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# Advent: The Word Became Flesh

Advent Guide

BY SNOWBIRD WILDERNESS  
OUTFITTERS

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"And the Word became flesh and dwelt  
among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as  
of the only Son from the Father, full of grace  
and truth."  
(John 1:14)



"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are  
too little to be among the clans of Judah, from  
you shall come forth for me one who is to be  
ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of  
old, from ancient days...And he shall stand and  
shepherd his flock in the strength of the  
LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD  
his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now  
he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And  
he shall be their peace..."  
(Micah 5:2-5)



# Introduction

The Advent season is a time to remember, celebrate, and share the good news of Christ coming into the world. We are all often busy chasing down gifts, family travel schedules, and completing work deadlines. This is our effort to slow down the frenzy and point you toward the God the Son, Jesus.

*Advent: The Word Became Flesh* includes 25 daily entries leading up to Christmas (December 1-25). You can also view the posts each morning on the SWO Blog or the Snowbird App.

The SWO Advent Guide looks to the heart of Scripture and examines what the Bible says about Jesus. Each day, we will dive into God's Word and discover who Christ is, why He came, how He came, and what He accomplished.

## A note for parents:

There will be a family discipleship section included each day. You will find the content geared primarily toward preschool and elementary-age kids, but the type of content will vary each day. Our goal here is to keep things short, vivid, and engaging for conversation—not give you a list of impossible steps. If you have teenagers at home, we recommend walking through the Individual Study section as a family and take turns reading the Scripture sections.

*"Basically, there are three elements to family worship: read the Bible, pray, and sing." – Donald Whitney*

## Some children's Bibles we love:

- Jesus Storybook Bible
- The Biggest Story ABC
- The Biggest Story: How the Snake Crusher Brings Us Back to the Garden

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# 25 Days of Advent

- Day 1 – The Radiance of the Glory of God
- Day 2 – King Before the Beginning of Time
- Day 3 – The Bread of Life
- Day 4 – The Light of the World
- Day 5 – The Good Shepherd
- Day 6 – The Resurrection and the Life
- Day 7 – Jesus Came to Serve
- Day 8 – Jesus Came to Rescue
- Day 9 – Jesus Glorified the Father
- Day 10 – Jesus Gives us Peace with God
- Day 11 – Jesus Gives us Peace with Others
- Day 12 – Jesus Came to Crush Satan
- Day 13 – Jesus Fulfilled the Covenant
- Day 14 – Jesus Fulfilled Prophecy
- Day 15 – Jesus Is the Root of David
- Day 16 – The Bright Morning Star
- Day 17 – The Genealogy of the King
- Day 18 – The Word Became Flesh
- Day 19 – The First Miracle Birth
- Day 20 – Gabriel's Announcement to Mary
- Day 21 – The Magnificat: Mary's Song of Praise
- Day 22 – The Birth of John the Baptist
- Day 23 – Zechariah's Prophecy
- Day 24 – The Birth of Jesus Christ
- Day 25 – Some Worship an Some Reject





# The Radiance of the Glory of God

## Day 1

### Read

Hebrews 1

### Reflect

Hebrews 1 gives us glorious insight into the identity of our Savior—the baby Messiah born in Bethlehem. Before the stable, shepherds, and wise men worshipped Christ as a baby, our King was on His throne. The greatest thing about the birth of Jesus is that this was His Advent (His coming). Jesus was never created, but rather He is Creator, Sustainer, Savior, and Lord.

In the Old Testament, the Lord provided prophets for His people so they could know Him and know His ways. But, God wasn't satisfied with human mediators. Yahweh, the triune Lord of Lords, pursues a personal relationship with His people. He is a glorious, holy, righteous God. But, He is also loving, merciful, and gracious. Jesus was no mere prophet. He is the very Son of God, the promised Messiah, Immanuel (God with us). He is the radiance of God's glory and the physical imprint of God's nature. The Son of God "upholds the universe by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:3). God the Father sent his Son to become one of us. The glory of our Lord is so intense that He entered our broken, sinful world and wasn't tainted by it. Rather, He transformed hearts and minds—redeeming them for His glory.

