



Week 1

The Promise of a Savior

-Personal Study-

*I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*

GENESIS 3:15

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time, he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.*

*You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.*

*For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.*

*For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.*

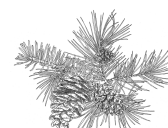
*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.*

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

ISAIAH 9:1-7

**Think of a time when you were in trouble and needed to be rescued.
How did you feel in that situation? Whom did you look to for help?**





Advent in the Beginning

Many of us grew up with the story of Advent beginning in a stable. But, the story begins in a Garden.

When God created the world, all things were just as they should be. Creation functioned in perfect order according to God's beautiful design. Man walked in unbroken relationship with God, fully known and unafraid. But in an instant, all that changed as Adam and Eve disobeyed God's good instruction. They took of the fruit and ate, and sin entered the world. Fellowship broken. Peace shattered. Creation thrown into chaos. Darkness, depravity, fear, shame and selfishness flooded the human heart, separating man from God. The situation was dire.

But right then, amid the darkness, God spoke a word of hope: a Savior would come, born of a woman, to defeat the enemy and deliver God's people.

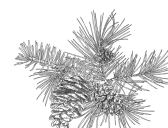
Scholars refer to Genesis 3:15 as the *proto euangelion* or the "first gospel." From the first moment of our need for rescue, God's promise was there. Before He addressed Adam and Eve, God turned to the serpent and announced that sin would not have the final say and that the schemes of the enemy would not prevail.

Shadows, Hints and Whispers of His Coming

Throughout the Old Testament, God spoke to His people about this promise and gave them things to watch for in order to recognize the Savior's coming. God revealed that the Messiah would be born in the line of David (Isa. 9:6-7), of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) and in the town of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). He would be a Man of Sorrows—crushed, despised and rejected justifying many through what He suffered (Isa. 53). The promised Deliverer would be a light overcoming darkness (Isa. 9:2), a Preacher of Good News to the poor (Isa. 61) and One walking in the power of the Spirit (Isa. 42:1). There were hints and shadows of Him everywhere.

God also reminded His people not to lose heart as they waited for the Savior to come. It's important to remember that God did not fulfill His promise right away. His people waited a long time. They spoke of the promised Rescuer from generation to generation, enduring cycles of war, rebellion, captivity and restoration. They watched and waited—anxiously, expectantly—for God's faithfulness.

We can all identify with feeling hopeless, helpless and in desperate need of rescue, especially when it comes to the weight of sin. Heavy and inescapable, we know its effects with every breath—both our own sin and that of others. Our world is full of evidence that something is wrong and needs to be made right. The reason we celebrate Advent is because the story of the Garden doesn't end with man's rebellion—but instead his redemption.





Reflection

Consider the way God used Moses to deliver His people from bondage in Egypt (Ex. 12-14). Was there any way for the Israelites to escape their slavery apart from God's provision and power? How is sin an even harsher, more oppressive master than Pharaoh? What is our only hope of deliverance?

Think about Israel's long wait for the promised Savior to come. How do you think God's people fought against doubt, discouragement and the temptation to believe God forgot them?

God often gives us seasons of waiting to sift and strengthen our faith. If you are in a season of waiting, what might the Lord be teaching you?

God reveals many things about His nature and character through the birth of His Son. What attributes of God do you see in this part of the Advent narrative?

Response

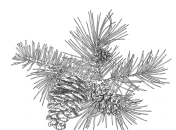
What is one hope you have for yourself, your family or your community as you begin the Advent season? How will you make that a reality?

Pray for yourself and those around you, asking God to open your eyes and heart to what He has for you this Advent season.

Songs of the Season (Week One)

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus





-Family Discipleship Time-

Set aside ten minutes one night this week to talk about God's promise to rescue His children from sin. The only materials needed are five candles, matches and a Bible.

Lighting of the Advent Candle

Have one member of the family light the first candle.

Scripture Reading

Have one person read the following passages out loud.

Before they left the garden, God whispered a promise to Adam and Eve: "It will not always be so! I will come to rescue you! And when I do, I'm going to do battle against the snake. I'll get rid of the sin and the dark and the sadness you let in here. I'm coming back for you!" And he would. One day, God himself would come.

(THE JESUS STORYBOOK BIBLE)

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

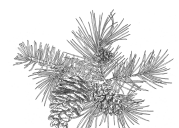
ISAIAH 9:6

Reflection

Briefly talk about what it means to be rescued from something. When might you need to be saved from danger? Whom would you call upon to rescue you? For example, if there were a re, whom would you call to save you? What are rescuers typically like?

Have an adult read the commentary below.

In the very beginning, God created a perfect world. There was no sin, pain, sickness, death or sadness. God created Adam and Eve to live in His perfect world with joy and peace. But Adam and Eve sinned. They disobeyed God. When they sinned, God's perfect world broke.





There was a punishment for Adam and Eve's sin. Because God is perfect, He cannot be near sin. So Adam and Eve were separated from God. The punishment for their sin would also be placed on all humans who were born after Adam and Eve.

Ask: Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God, each of us needs to be rescued from something. What do we need rescue from?

But before Adam and Eve left God's perfect Garden, God made a promise. God promised to send a Rescuer, someone to save Adam, Eve and mankind from the punishment of sin. He promised to send Jesus!

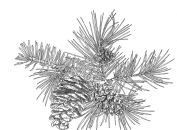
God did not send Jesus to rescue His people right away. God waited thousands of years to send the Rescuer. During that time, God's people faced many hard things. While they waited, God gave them hints and clues about how Jesus would come, what He would do and what He would be like. These hints, written in Scriptures by prophets, would help God's people wait. The verse from Isaiah that we read together after lighting the Advent candle was written while God's people waited those thousands of years for the Savior.

During that time, God made other promises to His children and kept those promises. Each time God made and kept a promise, it helped His children trust that He would be faithful to His promise to send Jesus to rescue them from their sins.

Ask: What do you think it felt like for God's people to wait for the promised Rescuer to come?

Some days, God's children waited patiently. Some days, they waited with tears and frustration. Some days, they wondered if God had forgotten His promise. But God continued to whisper it over and over again as His children waited. And one day, when no one was expecting it, Jesus would come.

God shows us many things about what's He's like through the birth of Jesus. How do you see that God is the Deliverer, that He rescues His children, in this part of the Advent narrative? What other attributes of God do you see?





Prayer

Have one family member say a prayer to thank God for His goodness and mercy in sending Jesus to rescue us from our sins.

Song

As a family, sing or listen to “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus.” As you do, read carefully through the lyrics and explain any words that might be unfamiliar to your kids. Ask them what they learn about Jesus from this song.

*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.*

Family Activity

Parents, make plans for a fun Christmas activity next week that you know your children will love. Perhaps it's seeing a Christmas play or movie, decorating cookies together or seeing Christmas lights. At the end of your family Advent time, promise your kids that you are going to do something special together to celebrate Advent—something they will love—but don't tell them what or when. As the days go by, remind them of your promise and give them hints as to what it might be. Let their expectation and excitement grow throughout the week. Use this opportunity to remind them of God's promise to send a Rescuer and the anticipation God's people felt as they waited.

Additional Activities

Create an Advent wreath to use throughout the Advent season.
Create a nativity scene to use throughout the Advent season. If you would like to make this activity last the entire season, consider creating just the stable, animals and Mary and Joseph this week.

