



HOPE

week 1

SCRIPTURE: Therefore accept one another, just as Christ also accepted you, to the glory of God. For I say that Christ became a servant of the circumcised on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises to the fathers, and so that Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and I will sing praise to your name. Again it says, Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people! And again, Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples praise him! And again, Isaiah says, The root of Jesse will appear, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; the Gentiles will hope in him. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
— *Romans 15:7-13*

QUOTE: "Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have what? Hope." — *John MacArthur, A Theology of Hope (Sermon)*¹

DAY 1

His Arrival

Read together at home, around the table or at bedtime.

JEREMIAH 33:14-15

Christmas is said to be the most wonderful time of the year. While it's easy for the holiday to quickly pass by, we encourage you to celebrate the true reason for the season. We invite you and your family to be reminded of the hope, promise, joy and love the Bible gives us in telling God's great story.

Before heading off to work or school, during dinner or just before bedtime, set aside time to read each devotion leading up to Christmas Day.

"Advent" means coming or arrival. Believers use this time of year to be reminded of the wonderful truths in Scripture centered around the arrival of God's Son.

Why did Jesus need to come to Earth? To find the answer, we can go back to Genesis 3. As the first two people on Earth, Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden of Eden. But tragedy struck. We discover sin when Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Their sin cost them — and us — a close, intimate relationship with God.

But nothing would keep God from His creation. In Genesis 3:15, God immediately gave a promise of hope to Adam, Eve — and us. He promised to send a Savior to repair our broken relationship. He would send Jesus to pay the ultimate price and renew what was lost.

Thousands of years after God's encounter with Adam and Eve in the garden, the Gospel of Matthew describes the fulfillment of God's wonderful, long-awaited promise when he writes, "She (Mary) will give birth to a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

As Advent begins, remember why Jesus' arrival to Earth was necessary. He came to restore what sin destroyed. Jesus came to bring hope to all people, giving them the opportunity to have a close relationship with God again.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

YOUNGER CHILD: Can you name some of the members of our family? Today's devotional reminds us that if we were to draw out our entire family tree, we would all be related to Adam and Eve!

OLDER CHILD: Draw your family tree together. If you were to trace your family tree to the very beginning of time, you would see that you're a relative of Adam and Eve!

TEENAGER: While we inherited a sinful nature from Adam, it's likely that someone in your family has been instrumental in passing on the faith from one generation to the next. If so, who was it and how did they do it? If not, how can you be sure to pass on your faith to the next generation?

PRAYER PROMPT:

Thank the Lord for sending Jesus to restore our relationship with God.

DAY 2 Our Relationship

Read together at home, around the table or at bedtime.

JEREMIAH 33:14-15

Now that we have a better understanding of why Jesus' arrival was necessary, this leads us to another question: How would God restore our relationship with Him? I

If we were to trace our family tree back to the beginning, we would find that we are all related to Adam and Eve. They are our great-, great-, great-, great-, etc., grandparents. Whether we like it or not, we're related. Because of our relationship to Adam, we, too, are sinners and have a broken relationship with God. In Romans 5:12, Paul explains: "Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned."

Simply stated, we inherited their sin.

But God did not leave us in this condition. He took responsibility for our broken relationship and fixed the problem Himself. How did He do this? God fulfilled His promise and provided redemption for us through Jesus, the righteous branch of David. A little baby born in a manger lived a perfect life in complete obedience to His Father. Jesus willingly took upon all our sins. As a result, God's wrath was unleashed on His Son. Christ suffered and died for us and paid the price for our sins.

After Jesus' death and burial, God would not let His Son remain in the grave. He raised Jesus back to life. He defeated death for the sake of our redemption. No wonder Zechariah would say, "Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and provided redemption for his people" (Luke 1:68). But what did God accomplish? Our redemption.

Since we are made in His image and belong to Him, the Lord brought us back to Himself. Through Jesus, God made the way for anyone who wants to have a relationship with Him possible again.

However, there is still one part missing. Before anyone can enjoy a relationship with the Heavenly Father, they must trust what He has done for them. They must confess their sins and surrender their lives to Jesus. It simply

requires a person to “believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Read the following story together as a family.

Jimmy is playing trucks in his room with his older brother. Their mother calls them for dinner, so they clean up quickly and rush downstairs. When they start playing the next day, Jimmy’s firetruck is in his brother’s bin, and his brother won’t give it back. His brother agrees to hand over the truck if Jimmy gives him a cherry lollipop. So Jimmy exchanges the lollipop to get his firetruck back.²

Note: For families with teenagers, you may want to substitute different objects in the illustration.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

YOUNGER CHILD: Act out the above story as a family. Ask your children, “What did Jimmy have to give to get his firetruck back?” Then, explain the importance of redemption.