Hebrews 1 reveals two reasons for Christ's advent. First, God himself came to commune with us and reveal himself as never before. This is cause for joyous celebration! On Christmas morning, the Creator of the universe came to visit His creation—in a humble stable found in the rundown town of Bethlehem. Second, Christ came to make purification for sins. This is why Jesus is referred to as the "Lamb of God." He is the perfect, sacrificial Lamb who came to earth for the express purpose of conquering Satan through living a sinless life, paying our sin debt on the Cross, and rising again on the third day.

*"He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." (1 Peter 1:20-21)*

Jesus is greater than the prophets, greater than angels, and greater than any created being. Right now He is seated in glorious majesty on His throne—upholding the universe by the word of His power.

## Apply

1. Don't forget Christ's humanity. When you think on Christmas this year, meditate on Mary and Joseph giving birth to Christ in a manger.
2. Don't forget Christ's deity. Meditate on the risen King in glory and remember that He left His place of glory to rescue us and purify us for an eternal relationship with Himself.
3. Treasure the Word of God. Read the Bible broadly this month, not just a few verses each day. Create a daily habit of feasting on the truths of Jesus.
4. Worship Jesus. Spend time in daily prayer and meditation over the Scripture passages you are reading. Praise the Lord this season. Thank Him for the immense love, joy, peace, and grace that He provides.

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, you are glorious and holy above what I can imagine. You are beyond us, but you came down to be one of us so that you could rescue us! Thank you for loving me in the middle of my humanity. Teach me how to daily remember your glory and walk in a way that reflects your glory to those around me.*

## Family Discipleship

Hebrews 1:1-4

1. Why did God send His Son to earth to live like us?
2. Why is it important to remember Jesus lived in Heaven before being born as a baby?
3. Where is Jesus now?
4. Discuss what "glory" means.



# King Before the Beginning of Time

## Day 2

### Read

Isaiah 6:13, John 12:20-43, Colossians 1:15-22

### Reflect

To truly celebrate Christ's advent, we must first learn what God's Word says about who Jesus is. What was Christ doing before coming to earth? Some of the richest prophecies of the coming of Jesus are found in the words of Isaiah, one of the Lord's prophets to Israel. Here, Isaiah is given a wonderful vision of God the Son on His throne—740 years before the birth in Bethlehem. By God's grace, we have John's testimony to help us understand (John 12:41).

Not only did Jesus reign on His throne before coming to earth, but mighty angels worshipped Him day and night. His glory and holiness exuded so much power that the heavenly beings couldn't even look upon His face. As they cry out "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" they worship the eternal and perfectly complete nature of Christ's holiness. Isaiah writes that the "foundations of the thresholds" shook at the very voice of God. How much more should we, as finite and sinful people, stand in awe of our mighty Lord!

### Isaiah's response

Isaiah cried out in a trembling plea for forgiveness. Seeing a small glimpse of real holiness brought on a hyperawareness of his unworthiness. Face to face with the God of light, Isaiah was the very definition of darkness. He records, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). But God, in a moment, purifies Isaiah's mouth and atones for his sin. Isaiah, in this vision, receives the atonement and purification that we all need. Christ's holiness and righteousness are so complete and pervading that only He can atone for our sin. The "whole earth is filled with His glory," but yet He loves us individually and rescues us specifically. If you are a born-again follower of Christ, then you are His child. He knows you intimately.

Before the beginning of time, Christ was on His throne. He is the mighty warrior King who would one day delve down into the depths of humanity as a humble baby, to redeem us and bring us back to Himself.

