



# ADVENT

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AN INVITATION TO HOPEFUL WAITING

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Designed and produced by the  
Communications Team at The Summit Church in Central Arkansas.  
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# BEGIN HERE...

*Advent* // from the Latin word *adventus* - arrival

The season of Advent is an invitation to hopeful waiting. It is a time to repent from darkness and embrace the light of Christ. Advent shakes us from our spiritual drowsiness and reawakens faith in God's promises. It reminds us that our waiting will one day end. Advent is about remembering the arrival of a promised Savior. And it is about the anticipation of His return.

## *How to Use This Guide*

Each week starts with a short story that will help awaken our imagination to the wonder of the Incarnation. If you have children, these stories are designed to be read aloud with your family as a way to include them in Advent. It will conclude with a Scripture as well as a few questions. Make these moments special. One way the early church did this was by lighting a candle at the beginning of each week during their Advent reading. For example, read the story at night and light a candle in a dark room. Let it be a reminder to your children that God has brought light to the darkness. Each week, light an additional candle and watch the room grow brighter and brighter until Christmas morning.

The rest of the week will consist of a short Scripture reading followed by a time of reflection and prayer. Do not rush through these prompts. They are meant to direct your heart to an aspect of Christ that will draw you closer to Him. Consider taking fifteen minutes in the morning to do this and meditate on your experience throughout the day. Use the following as a suggested weekly rhythm during this Christmas season:

Sunday ———— *Worship Gathering*  
Monday ———— *Read the story, Scripture, and discussion questions together as a family*  
Tuesday ———— *Personal Devotion Reading and Reflection*  
Wednesday ———— *Personal Devotion Reading and Reflection*  
Thursday ———— *Personal Devotion Reading and Reflection*  
Friday ———— *Personal Devotion Reading and Reflection*



*Advent has a dual meaning. It is the celebration of the arrival of Jesus and the anticipation of His return. Each week will have moments to focus on both. May our Heavenly Father bring peace to you this Christmas season. As you remember the promises He has already brought to pass, may your heart be filled with hope for the day when every tear is wiped away and all things are made new.*



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*Week 1*



# WEEK 1: DAY 1

## *Family Story Night*

### *Stars*

The fire crackled, spitting sparks high into the night. They swirled together with the stars. There were so many stars and sparks the air danced and it made the boy laugh.

“Abba, look!” he said to his father, who had his face towards the sheep. All of them were still sleeping as they had been for hours. But he was the watchman. Men from Bethlehem counted on shepherds like him to take care of their flocks. The boy tugged again.

“Look, Abba, the sky.”

The watchman, now shaken loose of his trance, glanced down at his son with a smile then followed his finger up to see the dancing sky. He took a long breath, almost as if trying to pull the whole sight into his lungs.

“I’ve sat under these galaxies for many nights,” the watchman said. “They never stop filling you with wonder. These stars,” he waved his finger in a wagging motion all around him, “they are full of hope.”

“Because of the promises?” the boy asked.

“Yes. The promises. Do you remember God’s promise in the stars?”

“I remember,” he replied. The fire popped another plume of sparks. “But I like it when you tell the story of Abraham and the stars. Tell it again.” The watchman eased another log onto the coals.

“Long ago,” he said, “before our town. Before our land. Before our tribe made their home here. There was a man. An old man. A man so old that he was quite nearly dead. His name was Abraham. And his wife, Sarah, was just as old and just as quite nearly dead as Abraham. They were very wealthy. They owned fields and more sheep than are in this valley. Thousands more. Abraham and Sarah were blessed. But they had waited their whole lives for the blessing they most longed for. The blessing that

outweighed all their silver and gold and jewels. A child. Abraham and Sarah had waited and hoped for so long that it hurt. So long that their hope had dried up like a twig in the desert. They knew it was too late to have a child now. Quite nearly dead people simply can't have children.

Then one night, very much like this one. Abraham was out in a field and our God spoke to him.”

The watchman took a deep breath and the boy smiled. He liked this part.

“Abraham!’ the Lord thundered from the heavens.”

“Well, of course Abraham nearly fell over,” the watchman said, “but he recognized God’s voice. So Abraham said to him, ‘Yes Lord, here I am.’”

“Abraham, tonight is a special night. Look at the stars, how many do you see?’ the Lord said.

‘There’s...there’s too many to count,’ Abraham stammered.

‘I am going to make your family bigger than the stars,’ God said.

Abraham raised an eyebrow in confusion,” The boy laughed as his father tried to make the same confused look.

“But Lord,’ he said, ‘I am old. And so is my wife.’

The Lord replied, ‘Nevertheless, I will give you a son.’

Abraham knew it sounded impossible. Even still, his heart, which for so long had been hopelessly dry, now flooded with faith in the Creator of life and His promise. He believed God could do it.

‘I will bless you, Abraham,’ the Lord said. ‘But this blessing is not just for you. Through you, through your family, I will bless every family on the earth. Your people will become a mighty nation that will bring new life to my world.’”

“But then...years went by. Then more years,” the watchman said. The fire sizzled in front of them as they stared into the winking coals.

“Do you think Abraham doubted while he waited?” the boy asked.

