

Empty Boxes Series

5-Day Devotional: Week 1

Hope

Day 1 Hope That Doesn't Disappoint

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3–5

Peter reminds us that hope isn't a feeling we manufacture; it's a gift God gives. The world makes hope sound like wishful thinking or emotional excitement, but biblical hope is something far sturdier. Peter says we have been given new birth into a living hope. That means our hope is alive because Jesus is alive, and nothing in this life can spoil, perish, or fade what He has secured for us. Every earthly version of hope eventually wears out, but the hope Jesus gives only grows stronger. When we begin Advent by praising God before we see the outcome, our hearts settle on the only foundation that never shifts.

- What stands out to you most about Peter's description of a living hope?
- Where have you mistakenly expected earthly things to give you the hope only Jesus can give?
- What would it look like for you to start this Advent season by anchoring your hope in Jesus alone?

Prayer: Jesus, thank You for giving me a hope that lasts. Help me place my confidence in You instead of things that can fade. Teach me to praise before I see the outcome. Amen.

Day 2 Mercy That Makes Us New

Scripture: Titus 3:3–7

Paul describes who we used to be before Jesus, stuck, lost, and unable to change ourselves. But then the mercy of God appeared, and everything shifted. Advent reminds us that hope arrived in the form of a person. Jesus didn't wait for us to fix our lives. He stepped into our brokenness and made us new. The mercy of God doesn't just forgive sin; it transforms us from the inside out. The world's hope says, "Try harder and maybe life will get better." Jesus says, "Come to Me, and I will make you new." Real hope grows when we see just how much mercy has been poured over our lives.

- How does remembering God's mercy strengthen your hope today?
- What part of your life do you need Jesus to renew?
- Where have you been trying to "fix yourself" instead of receiving God's mercy?

Prayer: Lord, thank You for the mercy that changes me. Help me walk in the new life You've given me and stop carrying the things You've already forgiven. Amen.

Day 3 Hope That Waits Well

Scripture: Romans 8:22–25

Paul describes hope as something active, not passive. Creation groans, believers groan, and even the Spirit longs for the day everything is made new. This passage reminds us that hope involves waiting, but waiting with confidence. We don't see everything God is doing yet, but we trust that He is faithful. Biblical hope doesn't deny reality; it anchors us in God's promise while we live in the tension of "not yet." Advent is a season of waiting well, practicing expectancy instead of anxiety, looking toward Jesus with confidence that He keeps His word.

- What do these verses teach you about the connection between hope and waiting?
- Where in your life do you feel the tension of "not yet," and how might God be forming hope in you through it?
- What would it look like for you to wait with expectancy instead of frustration this week?

Prayer: God, teach me how to wait on You with hope. Help me trust Your timing even when I can't see what You are doing. Strengthen my heart as I look toward Your promises. Amen.

Day 4 Hope That Holds Through Trials

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:6–7

Peter says trials refine our faith the way fire refines gold. Not everything that feels painful is pointless. When our hope is in circumstances, trials shake us. But when our hope is in Jesus, trials actually strengthen what we believe. Advent reminds us that Jesus entered a hurting world, not a perfect one. He understands grief, disappointment, and difficulty. He is near to us in the fire and uses those moments to anchor us more deeply to Himself. Trials don't get the final word; hope does.

- How have trials in your life shown you where your hope was anchored?
- What is one place of difficulty right now where you sense God refining your faith?
- How could choosing praise in the middle of hardship reshape your perspective?

Prayer: Jesus, thank You for being with me in every trial. Strengthen my faith and refine my hope. Help me trust that You bring beauty from what feels heavy. Amen.

Day 5 The Hope That Came Near

Scripture: John 1:1–14

Advent is a celebration of a God who came close. Hope didn't stay distant or abstract. Hope put on flesh and stepped into our world. When John says Jesus moved into the neighborhood, it reminds us that real hope isn't something we climb up to find; it's Someone who came down to rescue us. If Jesus came near once, He will come near again. And in the waiting, He walks with us. Hope isn't something we carry alone. Hope is a Person, and He is with us.

- How does the idea of Jesus “coming near” shape the way you understand hope?
- Where do you most need to experience the nearness of Jesus right now?
- How can you share the hope of Jesus with someone else this Christmas season?

Prayer: Lord, thank You that hope came close. Help me recognize Your nearness every day and share Your hope with the people around me. Amen.