## Apply

1. Remember the wonder of Christ's holiness this Christmas season. Stand in awe of His might and glory.
2. Praise God for His mercy and grace in your life specifically. Regardless of what has happened this past year, we must remember Christ (King of the universe) left His heavenly throne to come down on a rescue mission to save us.
3. Thank Christ for His perfect holiness. He is infinitely worthy of honor, and we are infinitely worthy of judgment. By His grace, we can have new life in Jesus!

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, I praise for your infinite might, power, and holiness. Thank you for revealing yourself to me in your Word and in coming to earth as a baby in Bethlehem. Teach me to tremble in humble, fervent worship of your power. But also, give me the power to daily walk in the grace you've provided me in salvation.*

## Family Discipleship

Isaiah 6:1-7

1. What is the prophet's job? (To speak God's words to His people, because the people were too sinful to be in His presence)
2. This was a vision of perfect, sinless angels (seraphim) worshipping God the Son. Why is Jesus worthy of such honor and glory? (He is the King of Kings, the Son of God, Creator of the universe)
3. What are other places in the Bible where it mentions God's voice or word? (Creation, John 1, healing sickness, forgiveness in the gospel accounts, etc.)
4. How does Isaiah react when he sees the Lord? (in awe, repentant, fearful, realizes he is unworthy)
5. How does God the Son (Jesus) react to Isaiah's worship and repentance? (forgives him, atones/cleanses his sin, uses Isaiah to speak His words to the people of Israel)
6. Is Jesus or our sin more powerful? (Jesus)



# The Bread of Life

## Day 3

### Read

John 6:1-71

### Reflect

The Apostle John records seven resounding “I am” statements that Jesus made during His earthly ministry. Each of these metaphors spoke rich truths to the disciples and the crowds listening. We can never over-learn the identity of Christ. Spend a few days resting in the identity of Christ, so that you can more richly rejoice in His coming. Check out the list of statements at the bottom of this post to get a preview of the next several days.

John 6 is a magnificent passage revealing the eternal power and fullness that Christ provides. Early in the chapter, He feeds the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish. After this miraculous event, Jesus withdrew to the mountain by Himself. This is the night that Jesus walks on water when He goes to see Peter and the disciples in the boat (John 6:16-21).

### Jesus, the Bread of Life

The next day, Jesus gives this first “I am” discourse—claiming to be the “bread of life” (John 6:35). Yes, our Lord can miraculously provide physical sustenance. But, more importantly, Jesus Himself is our eternal provision. He sent manna in the Old Testament and He fed five thousand men, but now He has come down Himself to provide a fullness that is beyond compare. The manna and the loaves were merely shadows of the Messiah—the Bread of Life. Draw near to God this season. Humble yourself in prayer and submission to Christ. Worship Him in spirit and truth. He will welcome you with open arms and fill you with His love and goodness. “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out” (John 6:37). Christ promises that He will also raise us up on the last day (John 6:44). Those who come to Him in repentance and faith, with a humble heart, will never be forsaken but rather filled with Christ Himself!

These words cut the crowd to their hearts and many of the Jews grumbled against it because they understood the weight of Christ’s claim. Even the disciples recognized that it was a difficult claim for someone to accept (John 6:60).

But, at the end of the day, Peter affirmed: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68-69). Elsewhere in Matthew 16, Peter exclaims in worship: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

## Apply

1. Think back on the previous year, how have you been feeding yourself spiritually? Where are you finding your sustenance and strength to walk out your daily life? Meditate on these questions today and ask the Lord to reveal the current realities of your heart.
2. Use this month of the Advent to remember the richness of Jesus. Scripture tells us that only Christ is the “Bread of Life” and only He has the “words of eternal life.” Spend time journaling today and ask the Lord to help you rest in the fullness of Christ.