The watchman looked down into the fire for a moment. “What do you think?”

“Well,” the boy replied slowly, “I feel like I would. He had to wait so long, you know? But God did it. He gave them a son.”

Sparks shot up and floated down into the flames. The boy stayed silent. He knew what the next part would be. It was how his father always ended these stories.

“And our God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, if his promises were true then...” he paused and waited for the reply.

“They are true now,” the boy said.

“They are true now,” the watchman repeated. “And if he was faithful to them...”

“He will be faithful to us,” said the boy.

“He will be faithful to us,” said the watchman.

The fire was beginning to burn low and the boy yawned as he laid his head on his father’s lap. Both were quiet under the blanket of planets and galaxies. The boy looked up and saw his father’s eyes back on the field, staring closely at the crags and curves and little lumps of sleeping sheep dotting the valley. He sat up and stared too, squinting his eyes in the same direction.

“Abba,” he said to the watchman.

“Yes, my son?”

“What is it exactly that we’re watching for?” he asked.

“The morning,” he replied. “We’re watching for the morning.”

## *Reading*

### ***Genesis 22:17-18 (God’s promise to Abraham)***

“I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your children as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore...and in your children shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”



*Psalm 130:5-8*

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;  
my soul waits for the Lord  
more than watchmen for the morning,  
more than watchmen for the morning.  
O Israel, hope in the LORD!  
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,  
and with him is plentiful redemption.  
And he will redeem Israel  
from all his sins.

*Family Discussion*

What is something you've had to wait for? What did waiting feel like?

There are many promises that God has made to us. Sometimes, like in the story of Abraham, we have to wait for them to become real. As we look forward to Christmas, that's what Advent helps us do. It helps us wait for the arrival of Christmas just like sometimes we wait on God's promises. And, as we get closer to Christmas, we will see how God always fulfills His promises to us... sometimes in surprising ways!



## WEEK 1: DAY 2

### *Reading*

#### *Isaiah 9:1-7*

Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory.

2 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.

3 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.

4 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.

5 The boots of the warrior  
and the uniforms bloodstained by war  
will all be burned.

They will be fuel for the fire.

6 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.

7 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!

**Matthew 4:12-17**

When Jesus heard that John [the Baptist] had been arrested, he left Judea and returned to Galilee. 13 He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.

14 This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

15 “In the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali,  
beside the sea, beyond the Jordan River,  
in Galilee where so many Gentiles live,

16 the people who sat in darkness  
have seen a great light.

And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow,  
a light has shined.”

17 From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.”

## *Reflection*

Have heartaches, disappointments, anxieties or griefs occurred this year in your life? Advent is a time to be honest about moments of darkness, and to allow the light of hope to flood every part of it.

Imagine the shadow of death from Matthew’s gospel as a real place - a cold valley with steep walls and disorienting darkness. All gloom in life fills the canyon until, without warning, light pierces through and pushes the fog to either side. The light warms the valley and reveals the trail towards home. Remember that Jesus entered our valley of death and shadows. He knows how real our darkness can be. And how bright His hope can shine. Spend the next few minutes meditating on the truths of today’s reading in light of the hope of Christ.

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## *Prayer*

*Father in Heaven,*

*I am humbled to think that Jesus was willing to enter the hopelessness of my situation and rescue me. Thank You for turning sorrow into joy. Turn my eyes now from any temptation to return to darkness. Keep them directed towards You. May the Kingdom of Christ shine so brightly in my life today that the gloom of others is banished as well. Amen.*



## WEEK 1: DAY 3

### *Reading*

#### ***Isaiah 11:1-9***

Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot—  
yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.

2 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.

3 He will delight in obeying the LORD.  
He will not judge by appearance  
nor make a decision based on hearsay.

4 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.

5 He will wear righteousness like a belt  
and truth like an undergarment.

6 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.

7 The cow will graze near the bear.  
The cub and the calf will lie down together.  
The lion will eat hay like a cow.

8 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.

9 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.

#### ***Romans 15:8-13***

Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. 9 He also came so that the Gentiles might give glory to God for his mercies to them. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote:

“For this, I will praise you among the Gentiles;

I will sing praises to your name.”  
10 And in another place it is written,  
“Rejoice with his people,  
you Gentiles.”

11 And yet again,  
“Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles.  
Praise him, all you people of the earth.”

12 And in another place Isaiah said,  
“The heir to David’s throne will come,  
and he will rule over the Gentiles.  
They will place their hope on him.”

13 I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Reflection

What would life be like without the hope of Christ? Think of how accomplishments or disappointments or happiness or sorrow might feel in a Christless world.

Martin Luther once wrote, “The Incarnation is proof that our God is not against us.” He has not left us without hope. The Root of Jesse (Jesus) reveals that the Kingdom of Heaven is filled with purpose. It is filled with *delight*. Following the Lord saturates a hopeless heart with joy that sustains us through our darkest hour. For the next few minutes, see how many reasons you can list for delighting to follow Jesus.

