

Advent Guide



Hope



Week 1

A promise given

READ Genesis 1:31, 3:1-15; Isaiah 9:6

"And yet, before you close this book and crawl under your covers and cry, you need to know that just as all the bad things began to happen, God's promise was beginning too. He promised that one day there would be a Snake Crusher to flatten that slimy serpent and save his sinful people. A war was about to begin. But God had already guaranteed that because of a great one to come, the good guys would win."

- Kevin DeYoung The Biggest Story Bible Storybook

As we begin our Advent study, we must first know what the word "advent" means. Simply put, "advent" means "coming" and when we use the word "advent" we refer to Jesus' first coming as a baby in Bethlehem. This is the Christmas story we are all familiar with. But, contrary to what most people think, the story of Christmas does not begin in a manger but in a garden. The advent story begins when God gave a promise to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden that a savior, a deliverer, a Messiah would come from Eve's offspring to crush the head of the serpent as we read in the passage from Genesis 3 above.

But why did God choose to give this promise? Why was this promise of salvation, deliverance, and restoration even necessary? Was God not good? Did He not create a perfect world for all humanity to live and dwell with him forever in perfect peace? The answer is abundantly yes! It was not God who messed everything up, but it was the sinful and rebellious hearts of all humanity. You see, Adam and Eve chose to reject their good and holy creator and instead of worshipping and enjoying God, they forsook Him and chose to worship themselves. This act of rebellion (what the Bible calls sin) brought a curse of death upon the world and the whole human race. Adam and Eve had ruined everything, and this created a need for a savior, for they could do nothing to restore the perfect relationship they had with God on their own.

Ask

What was the world like before sin entered the world? How do you see the effects of sin in your world and in your life today?

But God, in His grace, freely chose to give Adam and Eve (and all those who came after them) a gift that they did not deserve. He chose to make a promise that the curse of sin and death would not have the last word. He would not leave them in their sin and let them face the judgement they deserved but promised to provide the savior, the "Snake Crusher" who would make everything right again.

But God had said that if Adam and Eve ate from the tree, He commanded them not to eat from they would die. So how could God be merciful and not let sin go unpunished? Well, as an example of His mercy, instead of killing Adam and Eve for their sin, He killed an animal in their place and through the animal sacrifice, their sin was (temporarily) paid for. This also was a sign to point ahead to how this promised one would be the perfect sacrifice for our sins and die in our place, so our sin could be (perfectly) paid for.

Ask

Why did God choose to show Adam and Eve grace? Did He have to? Why or why not?

After the garden, God reiterated this promise again and again throughout the Old Testament in what the Bible calls a "covenant." He made a covenant with Abraham that through his line the Messiah would come and be a blessing to all the nations. He continued to establish his covenant with David, that the Messiah would be one of his sons. The requirements of the covenant were to worship and obey God, but like Adam and Eve, the people who came after continued to break God's promise and not fulfill their end of the covenant. However, God, in His mercy, continued to be patient with them and show grace to them, keeping the promise He first made to Adam and Eve that a Rescuer would come and make all things right.

Ask



Why do you think the people of Israel continued to reject God and worship other things besides God? In what ways can we also be like Israel even today?

God even went so far to speak of how this covenant would finally be able to be fulfilled by His people in the prophets...instead of asking them to conform to an outward law, He would transform them from the inside out! He would give them a new heart and a new spirit, so that it would be by the Spirit of God dwelling inside each person that they would be able to obey and love God. This is what we know as the "new covenant," that would be established when the "Snake Crusher" would finally arrive on the scene. But the people kept waiting and waiting for this promised one to appear. Would God keep His promise? Would He do what He said?

FAMILY/GROUP ACTIVITIES

PRAYER - A.C.T.S.

Adoration: Praise God for choosing to make a promise to send us a savior.

Confession: Confess how you, like Adam and Eve, have rebelled against God.
Confess specific things that you have worshipped other than God.