OLDER CHILD: What did it cost Jimmy to get his firetruck back? Was it worth giving away his lollipop to get his firetruck back? Then, explain the importance of redemption.

TEENAGER: What did Jimmy have to give to get his firetruck back? How does the story explain what God did to redeem us? From God’s perspective, was it worth buying us back with the price of His Son? Why?

PRAYER PROMPT:

Thank the Lord for sending Jesus and the incredible way He bought us back.

DAY 3

With His People

*Read together at home, around the table or at bedtime.***JOHN 1:1-2, 14**

When the apostle John writes, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," he is getting ready to tell the amazing story of Jesus. Jesus, the all-powerful God, is the very One who "became flesh and dwelt among us."

The Creator entered His creation as one of us. He was a helpless baby who had to be fed, changed and cared for. He had to be taught how to walk and talk. He was the Word who had created all that exists, and there He lay in a manger cooing.

In all this, Jesus never stopped being the all-powerful God. In Philippians 2, He willingly gave up His power to become flesh and dwell among us. The word "dwell" literally means to pitch a tent. In the Old Testament, God's presence stayed with His people inside a special tent as they traveled around the desert. But when Jesus came to set up camp with us, He came as an actual human to literally walk with His people.

How amazing that the God of the universe would stoop so low! He deserved to live in a palace and have everyone serve Him. Instead, He was born in a manger and grew up to be the most humble servant. He healed the sick, made the blind see and raised the dead. He didn't care how smart, rich or good people were. He chose to hang out with some of the least popular folks in town. His heart was to truly be with His people, to experience their sadness and joy, and to be their friend.

In His sinless life and sacrificial death, Jesus proved how much He loves us. Then, in His farewell speech before returning to His Father in heaven, He made one of the most comforting promises of all: "I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). Jesus intends to dwell with us even today.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

YOUNGER CHILD: How does a mom help a tiny baby? Can you imagine Jesus being a tiny baby just like that?

OLDER CHILD: As a family, consider the following: Who is someone in your neighborhood that you can serve this Christmas? Put together a plan to put these thoughts into action. Consider how Jesus is the most humble servant to ever live.

TEENAGER: By taking on flesh and living among people, Jesus came close to serve those in need. As a family, ask each other about what needs exist in your community and then create a plan to meet one of those needs directly. Make sure you take time to get to know and understand those you are helping.

PRAYER PROMPT:

Thank the Lord for sending Jesus, who has promised to always be with His followers.

DAY 4

Our Future Hope

Read together at home, around the table or at bedtime.

MATTHEW 1:18-21

Have you ever learned the meaning behind your name? Maybe your parents chose to name you after a family member or another significant event.

When the angel said, "You are to name him Jesus," he had much purpose behind it. The name "Jesus" means "to rescue or deliver." The angel said Jesus was to be given this name "because he will save his people from their sins."

In other words, the angel announced that this little baby would fulfill the promise that God made in the Garden of Eden. Jesus would make a way possible for everyone to have a relationship with God through His sacrifice and resurrection. While we look back at how Jesus walked with His people, followers of Christ have even more to be thankful for during this time of year.

Christmas is also a wonderful season to look forward to when Christ restores His creation. The book of Revelation states that when Satan no longer rules the Earth, God will make His home with us. He will wipe away all of our tears, and there will be no more death, crying or pain.

Revelation 21:3-5 reminds us of these truths: "God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away. Then the one seated on the throne said, 'Look, I am making everything new.'"

We are reminded of this future promise in the third verse of the Christmas hymn "Joy to the World": "No more let sin and sorrows grow, Nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, Far as, far as the curse is found." What a wonderful hope we have to anticipate!

As your family enjoys this Christmas season, take time away from the presents, parties and big meals to picture the scenes of the first time Jesus came. Then, take a moment to imagine what it will look like when He makes all things new.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

YOUNGER CHILD: Ask your child to share about a time they had to wait. How did they feel? Sad? Anxious? Remind them that God's people had to wait thousands of years for Jesus to be born.

OLDER CHILD: How do you think God's people felt as they waited thousands of years for the birth of Christ? Can you recall a time where you had to wait? What helped you wait patiently?

TEENAGER: Presents, parties and big meals aren't necessarily bad, but they can take our minds off the true focus of Advent. What are some ways you can transform these events to ensure Jesus is the focus?