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## Prayer

*Father in Heaven,*

*As one who was once separated from Christ and a stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world, I praise You for bringing me near through the blood of Jesus. May this Christmas be filled with reconciliation. In the same way that You have reconciled the church to Yourself, may family and friends experience Your love in ways that bring peace. Where there was once division, bring healing. Where there was once anger, bring mercy. Where there was once separation, bring nearness. May the delight of knowing Christ fill my heart with hope to see it happen. Amen.*



## WEEK 1: DAY 4

### *Reading*

#### **1 John 1:1-9**

We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. 2 This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

4 We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.

5 This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. 6 So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. 7 But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. 9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

### *Reflection*

The purpose of practicing truth, according to John's letter, is to have *fellowship*; both with God and one another. Light brings friendship. However, he warns of two trails that diverge from the path of friendship and lead us deep into darkness. The first deceives us into thinking darkness doesn't really exist. There is no sin (or so it says). This trail dismisses the darkness. The other embraces it. Practices it. Prefers it. They are different in their features but snake their way to the same destination – isolation, despair, and hopelessness.

The true path to fellowship (with God *and* others) embraces forgiveness made possible only in Christ. It's an honest, humble path. And we are invited to walk it each day with a Savior who is faithful and just.

## *Prayer*

*Father in Heaven,*

*My heart's desire is to have fellowship with You, but there are places in my heart that I am tempted to stray. Please forgive me, in Christ, for [repent of places where you have turned away from God]. I believe You are faithful and just. I receive Your forgiveness and accept Your cleansing work. Draw me close today and may our fellowship with one another spill over to my fellowship with those around me. Amen.*



## WEEK 1: DAY 5

### *Reading*

#### *John 1:1-18*

In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.

2 He existed in the beginning with God.

3 God created everything through him,  
and nothing was created except through him.

4 The Word gave life to everything that was created,  
and his life brought light to everyone.

5 The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness can never extinguish it.

6 God sent a man, John the Baptist, 7 to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. 8 John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. 9 The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.

11 He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. 12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

14 So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of un-failing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

15 John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"

16 From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.

17 For the law was given through Moses, but God's un-failing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

### *Reflection*

Jesus said, "If you've seen me, you've seen my Father also" (John 14:9). With that in mind, spend a few minutes answering the following questions:







# ADVENT

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AN INVITATION TO HOPEFUL WAITING

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*Week 2*



## WEEK 2: DAY 1

### *Family Story Night*

Each week starts with a short story that will help awaken our imagination to the wonder of the Incarnation. If you have children, these are designed to be read aloud with your family as a way to include them in Advent. It will conclude with a Scripture as well as a few questions. Make these moments special. One way the early church did this was by lighting a candle at the beginning of each week during their Advent reading. For example, read the story at night and light a candle in a dark room. Let it be a reminder to your children that God has brought light to the darkness. Each week, light an additional candle and watch the room grow brighter and brighter until Christmas morning.

#### *The Fence*

He was sure of it now. After the first time, he thought maybe he had just miscounted. Sheep can sort of blend together when they're in clumps. So, he counted again. Same number. Then one more time just in case, but he already knew what the number would be. Two less than were supposed to be at the pond. He strained his neck as high as possible and scanned all the way down the fence line but saw nothing. Just a long line of piled stones stretching on and on. The boy ran back towards the tree.

"Abba!" he called to the man sitting under it. His eyes were closed.

"Yes, son?" he answered. "What was the number?"

"Two are missing," the boy said with a quiver in his voice. The father opened his eyes and rose, pausing for a moment to pick up the staff laying at his feet.

"Are you certain?" he asked, already moving towards the fence line.

"I counted three times," replied the boy following behind him. They neared the fence. There were pieces of wood in places to fill lower gaps in the stone. They were rough and splintered.

"Why would they go beyond this?" the boy asked.

The shepherd was scanning the wood back-and-forth in a quick, steady motion. "Here," he said pointing down to his right about ten feet from where they stood. He walked over and stooped down at the spot. The boy ran to him and noticed the small tuft of wool hanging off one of the splinters.

"Here is where they went through," he said, then remembered the boy's question. "This fence helps them see where they should stop. They don't always pay attention to it. Sometimes, they leave."

The boy looked beyond the fence. "But there's nothing out there for them," he said. "There's no water. No pastures. Hardly any trees. And there are wolves. And there are lions." He thought about their fangs and shook his head. "It's scary out there."

"I know," said the father as he stepped over the fence. He turned and offered his hand to the boy. "That's why we have to go get them."

They travelled in silence for some time. Nothing but the sound of wind and the steady thud of the shepherd's staff hitting the ground. The boy looked behind them and couldn't see the trees or pastures or pond anymore. Even the fence had disappeared in the distance.

"You know, people do this too," the father said, never breaking his scan of the hillsides. "The Law of Moses is meant to protect. Like the fence, it acts as a guard so people don't wander away into sin and death. Yet they break through it all the time."

The boy thought for a moment. "Has anyone followed the Law perfectly?" he asked.

"Not yet," the father replied. "Everyone has wandered past the fence."

It was then that the boy noticed something from the corner of his eye. At first, he thought an insect was buzzing around. But no. There were two of them. Two small lumps moving down into a valley to his left.