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, thank you for being everything I need. You alone are able to fill me, sustain me, and empower me. I praise you for your goodness and love in coming to earth yourself. Teach me the richness of your coming to earth. You became a man to give us the bread of life—so that we would never again hunger. Enable me to rest in your fullness and not desire things that are merely temporary.*

## Family Discipleship

John 6:35-40, 66-69

1. Discuss why Jesus would use words like the bread of life, hunger, and thirst to talk about our relationship with Him. How do you feel when you are hungry or thirsty?
2. Why did so many of the people reject Jesus’ words, when His promise sounded so good? (They were blinded by sin and rejected Jesus as the Messiah)
3. Is there anyone else, sent from God, who has the words of life and is able to rescue us? (No, Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life)



# The Light of the World

## Day 4

### Read

John 8:1-59

### Reflect

Jesus told his twelve disciples, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). This simple interaction followed a discussion with the woman caught in the act of adultery, a lengthy discourse with the crowds, challenges from the Pharisees, and narrowly escaping stoning. John 8 is full of bold Messianic claims by Jesus, grace extended to the broken, and a promise of freedom in the light of Christ.

Immediately after rescuing the woman caught in adultery, Jesus addressed the crowd that had surrounded them: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). There is no better message the Messiah could have spoken in that instant. Jesus told the crowd they were walking in darkness and claimed that He was the Light able to pierce that darkness. Jesus said to the Pharisees later in the passage, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Christ did not shy away from pointing out the darkness people lived in, because He knew they could only see by the light that He provided. But, many were scared of the light and challenged His authority. Some believed but many rejected His claim.

Millions around the world are still living in the darkness and brokenness of sin. They have either rejected Christ as Lord or simply not yet heard of His coming. If you have received Christ into your heart and been made new by His grace and forgiveness, then you now have the "light of life" within you. You have seen the glory of Jesus and it has transformed your soul from the inside out!

## Apply

1. Meditate on the light Christ brings. What is your first reaction to Christ's claim as the "Light of the world"? Are you thankful in the peace His light brings, or does your flesh well up in defense against Him? The light of Christ burns bright and reveals sinful postures in our hearts, but He also brings healing and hope with it.
2. Show the light of Christ to those around you this month. Serve others humbly, love them deeply, and teach them about Jesus.
3. Make a list of family members, friends, and neighbors that don't yet know Jesus. Post it somewhere you will see often and pray for them every day this December. Pray for opportunities to speak the Gospel into their lives and for boldness to be faithful.

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, you are truly the Light of the world. Your glory shined into the darkness of the world and the darkness of my flesh. Thank you for revealing my sin and for drawing me to yourself for repentance. By your Spirit, continually remind me to walk in the light of Christ and to intentionally pursue ways to proclaim light and truth to the lost around me.*

## Family Discipleship

John 8:12-18

1. Is light a good thing? What do we need light for? (sun, warmth, flashlights to see, food for plants, etc.)
2. Why would someone hide from the light? (hiding sin, running away from something, not wanting accept truth, etc.)
3. What does it mean when Jesus says, "I am the Light of the world?" (Jesus is the hope of the world, the Messiah who can rescue us from the darkness of sin, who reveals and removes darkness)
4. What are some ways that we can show the light of Jesus to others around us? (loving people by building friendships that go deeper than acquaintances, finding ways to serve and love those whom no one else loves, loving people who can do nothing in return, teaching them the Gospel message — the great news of Jesus coming to earth as a man, living a sinless life, dying to pay for our sin, then rising again on the third day and enabling us to once again have a perfect relationship with our Creator God)



# The Good Shepherd

## Day 5

### Read

John 10:1-42

### Reflect

Throughout John 10, Christ continually points to a few key realities.

#### **First, the true Shepherd knows His sheep and His sheep know him.**

He “calls them by name” and they “hear his voice” (John 10:3). Jesus says that “he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice” (John 10:4). The sheep (the elect) have a personal and integral relationship with their Shepherd! Jesus claims: “I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father...” (John 10:14-15). God our Shepherd takes great ownership in our lives. He cares about the big things and the small things, and He guides us in His way of righteousness for His glory.