Thanksgiving: Thank God that Jesus worshipped God perfectly and died for all of our false worship on the cross.

Supplication: Ask God to give you the grace to worship him alone, knowing you were made for a relationship with him, to worship and enjoy him forever. Pray for your lost friends and family members that they would see their need for Jesus and pray God would give you the boldness to share the promise he made of a savior to come and the hope that we now have in Jesus.

SONG - CROWN HIM (GLORY IN THE HIGHEST)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2Se1z0ZEmM>

How can it be
That the son of God was born to us as a brother Royalty
Now robed in flesh
The glory of the Father
What do we bring to honour a king? What song do we sing for majesty?
We crown him
We worship
Glory in the highest Glory in the highest Hosanna
He saves us
Glory in the highest Glory in the highest

CRAFT IDEA

Try making your own advent candles by painting them, cutting them out of paper, or any way you can think of!



Faith

Week 2

A promise kept

read — Luke 2:1-7

"An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She's not done anything wrong. The child within her is from the Holy Spirit.' If that weren't enough to make Joseph the carpenter drop his hammer on his big toe, the angel had more to say: 'Mary is going to have a son, and you should call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' Things were about to happen that people had hoped to see happen for a long time. Centuries earlier the prophet Isaiah predicted that a virgin would have a son and he would be called Immanuel, God with us. In other words, a young woman with no earthly way to be pregnant would give birth to a heavenly child."

- Kevin DeYoung The Biggest Story Bible Storybook

ASK — What was the promise God gave to Adam and Eve that we talked about last week? Why do we need a savior?

During the time between the last book written in the Old Testament (Malachi) and the coming of Jesus was a period of 400 years of silence where God did not speak to His people. The anticipation of the coming Messiah during this time was great (imagine the anticipation you have on the night before Christmas and multiply that night times 400 years)! Yet, finally, we read in Luke 2, that the Messiah, the Snake Crusher, has finally come! God has been faithful to keep His promise!

All the prophecies that were predicted of the Messiah in the Old Testament (61 in total) were fulfilled through Jesus in the New Testament. The Old Testament tells us that a savior is coming, and the New Testament tells us Jesus is that savior who was promised all those years ago in Genesis 3. One prophecy we see that is fulfilled is of Mary, who is a virgin, who gave birth to Jesus, which was predicted in the passage from Isaiah we read last week.

ASK —

Why was it significant that Jesus was born of a virgin? Why is the virgin birth necessary for Jesus to be our savior (think about the need for our savior to be perfect)?

Notice that verse 4 says that Mary and Joseph went up from Nazareth to "the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David." This fact is very important as it reveals another prophecy that was fulfilled in Jesus. God promised David many years ago that the Messiah would come from His offspring and His kingdom would reign forever (2 Samuel 7). It was also foretold through the prophet Micah that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, "whose coming forth is from old, from ancient days." (Micah 5:1-2). God sovereignly orchestrated events to make sure that these prophecies came to pass just as He promised.

ASK —

How do the examples of fulfilled prophecy help strengthen your faith in the truthfulness of the Bible and your ability to trust God at his word?

The time then came for Mary to give birth to Jesus. Even though there was no place for them in the guest room, God provided a place for the savior to be born...in a dark cave surrounded by animals. Why did God plan for Jesus to be born in this way? Wasn't Jesus the King? Shouldn't He deserve a royal treatment? Jesus was and is the king, however, when He first came, He came as a suffering servant, to lay His life down for the sins of His people. Therefore, even in the birth of Jesus in a lowly manger, we see another fulfillment of prophecy from Isaiah 53; that this promised one who would save us from our sins would accomplish this task, not by exalting His life, but laying it down...FOR US.

FAMILY/GROUP ACTIVITIES

PRAYER - A.C.T.S.

Adoration: Praise God that all His promises are yes and amen in Christ!

Confession: Confess any times you have lacked faith to trust God and doubt His word.