"Look!" the boy shouted, but his father was already staring in the same direction. "We found them!"

They began to run towards the sheep. They ran faster than any sheep on earth could run. And it was not long at all before they stood in front of the two of them, blocking their path towards certain death. The boy looked down and noticed the smaller one's hooves were injured. Both of their coats were nearly brown with dirt.

Twigs and thorns poked out of their sides.

The shepherd reached out and touched the bigger one on top of the head and scratched behind its ear. It moved towards him. Then he scooped the other up and lifted it over his shoulders.

“Alright, little ones,” he said. “That’s enough. It’s time to come home.”

He turned back and began walking in the direction of the pond and the trees and the green pastures. The bigger sheep followed closely at his side. The boy followed them. He looked down and noticed his legs were bleeding from running through the thorns and briars. The cuts stung with every step.

“When we get back, are we going to punish them?” he asked. The shepherd stopped and looked back at his son’s legs, then at the sheep.

“They certainly deserve to be punished,” he said. “But no, we are not going to punish them. We are going to celebrate. They were lost, but now they’re found.” Then he started walking again.

The boy smiled and thought about the party they would have. He caught up with his father and looked down at the sheep as they walked together. He picked twigs and leaves out of his wool then patted him gently on the head. The sheep nuzzled against the boy’s hand.

“The cuts were worth it to bring you home,” he said.

## *Reading*

### *Isaiah 53:3-6*

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.

4 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!

5 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.

6 All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.

We have left God's paths to follow our own.

Yet the LORD laid on him [Jesus]

the sins of us all.

***Galatians 3:24-27, 29***

The law [of Moses] was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. 25 And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian.

26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes...29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

***Family Discussion***

What are ways we can sometimes “wander past the fence” and miss what God has called us to? How does Christmas impact the way we see our own sin?

During Advent, we get to remember that Christ has come to our rescue. All of us, like the sheep in the story, have gone astray from God. But Christ came into our thorns and briars to bring us back home.

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## WEEK 2: DAY 2

### *Reading*

#### ***Hebrews 4:14-18***

So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. 15 This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. 16 So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

#### ***Hebrews 8:1-13***

Here is the main point: We have a High Priest who sat down in the place of honor beside the throne of the majestic God in heaven. 2 There he ministers in the heavenly Tabernacle, the true place of worship that was built by the Lord and not by human hands.

3 And since every high priest is required to offer gifts and sacrifices, our High Priest must make an offering, too. 4 If he were here on earth, he would not even be a priest, since there already are priests who offer the gifts required by the law.

5 They serve in a system of worship that is only a copy, a shadow of the real one in heaven. For when Moses was getting ready to build the Tabernacle, God gave him this warning: “Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain.”

6 But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for he is the one who mediates for us a far better covenant with God, based on better promises.

7 If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it. 8 But when God found fault with the people, he said: “The day is coming, says the LORD,

when I will make a new covenant  
with the people of Israel and Judah.

9 This covenant will not be like the one

I made with their ancestors

when I took them by the hand

and led them out of the land of Egypt.

They did not remain faithful to my covenant,

so I turned my back on them, says the LORD.

10 But this is the new covenant I will make

with the people of Israel on that day, says the LORD:

I will put my laws in their minds,  
and I will write them on their hearts.

I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.

11 And they will not need to teach their neighbors,  
nor will they need to teach their relatives,  
saying, 'You should know the LORD.'

For everyone, from the least to the greatest,  
will know me already.

12 And I will forgive their wickedness,  
and I will never again remember their sins."

13 When God speaks of a "new" covenant, it means he has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.

## *Reflection*

Jesus came to establish the new covenant promised long ago through the prophets. In the old covenant, God's people were to follow the Law of Moses perfectly and so be blessed by God. Of course, many times, they chose not to. After some time had passed, they would repent by offering a sacrifice to God. At this time, the presence of God was separate from the people of Israel because of their sin. They could not enter the holiest of holy places in the tabernacle. So, they needed a mediator between God and Israel – a priest. God's new promise, however, was that a day would come where the veil that separated the holiest of holy places would be torn and we would have access to God. It would be possible only through a Great High Priest who would go before us.

Because of the Incarnation, you have access today to the throne of God Himself. You have a Great High Priest who understands your weaknesses. And you have the ability to stand as one whose sin has been removed as far as the east is from the west.

## *Prayer*

*Father in Heaven,*

*I approach Your throne of grace with confidence this day knowing that I will find mercy to help in time of need. Thank You for drawing near. As one who is prone to wander, I hold fast to my confession that Jesus is Lord. I cling to it with all of my might. May I be filled with all the fullness of God as I go along my way. I walk with confidence and gratitude according to Your promises through Jesus Christ. Amen.*





## WEEK 2: DAY 3

### *Reading*

#### *Psalm 146*

Praise the LORD!

Let all that I am praise the LORD.

2 I will praise the LORD as long as I live.

I will sing praises to my God with my dying breath.

3 Don't put your confidence in powerful people;  
there is no help for you there.

4 When they breathe their last, they return to the earth,  
and all their plans die with them.

5 But joyful are those who have the God of Israel as their helper,  
whose hope is in the LORD their God.

6 He made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and everything in them.

He keeps every promise forever.

