus has indeed come to save us from sin? **Hallelujah!**
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

KR

the Wonders of His Love
**AN ADVENT BIBLE
READING PLAN:**

Christ is coming

- Day 1 Isaiah 9:2-7
- Day 2 Isaiah 11:1-5
- Day 3 Isaiah 7:10-14
- Day 4 Micah 5:1-5
- Day 5 2 Samuel 7:12-16

Christ is here

- Day 6 Luke 1:26-33
- Day 7 Luke 1:34-38
- Day 8 Luke 1:46-55
- Day 9 Matthew 1:18-25
- Day 10 Luke 2:1-7
- Day 11 Luke 2:8-12
- Day 12 Luke 2:13-20
- Day 13 Matt. 1:1-17

Christ will give

- Day 14 Romans 6:20-23
- Day 15 Galatians 4:1-7
- Day 16 1 Timothy 1:15-17
- Day 17 Titus 3:3-7
- Day 18 Philippians 2:6-8

Christ will return

- Day 19 John 14:1-6
- Day 20 Daniel 7:13-14
- Day 21 Revelation 1:4-7
- Day 22 Revel. 3:20-22
- Day 23 Revel. 22:12-13
- Day 24 Revelation 22:16-17
- Day 25 Revelation 22:20



Bible Versions Used in the Devotionals

KJV	King James Version
ESV	The English Standard Version
NIV	The New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation

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