Thanksgiving: Thank God for providing a Savior who perfectly trusted God and died for our faithlessness.

Supplication: Pray God would give you the strength to trust in His word, knowing He is faithful. Pray for your lost friends and family members that God would help them to see He is worthy of their trust. Pray God would give you boldness to share how He was faithful to keep his promises in the birth of Jesus!

SONG - COME THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Zcyxr_qW6w

Come, Thou long expected Jesus Born to set Thy people free; From our fears and sins release us, Let us find our rest in Thee. Israel's strength and consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art; Dear desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver, Born a child and yet a King, Born to reign in us forever, Now Thy gracious kingdom bring. By Thine own eternal Spirit Rule in all our hearts alone; By Thine all sufficient merit, Raise us to Thy glorious throne. By Thine all sufficient merit, Raise us to Thy glorious throne

CRAFT IDEA

A covenant was often symbolized by a sign to remind the person of the promise that was made. Today, we can see this through those that are married wearing rings to symbolize their covenant promise to love one another forever. Try creating a Christmas wreath that symbolizes the covenant promise God first made with Adam and Eve that he would send a rescuer to save them and us from our sins.

Joy



Week 3

A promise told

read — Luke 2:8-12

"This was the best and brightest birth announcement you could ever imagine! The angels were announcing the arrival of the one who God had promised from the very beginning...the child of Adam and Eve who would bruise the snake's head...the one from Abraham's family who would bring blessing to all the families of the world... the shepherd king from David's family who would become the lamb and save God's people!"

- Sarah Rice Tracing Glory: The Christmas Story Through the Bible

ASK — Why do you think God chose Jewish shepherds as the first people to hear of the birth of Christ? What was his purpose?

Shepherds were a very low position socially in Jesus' time. They performed the dirty and difficult task of watching over sheep. But one of the important tasks specifically to these shepherds of Jerusalem was to keep watch over the sheep that would be used for the temple sacrifice outside of Bethlehem. These were the sheep to be used as sacrifices to God to temporarily cleanse the people of their sin. So, it is ironic that God revealed to these shepherds, who were watching over these sacrificial lambs, that the one true sacrificial Lamb of God had finally arrived to save His people from their sins!

ASK

———— How is Jesus the fulfillment of all the lambs that were sacrificed in the temple?

Another note to make about God revealing this message to the shepherds connects with what we learned last week about the coming Messiah. He would come from the line of David, the Shepherd King, and the prophet Ezekiel prophesies that the Messiah, when He comes, will be a shepherd over His people (Ezekiel 34). God was also making a point by choosing to tell shepherds first about the birth of His Son. He wanted Luke's audience and us to know that this good news of the Messiah finally arriving to save His people from their sins was not just for the righteous, or the well off, or the rich, or high social class, but this good news was for ALL PEOPLE, even the socially low and poor shepherds. Not only was this good news for Jewish shepherds but the angels say this "good news of great joy will be for all people," meaning all nations...both Jews and Gentiles!

Four key truths are communicated in the coming Messiah: He will bring peace with God to the restless hearts of men; He will bring and shine forth the glory of God, and this good news, this great joy, this peace, this glory, will be for all people to know and experience! Praise God that He has kept His promises in the birth of the Messiah, but also praise God He has chosen to make this good news accessible to all people, both Jews and Gentiles, peoples of all nations!

FAMILY/GROUP ACTIVITIES

PRAYER - A.C.T.S.

Adoration: Praise God that He chose to reveal the birth of Christ to all people; even to you! Praise God for choosing to reveal His glory to you and all nations through His Son!

Confession: Confess any ways you have shown favoritism or partiality to other people because they look or act differently than you.

Thanksgiving: Thank God for providing the perfect sacrificial lamb in Jesus to pay for your favoritism and partiality on the cross.