7 He gives justice to the oppressed  
and food to the hungry.

The LORD frees the prisoners.

8 The LORD opens the eyes of the blind.

The LORD lifts up those who are weighed down.

The LORD loves the godly.

9 The LORD protects the foreigners among us.

He cares for the orphans and widows,

but he frustrates the plans of the wicked.

10 The LORD will reign forever.

He will be your God, O Jerusalem, throughout the generations.

Praise the LORD!

### *Reflection*

Each day, we put our trust in many different places. Spend a few minutes and make a list of specific areas (e.g., relationships, career, future dreams, etc.) that require trust from you. Are you putting too much faith in something or someone other than God? To put it another way, is there an area in your life you have misplaced your hope?





## WEEK 2: DAY 4

### *Reading*

#### *Psalm 24*

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it.

The world and all its people belong to him.

2 For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas  
and built it on the ocean depths.

3 Who may climb the mountain of the LORD?  
Who may stand in his holy place?

4 Only those whose hands and hearts are pure,  
who do not worship idols  
and never tell lies.

5 They will receive the LORD's blessing  
and have a right relationship with God their savior.

6 Such people may seek you  
and worship in your presence, O God of Jacob.

7 Open up, ancient gates!  
Open up, ancient doors,  
and let the King of glory enter.

8 Who is the King of glory?  
The LORD, strong and mighty;  
the LORD, invincible in battle.

9 Open up, ancient gates!  
Open up, ancient doors,  
and let the King of glory enter.

10 Who is the King of glory?  
The LORD of Heaven's Armies—  
he is the King of glory.

### *Reflection*

Tradition holds that Psalm 24 was sung after the children of Israel made their ascent to Jerusalem for yearly feasts or celebrations. When they arrived at the gates, this hymn could be heard throughout the city. In many ways, it was a song of hopeful waiting. This must have been a time of reflection as well. The psalm has





## WEEK 2: DAY 5

### *Reading*

#### *Colossians 1:15–23*

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.

He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation,  
16 for through him God created everything  
in the heavenly realms and on earth.

He made the things we can see  
and the things we can't see—

such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world.

Everything was created through him and for him.

17 He existed before anything else,  
and he holds all creation together.

18 Christ is also the head of the church,  
which is his body.

He is the beginning,  
supreme over all who rise from the dead.

So he is first in everything.

19 For God in all his fullness  
was pleased to live in Christ,

20 and through him God reconciled  
everything to himself.

He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth  
by means of Christ's blood on the cross.

21 This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies,  
separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. 22 Yet now he has reconciled  
you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result,  
he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you  
stand before him without a single fault.

23 But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift  
away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good  
News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as  
God's servant to proclaim it.





# ADVENT

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AN INVITATION TO HOPEFUL WAITING

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*Week 3*



# WEEK 3: DAY 1

## *Family Story Night*

Each week starts with a short story that will help awaken our imagination to the wonder of the Incarnation. If you have children, these are designed to be read aloud with your family as a way to include them in Advent. It will begin with a Scripture reading and conclude with a time of prayer. Make these moments special. One way the early church did this was by lighting a candle at the beginning of each week during their Advent reading. For example, read the story at night and light a candle in a dark room. Let it be a reminder to your children that God has brought light to the darkness. Each week, light an additional candle and watch the room grow brighter and brighter until Christmas morning.

### *Reading*

#### ***Psalm 23 (ESV)***

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

3 He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

forever.



## *The Shepherd King*

The boy's father stood looking into the pink water as it reflected every color of the sky. The day had been long. He'd rescued two sheep and travelled far to bring them home. Both were drinking from the pool and the boy could hear his father singing as they did. He didn't sing well or often but he sang nonetheless. He'd always say it was because King David sang in this valley.

The father was still humming the melody when a stone split the middle of the still water and skipped across. He looked over to see the boy searching for another to throw.

"Do you think this is the one he meant?" said the boy as he sent another smooth stone sailing across. "When David the King wrote the 23rd Psalm, I think he was sitting here at this pond."

"There are a lot of places of still water in Israel," the father replied.

"These are David's though. He sang on these hills. He shepherded on them like us. This is my favorite pond in the whole valley, and I bet it was his too," the boy said.

"Well, that was a long, long time ago," the father said. "It may have looked differently then. Maybe it wasn't even here yet."

"No," the boy shook his head, "this was the one he meant."

The father smiled from the corner of his mouth, "What makes you so sure?"

"There's a green pasture all around," the boy said swirling his finger in a circle. "Still and quiet waters. Lying down in green pastures," he quoted. "It's all here."

"True," the father said, still grinning, "There are other green pastures near here. Maybe it was one of those that the King meant."

"But you always choose to come to this one after a long day. It helps you doesn't it?" the boy said.

"Yes," the father laughed to himself, "it does."

"That's not how I know though."

"Oh yeah? Why is that? How do you *know* this is the one?" he asked with a raised

eyebrow.

“This is the only one that makes you sing.”

The father looked back into the water and thought for a moment.

“What were you singing?”