*"A true Christ follower will hunger for the Word, abide in the Word, and respond to the Word." – Brody Holloway*

#### **Second, Jesus reveals that “the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).**

The foreshadowing of Christ’s crucifixion is undeniable! This Good Shepherd discourse shares rich insight into Christ’s ultimate mission of redemption. “...I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father” (John 10:17-18). It is only by this sacrifice that we, His sheep, “may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

#### **Third, Jesus reminds us that no one can steal us away from the Shepherd.**

He loves us with a perfect, never-ending, and never-failing power that keeps us safe in His flock. Our Lord acts in power, righteousness, and love toward those who are His sheep. The triune nature of our God is perfectly faithful to Himself—and thus faithful to His sheep.

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:28-30). Our chief Shepherd knows us intimately, loves us sacrificially, and protects us eternally.

## Apply

1. What shepherd are you following? What guides your actions, words, and relationships on a daily basis?
2. Are you reading God's Word and abiding in Him? Many of us long to hear God speak to us while we ignore the 66-book love letter He's left for us. God's Word is His favorite way of speaking to His sheep. Don't ignore it.
3. Are you listening to God's Spirit in prayer? Make sure your prayer time isn't merely a list of requests this season. Intentionally plan time to pray, meditate on God's Word, and listen to Him.

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd. There is no other like you. Thank you for speaking to me, loving me, and protecting me as your sheep. Forgive me for the ways that I sometimes pull away and follow other shepherds. Give me a greater desire to abide in you, so much so that I immediately recognize and flee from any sin that desires to draw me away.*

## Family Discipleship

John 10:11-16 (or Psalm 23)

1. What does a good shepherd do for his sheep? Why would God (Jesus) use this example to help us understand who He is? (Shepherds love, protect, and speak to their sheep. This example fit the culture of biblical times so that people could understand. It's also interesting to think about how lowly the job of shepherding was viewed—they smelled bad, lived in the mountains alone, and slept on the ground. It was a difficult, thankless job.)
2. What proof does Jesus give them to show that He is the Good Shepherd? (He tells the people that He will lay down his life in death and rise again in three days. They didn't understand it, but He was explaining the crucifixion was the reason He came to become a sheep—the Good Shepherd became the Lamb of God.)

# The Resurrection and the Life

## Day 6

### Read

John 11:1-44, 14:1-6

### Reflect

John 11 describes the miraculous story of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead. Jesus' actions and words do more than just point to His healing power. They lift up His identity as God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. Jesus arrives on the scene four days after Lazarus had already been buried. But, seeing His compassion didn't satisfy Martha (Lazarus' sister). She challenged Jesus in her grief, claiming He could have healed her brother if He had only arrived earlier. At the same time, Martha acknowledges that Christ will raise His followers "on the last day" (John 11:24). She was right. Jesus will one day return and raise those who have been identified with Him in salvation. But, she still didn't grasp the utter glory of the One who will wipe away every tear from every eye. Jesus' replied with a groundbreaking statement of His Messianic identity: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

Jesus is our mediator and the Father's agent of reconciliation. He came to redeem His people back to Himself. However, Jesus is not only the giver of new life. He is our resurrection. He is our life! Christ is our example of faithful obedience to the Father and love for others, but He is much more than that. Jesus gives us Himself. He gives us eternal life in Himself. The Christian is given a new identity found "in Christ." There is no greater gift than receiving Jesus, from Jesus.

Fast-forward a few chapters in John's gospel account, and we read of Thomas telling Jesus, "we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (John 14:5). Christ is patient and loving beyond our understanding. Looking back, it's tempting to shake our heads at "doubting Thomas." But, we are all the same. We are thick-headed, stubborn people who desire more information more than we desire more of Jesus. Lovingly, our Lord makes another bold claim to His apostles: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). This is no veiled metaphor. Jesus has moved from talking about sheep doors and shepherds in John 10 to claiming to be the only Way to the Kingdom of God. Our Messiah, born in the Bethlehem manger, was not merely a messenger. He is the Way. He is the message of Truth. Jesus is the Life.