Supplication: Pray for God to give you the power by His Spirit to proclaim the hope, joy, and peace people can have in Jesus. Pray specifically for a people group that is unreached and needs to hear the gospel (For help with this, go to joshuaproject.net and/or pray for Sarah Elkins, a member of Westwood, who is on the mission field in Southeast Asia).

SONG - HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING

<https://youtu.be/KRAI8V8cbwI?si=PRwgd0gtkUrjEO2W>

Hark! The herald angels sing " Glory to the new-born king
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With angelic host proclaim "Christ is born in Bethlehem"

Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the new-born king"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!

Light and life to all He brings

Risen with healing in His wings

Mild He lays His glory by

Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth

Hark! The herald angels sing

"Glory to the new-born king"

Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled
Joyful all ye nations rise

Join the triumph of the skies
With angelic host proclaim "Christ is born in Bethlehem"

Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the new-born king" "Glory to the new-born king"

CRAFT IDEA

Try making a staff out of paper, wood, or any other materials (you can also have your younger kids draw some too!). The staff symbolizes God first proclaiming the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. Let it also be a reminder that Jesus is our Shepherd King who watches over our lives and who chose to lay his life down for his sheep. He is the spotless lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world! Read Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34, and/or John 10 for more meditation on these truths!

Peace



Week 4

A promise for all people

read — Matthew 2:1-12

We learned last week that the first people God told about Jesus' birth were the shepherds. The magnificent mass of angels shouted from the skies that Jesus had come. But the angels were not alone in proclaiming the good news that night, and the shepherds were not the only people to learn of the Rescuer's coming.

On that very night, God placed a special star in the sky, a bright ray of light that declared the birth of the King. In a faraway land, men called Magi, saw this star. These were no ordinary men. They were educated men who studied the skies and nature and knew all about stars and signs. It is believed that these men came from Persia, or modern day Iran. Their journey took a long time. They did not arrive in Bethlehem the night Jesus was born as most people believe. In fact, it may have taken them up to two years to reach the place where Jesus was.

ASK —

Why do you think the Magi were willing to leave their homes and families and travel for such a long time to find Jesus?

We learn from the Bible that when the Magi found the place where Jesus was living with Mary and Joseph, they entered the house, bowed down, and worshiped this small child who had come to save sinners. They then gave Jesus precious, costly gifts.

ASK

What did they know and believe about Him? Why do you think they brought baby Jesus such special, expensive gifts?

There was something else very unique about these men. They were not Israelites. They were Gentiles. That means they were not from Abraham's family and likely did not know and worship God. But that night, God did something that no one expected. By placing that star in the sky, God showed unbelievable mercy toward all people. In showing the Magi that Jesus, the King of heaven, had been born, God was extending salvation to people of all nations.

Throughout the Bible, God promised to send a Rescuer to save the Israelites from their sins.

This scene in the Advent narrative whispers of an incredible mercy: God reveals His Son and extends salvation to the nations. Men and women from every people, tribe, and tongue will confess Him as Lord and worship Him as King. Jesus is worthy. Only He deserves the glory, honor, and praise of the nations.

ASK

In this part of Advent, how do you see that only God is worthy and that He deserves all the glory?

In the same way God set a star in the sky to lead the Magi to Jesus, He places each of us in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools. You don't have to go overseas to impact the nations. God brings them to our doorstep—refugees, international students, and those in search of greater opportunities and freedom. The nations may very well live next door. Being part of God's global purposes may be as simple as reaching out to people He has placed in your everyday life. Or you may indeed go to the ends of the earth and happily herald the good news to those who have never heard because God is worthy of their worship.

FAMILY/GROUP ACTIVITIES

PRAYER - A.C.T.S.

Adoration: Praise God that He chose to reveal the birth of Christ to all people; even to you! Praise God for choosing to reveal His glory to you and all nations through His Son!

Confession: Confess any ways you have not shared the good news of Jesus with those around you.

Thanksgiving: Thank God for extending His mercy to ALL people through Jesus His Son.