“It was the song your mother and I sang when we arrived at the gates of Jerusalem. The *twenty-fourth* Psalm. It was a song of advent.”

“What does that mean?” he asked.

“It means a song of waiting for an arrival.”

“What are the words?”

The father looked up the valley and cleared his throat.

“It says,

‘Who can climb the hill of the Lord?

Who can stand in such a holy place?

Only those whose hands are clean.

Only those whose hearts are pure.

Only those who trust in what is true.

Only those whose promises are good.

These are the ones who will receive blessing.

A blessing from the Lord.

These are the ones who will receive righteousness.

Righteousness from the God of Jacob.’

Then the father closed his eyes as he spoke louder,

‘Lift up your heads, oh gates!

Lift up high, you ancient doors,

So the King of Glory may come in!

Who is the King of Glory?

The LORD, strong and mighty.

The LORD of angels and armies.

He is the King of Glory.

Lift up the gates! Raise high the doors!

May the King of Glory come be with us!’”

It was quiet after that. The boy watched small ripples in the water as tears dropped off his father's cheeks.

"Abba," said the boy. "Do you think there will ever be a King like David again in Israel?"

The father wiped his eyes. "The LORD has promised a Savior King will come. A Messiah. Just as he promised our ancestor Abraham that he would have a family and become a mighty nation."

The boy looked up at his father and said, "And if His promises were true then..." he paused and waited on his father's reply this time.

"They are true now," said his father.

"They are true now," said the boy as he looked back down into the water. "And if He was faithful to them..."

"He will be faithful to us," said the father.

"He will be faithful to us," said the boy.

The sun was hidden behind the hills now and stars were starting to peek through the twilight.

"Let's build our fire before it gets too dark," the father said turning back towards the trees. All the sheep were busy finding a place to bed down for the night. He put his arm around the boy as they walked past the water.

"You know," he said looking up at the sky, "I'm beginning to think you may be right. I think that really may be the one."

### *Family Prayer*

Spend a moment and thank the Lord for sending Christ. Like the story, you can turn Psalm 24 into a prayer for Advent. Ask God to lift high the gates of your heart so that His glory can flood in.



## WEEK 3: DAY 2

### *Reading*

#### *Philippians 2:1-11*

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?

2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

6 Though he was God,  
he did not think of equality with God  
as something to cling to.

7 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,

8 he humbled himself in obedience to God  
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor  
and gave him the name above all other names,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

### *Reflection*

Spend a few minutes writing or reflecting on the questions Paul asks in verse one.

What encourages your heart today about belonging to Christ?

In light of your current circumstances, what comforts you about God's love?

Is your heart tender and compassionate or hardened and cold?

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Afterward, consider how Christ is described in verses 5-11 as our model of how to embrace humility.

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### *Prayer*

*Father in Heaven,  
Thank You for modeling what you command. Today, I put to death selfishness and pride that fuels the need to impress others. Instead, I put on the humility of Christ and ask for strength as I serve and consider others more important than myself. As I do, may they experience the love of Christ in a fresh way. I praise You for sending us the Name that is above every name, Jesus Christ. Amen*



## WEEK 3: DAY 3

### *Reading*

#### ***1 Corinthians 15:17-23***

And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. 18 In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! 19 And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

20 But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

21 So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. 22 Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. 23 But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

#### ***1 Corinthians 15:51-58***

But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! 52 It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. 53 For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

54 Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

56 For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. 57 But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

## *Reflection*

Advent is more than celebrating the birth of our Savior. It is the anticipation of the day when He returns and makes all things new. Advent is a season to cling to hope. Hope that our work and love and pain and sorrow and waiting will all be used by God for our good (see Romans 8:28). For, like Adam, we will die. But, like the Second Adam (Jesus), we will join in the resurrection. This hope brings light and life to every aspect of our lives. Because of the Incarnation and Resurrection, every moment of this day has purpose in your life.

## *Prayer*

The following is taken from the third and fourth stanzas of “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” Use them as a prayer of praise to the Lord.

*Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Ris'n 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.*

*Come, Desire of nations, come!  
Fix in us Thy humble home:  
Rise, the woman's conqu'ring seed,  
Bruise in us the serpent's head;*

*Adam's likeness now efface,  
Stamp Thine image in its place:  
Final Adam from above,  
Reinstate us in Thy love.*



## WEEK 3: DAY 4

### *Reading*

#### ***Isaiah 40:1-11***

“Comfort, comfort my people,”  
says your God.

2 “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.”

3 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!

4 Fill in the valleys,  
and level the mountains and hills.

Straighten the curves,  
and smooth out the rough places.

5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
and all people will see it together.  
The LORD has spoken!”

6 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.

7 The grass withers and the flowers fade  
beneath the breath of the LORD.  
And so it is with people.

8 The grass withers and the flowers fade,  
but the word of our God stands forever.”

9 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!”

10 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.

11 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.

### **1 Peter 1:21-25**

21 Through Christ you have come to trust in God. And you have placed your faith and hope in God because he raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory.

22 You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.

23 For you have been born again, but not to a life that will quickly end. Your new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God. 24 As the Scriptures say,

“People are like grass;

their beauty is like a flower in the field.