PRAYER PROMPT:

Thank the Lord for sending Jesus, whose birthday we celebrate and whose return we anticipate.

DAY 5

The Real Gift

Read together at home, around the table or at bedtime.

LUKE 2:1-7

There is nothing like hearing others share stories from the Christmases of yesteryear. Family gatherings are often filled with memories and childhood recollections as loved ones talk about their parents, siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins visiting the homes of their grandparents for the holidays.

Wanda is a wife, mother and grandmother from Statesville, North Carolina. Her face glows when she talks about the holidays and the fond memories she had as a child on Christmas Eve. Wanda tells this story:

The evening meal, in and of itself, was enough to make our celebration unforgettable. Following the meal, we would gather in the living room around the Christmas tree while my grandmother would read the Christmas story from Luke 2. She did not stop with just the reading, but challenged us to remember the true meaning of Christmas and how we should keep Christ in our hearts year-round. We would sing several Christmas carols that my sister would play on the piano and my dad would lead in his beautiful, baritone voice.

The last part of the evening was the opening of gifts. Thinking back over those times, I cannot remember a single gift that I received or a favorite dish that I enjoyed. Instead, I recall my grandmother's voice as she read to us and talked to us about the One who was the very essence of her life. That is what left an indelible impression upon my heart and mind.

During the holidays, keep in mind the reason we celebrate Christmas. It is not about the gifts that come wrapped in colorful, glittering paper, but the gift of Jesus, who was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

YOUNGER CHILD: What is your favorite Christmas memory? Why?

OLDER CHILD: Can you retell the story of the birth of Christ by memory? After your child shares, read Luke 2 together as a family.

TEENAGER: Why do you think Wanda forgot about the gifts she received and the food she enjoyed, but could remember her grandmother's voice as she read the Christmas story?

PRAYER PROMPT:

Thank the Lord for sending Jesus and giving us a beautiful story we can share with our family, neighbors and friends.

DAY 6

The Promised Hope

Read together at home, around the table or at bedtime.

MATTHEW 2:1-11

Long before Jesus came to Earth, it was written that a ruler of Israel would be born in the town of Bethlehem. Speaking of Bethlehem, Micah 5:2 records “out of you will come from you to be ruler over Israel for me.” At the beginning of chapter two, Matthew makes the connection that the birth of Jesus is that promised hope and fulfillment of prophecy.

With Jesus — the promised hope’s arrival — observe the differences between the Magi, also known as wise men, and Herod’s response to Immanuel. Whereas the Magi believed in the Messiah, Herod did not believe Jesus to be the coming king. Consequently, the Magi chose to go in worship, while Herod never chose to worship Jesus.

The outcome from both parties’ choices was different as well. Since the Magi went with hopeful intent, they received joy (Matthew 2:10). Scripture reveals the Magi’s emotions for the Savior and how they demonstrated their hope by following the star and prophecy. One can imagine that, since they received joy when they followed the star with such fervent hope, how much more joy they would have had seeing the Messiah. They even fell to their knees and worshipped Him!

Perhaps, the New American Standard Bible (NASB) best describes the Magi meeting Jesus. It notes, “Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and falling to their knees, they worshipped Him” (2:11, emphasis added).

These were wise men. In fact, many versions of the Bible refer to the Magi as “wise men.” Since these were indeed “wise men,” Herod can be seen as the exact opposite — foolish. Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

As a result, Herod’s hope was misplaced as he did not believe in God, nor have his wisdom or joy. The Magi did not pursue the King of the Jews with

an unjustified belief. No, the Magi sought the King of the Jews based on God's prophecy.

Together as a family, remember Christ came to give hope, and that hope rests upon a solid foundation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

YOUNGER CHILD: As a family, sing "Away in a Manger."

OLDER CHILD: Go outside one evening and stargaze together. Talk about what you've learned about the Magi, and how they showed their hope in God by following the star to Jesus.

TEENAGER: What can you do to make sure you are actively pursuing Christ in joyful worship? After sharing as a family, commit to everyone putting one of these strategies into practice this week.

PRAYER PROMPT:

Thank the Lord for sending Jesus, who came to give hope that rests upon a solid foundation.

Live it out: *Jesus showed us hope by coming near and serving those in need. As a family, talk about people or places in your community that could use some extra care this season. Choose one need you can meet together — maybe preparing a meal, collecting warm clothes, or visiting someone who's lonely. Take time to listen and learn from those you serve.*