Supplication: Pray again this week for God to give you the power by His Spirit to proclaim the hope, joy, and peace people can have in Jesus. Pray specifically for a people group that is unreached and needs to hear the gospel.

SONG - JOY TO THE WORLD (JOYFUL, JOYFUL)

https://youtu.be/snl_KafJI_o?si=hXoNFAIhh-pfY9FQ

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
We will sing, sing, sing Joy to the world
We will sing, sing, 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
We will sing, sing, sing Joy to the world
We will sing, sing, sing

SONG JOY TO THE WORLD (CONTINUED)

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
We will sing, sing, sing
Joyful, joyful we adore Thee
God of glory, Lord of love
And hearts unfold like flowers before Thee Opening to the sun above
Joyful, joyful we adore Thee
God of glory, Lord of love
And hearts unfold like flowers before Thee Opening to the sun above

CRAFT IDEA

Try making a manger scene out of paper or any other craft materials you might have! Younger kids can try drawing a manger scene or gluing pre-cut pieces of construction paper to create their manger scene.

Advent



Week 5

The promise returns
(Christmas Day Devotional)

read — Luke 21:27-28 and 2 Peter 3:8-14

ASK — As a family, in what ways do you prepare for something (i.e. dinner, school, work, having people over)? What kinds of things do you do to get ready? Why do you do these things?

Over the last few weeks, we have seen that Jesus came, just like God said He would. The good news is God's promises don't end there. People waited for years with eager anticipation for Jesus to come and rescue them from their sins, and we are waiting too.

Another promise was made by God. He promised that Jesus would return to earth. If we love and trust Him, then we are already saved from our sins. However, when He comes a second time, we will be saved from all the brokenness that sin has caused in the world.

God has given us hints and clues, just like before, about how and when Jesus will return. We are waiting, just like before. We do it patiently sometimes, and other times with frustration and tears because we can't wait to live in a world free from sin. Sometimes we forget and wonder if Jesus really will come back. But God is faithful—even when we are faithless. And Jesus will come back.

ASK

———— How do you think we should be waiting for Jesus' return? What should we do as we wait?

This time it will be different. He will not come in the middle of the night as a baby, weak and helpless. The Bible tells us that when He returns, it will be on the back of a horse, riding out of the sky with a sword in His hand. Satan will be defeated and we will win when our Rescuer returns!

Hope: it is what we hold to as we wait. We seek to live by the fruits of the spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control). We want to be more and more like Jesus each and every day, putting away the sin that easily entangles us. And, we share the Good News of a savior with everyone we know so they too will have this hope.

Jesus is coming back. We don't know when, but we know He's coming. Soon. So be ready. Soon we will worship our King, as He deserves, forever. Come, Lord Jesus, come!

ASK

———— What are you most looking forward to when Jesus returns?

FAMILY/GROUP ACTIVITIES

PRAYER - A.C.T.S.

Adoration: Praise God that He has promised that Jesus will return and sin will be removed forever!

Confession: Confess any areas of your life where you have not made choices that reflect His return.

Thanksgiving: Thank God for His promise of a return of our Savior Jesus and for rescuing us from eternal death.

Supplication: Pray again this week for God to give you the power by His Spirit to live each day expecting His return and working to be more and more like Him in all things.

SONG - O HOLY NIGHT

<https://youtu.be/3II5ImwJIX0?si=lpjc-r3DKNPYZN4d>

O Holy night! The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth

Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til He appears and the soul felt its worth

A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices

For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn

Fall on your knees; O hear the Angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born
O night, O Holy night, O night divine!

Truly He taught us to love one another;

His law is love and His Gospel is Peace

Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother
And in His name, all oppression shall cease
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we
Let all within us Praise His Holy name

Christ is the Lord; O praise His name forever!
His power and glory evermore proclaim

His power and glory evermore proclaim

CRAFT IDEA

Have each family member draw or paint what you think Christ's return will look like. Have each person share their creation.

A resource provided by Westwood Media Services

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