The grass withers and the flower fades.

25 But the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And that word is the Good News that was preached to you.

## *Reflection*

It is sobering to think that everyone you know and love will one day fade like the grass. All our glory and accomplishments blown away in the wind. Yet Peter goes on to say, “But the word of the Lord remains forever. And this is the *good news* preached to you.” The promises of God give us eternal hope in the midst of fleeting years. C.S. Lewis put it this way, “Aim at Heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.” Because of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, all of our moments have deep meaning.

## *Prayer*

*Father in Heaven,*

*Though outwardly I am wasting away, inwardly I am being renewed moment by moment. Aim my life towards Heaven today. Unmask any lesser hope and replace it with the unshakeable, steadfast hope of eternal life that is mine in Christ. Keep me close, lest I waste my days chasing after the wind. Blow away the chaff of selfish ambition and jealousy. May I instead be carried by the work of your Holy Spirit as you prepare me for the eternal weight of glory that's beyond all comparison. In Christ, Amen.*



## WEEK 3: DAY 5

### *Reading*

#### *Titus 3:3-8*

Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other. 4 But—

When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, 5 he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. 6 He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. 7 Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.

8 This is a trustworthy saying, and I want you to insist on these teachings so that all who trust in God will devote themselves to doing good. These teachings are good and beneficial for everyone.

### *Reflection*

There came a moment in redemptive history when the people of God no longer had to wait. After centuries of silence, the loving kindness and goodness of God *arrived*. And He did not come angry or vengeful. He was not holding a sword or gavel. When Jesus Christ appeared, He did so to save. Those who were walking in darkness finally saw a great light (see Matthew 4:16). They were no longer looking. He was with them.

### *Prayer*

*Father in Heaven,*

*How great is Your loving kindness towards us. As we live in the warmth of Your grace, let us understand in deeper ways what it means that we are heirs to the hope of eternal life. May the arrival of our Savior stoke the fire in our hearts for His promised return. We look to a better country today; our true home where the knowledge of the glory of God covers every blade of grass. Amen.*



# ADVENT

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AN INVITATION TO HOPEFUL WAITING

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*Week 4*



## WEEK 4: DAY 1

### *Family Story Night*

Each week starts with a short story that will help awaken our imagination to the wonder of the Incarnation. If you have children, these are designed to be read aloud with your family as a way to include them in Advent. It will conclude with a Scripture as well as a time of reflective prayer. Make these moments special. One way the early church did this was by lighting a candle at the beginning of each week during their Advent reading. For example, read the story at night and light a candle in a dark room. Let it be a reminder to your children that God has brought light to the darkness.

#### *Visitors*

The boy's eyes shot open and darted around the midnight sky. Every star was still in its place. Pulsing and bright. Just like they were when he drifted off to sleep. He thought perhaps they were sparkling more than before, almost as if they were dancing, but dismissed it. He glanced over at his father who was not watching the sheep. He too was looking at the sky.

The breeze shifted suddenly out of the north. He sat up. His father looked at him but said nothing. Neither knew what to say. There was nothing to say, exactly. It was something they felt. Something in the air. Something in the blades of grass. Something in the stars. It all looked the same but it was not. Everything felt alive. Like the whole world had just plunged into a deep spring in the heat of the day. The boy looked at his father's arms. His hair was standing up as well.

"What is it?" asked the boy. His father looked around the valley, up into the sky, then breathed in the air around him.

"I don't know. It's as if..."

There was the sound of cracking. It couldn't have come from a tree, for it was far too loud. Like the sound of a forest of oaks snapping in unison. They both stood up and looked for where the sound was coming from.

Then it wasn't dark anymore.

It was as bright as the morning. Maybe even brighter. The trees and the hills and the rocks looked as if they were glowing with light. The boy tugged on his father and pointed to the place where it was brightest. He could hardly look at it without burning his eyes. But he could make out what looked to be the image of a man. An angel?

Yes, it was an angel. They were both sure of it now. The angel had eyes that sparked like fire. Neither the boy or his father could look into them without being filled with fear.

Then the angel spoke. His voice felt more ancient than the earth and moon. It at once filled you with awe and dread and hope.

“Do not be afraid,” said the angel. The boy and his father could not take their eyes off the ground. They were both trembling now. The angel took a step forward.

“Sons of Adam, do not be afraid. Be filled with courage. May your hearts overflow with gladness. For I have come to bring you good news of greatest joy that will be for all people. From the lowest to the highest. From the greatest to the smallest. For those in this land and distant ones. For unto you has been born this day, in Bethlehem – the city of King David, a Savior. Christ, the Lord. You will find him with ease. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes and lies sleeping in a manger.”

The father looked at the boy. *The Messiah had come? In swaddling clothes? They both thought. The Lord of all Kings is wearing strips of cloth we put on donkeys? He is sleeping in a food trough? That is no way to welcome a King.* The thoughts were coming too fast to make sense of it all.

The sounds of cracking returned so loud it was as if the mountains were crumbling into the valley. And the light that was brighter than day somehow became brighter. They looked around and the entire night was filled with angels. All of them were singing. Over and over and over they sang.

“Glory to God! Glory to God!  
Glory to God in the highest!  
Be filled with joy! Good news has come!  
Our God has brought peace to the earth!  
Glory to God in the highest,  
For our God has brought peace to the earth!”

After the final note, they were silent for one moment, then vanished the next. The boy and his father could see nothing at first, as if they had walked from the

sunlight into a cave. They blinked quickly trying to make their eyes adjust to the night. Slowly, the boy could see a star poking out of the darkness. Soon the valley returned to their vision. It was quiet.

The boy heard his father weeping at a distance. He was already walking quickly towards Bethlehem. He ran to catch up with him and, between heaving breaths, could hear his father saying over and over again,

“He was faithful to them. And He is faithful to us.”

## *Reading*

### *Luke 2:15-20*

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.”

16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. 17 After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. 18 All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, 19 but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. 20 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.

## *Family Prayer*

Invite each member of your family to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God. Thank Him for His promises. Ask Him to fill your heart with wonder this Christmas. Pray that your mind will be renewed and your spirit filled with hope in His promises.



## WEEK 4: DAY 2

### *Reading*

#### *Galatians 4:4-7*

But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. 5 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. 6 And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” 7 Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

### *Reflection*

Christ came into the world to set us free. In Him, we have the ability to live as sons and daughters of God – filled with the Holy Spirit, strengthened with courage, and empowered to walk in righteousness. Because of His reconciling work, we can know God as Father. We can love others with genuineness and compassion. And we can have peace in the midst of frightening and heavy circumstances.

### *Prayer*

*Father in Heaven,*

*Your presence in my life brings gladness. I rejoice to call You Father. May I experience the nearness of Your presence today in the small moments – in my car, my conversations, my meetings, my solitude, my errands, my eating, my drinking – let them all be marked with the fullness of God. Amen.*





## WEEK 4: DAY 3

### *Reading*

#### *Matthew 1:18-24*

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. 19 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.

20 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. 21 And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

22 All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet:

23 “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.’”

24 When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife.

### *Reflection*

When we hear the voice of Jesus, we hear the voice of God. “If you’ve seen Me,” He said to Philip, “then you’ve seen My Father also” (see John 14:9). That’s what makes the word, “Immanuel,” so special. “God, *with us*.” The invisible made visible. By calling Him “Jesus,” the angel showed Joseph His purpose. Jesus’ name literally translates to “God saves.” Imagine what it was like for Joseph to awaken the next day. Not only was God with them. He had come to save.

### *Prayer*

*Father in Heaven,*

*To know You in Christ is to have abundant life. May Your presence strengthen me today with power through Your Holy Spirit; that I may comprehend with all the saints what is the height and breadth and length and depth of Your love. May I know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge – that I may be filled with all the fullness of God. Amen.*



## WEEK 4: DAY 4

### *Reading*

#### *John 3:16-17*

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

### *Reflection*

God sent Jesus into the world to bring salvation and new life. Over the coming days, you may find yourself with family who don't believe the truths of the Gospel. Or perhaps you have friends who will soon be in difficult conversations around dinner tables. Spend some time today interceding on their behalf. Ask that the true joy and celebration of Christmas would be experienced by everyone in your life.

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### *Prayer*

*Father in Heaven,*

*Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save (Isaiah 59:1). As Nicodemus came to Christ and asked how to inherit eternal life, may \_\_\_\_\_ find their heart stirred with the same question this Christmas. May they hear the saving message of Christ and come to faith. Give me boldness in my proclamation and wisdom in my speech. For with You, nothing is impossible. Amen.*



## WEEK 4: DAY 5

### *Reading*

#### *Matthew 7:24-29*

“Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. 25 Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. 26 But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. 27 When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.

### *Reflection*

As you enter these days of Christmas celebration, reflect on the last year. What have you been building your house on? What storms have come your way? Has obedience to Christ’s commands marked each season? Where do you hope to grow in your faithfulness to God this upcoming year?

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### *Prayer*

*Father in Heaven,*

*Your commands are good and bring life to us. Thank You for sending Christ to not only reconcile us, but to call us towards obedience and flourishing. Forgive me for wandering astray. Draw near today as I draw near to You. May my feet be set on the solid rock of Jesus Christ. So anchor my heart in Your good words that the storms of life cannot overtake me. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I will celebrate the birth of Christ today by obeying His commands. Amen.*



# ADVENT

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AN INVITATION TO HOPEFUL WAITING

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*The Eve of His Arrival*



# CHRISTMAS EVE

## *Reading*

### ***Revelation 21:1-5***

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. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3 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 4 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."

5 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."

## *Prayer*

*To the Creator of heaven and earth, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, all glory and honor and praise to You. On this night, we are reminded of a people who once walked in darkness but have seen a great light. We are reminded of ancient promises that have been fulfilled through Jesus the Messiah. And we are reminded of promises yet to be fulfilled. Promises of restoration and life. Promises of resurrected saints and redeemed creation where death and heartache and sorrow will only be spoken of in past tense. It is night, but morning will come. We await it with eagerness and expectation. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.*



**THE SUMMIT  
CHURCH**