## Apply

1. Think honestly about your source of salvation today. Are you trusting salvation as a gift of grace from Jesus? Or, are you depending on knowing the right information or following the right rules?
2. Make a list of friends and family that don't yet trust Jesus as "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." It shouldn't take long to come up with 5-10 names. Save the list somewhere and start praying for them daily. Pray their hearts would soften to the simple but convicting message of Jesus. No one has access to the Father except through the blood of Jesus. Pray for boldness and opportunities to share with them.

## Pray

*Jesus, you are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Thank you for being everything that I am not. We are lost, but you are the way to the Father. We are broken, but you are our eternal resurrection. Burn a passion in my heart for my friends and family that matches your love for them. Thank you for equipping me with your Word and your Spirit. I praise you for the courage you have already given me as your child. Use me as your messenger this Christmas!*

## Family Discipleship

John 11:17-44

1. Who is the only one who has power over life and death? How do we know this? (Jesus, because the Bible tells us so.)
2. Everyone still dies (physically), so what does Jesus mean that anyone who believes in Him will never die? (This life and our bodies are only temporary, but our souls will live forever. Jesus enables us to repent and trust Him as our Savior so that we can live with Him and worship His glory, forever in Heaven).
3. Why did the Pharisees get so angry that Jesus was healing people and raising people back to life? (Jesus was the true Messiah from God, so that meant people needed to trust Him instead of the Pharisees' man-made rules and laws. They thought they could create their own way to salvation and righteousness through good works, and without Jesus. Jesus said that no person is good enough to earn eternal life. He provided the way to salvation as a gift of God that depended on His own righteousness.)

# Jesus Came to Serve

## Day 7

### Read

Philippians 2:1-11, Mark 10:35-45

### Reflect

Jesus is our example of godly living. Paul tells us in no uncertain terms. One of the reasons Christ came to earth as a man was to exemplify a life that is fully in step with God's commands, is guided by the Spirit of God, and humbly serves others. However, Philippians 2 reveals much more than a good example of living.

The beauty of Philippians 2:1-11 is that we are given a clear vision of Jesus. Working backward from verse 11, Paul makes some glorious assertions of who Christ is, what He has done, and what we need to be doing today. Paul begins chapter 2 with instruction for the believers in Philippi that is directly applicable to us. We are to be "in full accord and of one mind." We are to walk in the Spirit, comfort one another, love one another, and encourage one another "in Christ" (Philippians 2:1-2). This requires us to count others as "more significant" than ourselves and to look "to the interests of others." By ourselves, this is impossible. The mind of flesh is tainted by sin. Without Christ, we are unable to see through the cloud of selfishness and pride known as the human heart. But, thanks be to God, He specializes in making all things new. The Lord Jesus is defined by love, holiness, righteousness, and the redemptive power to transform our hearts and minds.

#### Outline of Philippians 2 (working backward):

- 2:11 – Every tongue will confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord"
- 2:10 – Every knee will bow at the "name of Jesus"
- 2:9 – God has "highly exalted" Jesus and given Him "the name that is above every name"
- 2:8 – Jesus became human, and humbled Himself "to the point of death"
- 2:7 – Jesus "made himself nothing" and became a servant
- 2:6 – Jesus "did not count equality God with God a thing to be grasped"
- 2:6 – Jesus is God who became flesh to visit mankind. Jesus is God with us, Immanuel.

Many refer to the Kingdom of God as the "upside down kingdom." Our Lord, the eternal King of Kings, made Himself the servant of all to rescue His people and bring us back to Himself! "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life..." (Romans 5:10-11).

*"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)*

*"Christ being fully God, possessing the very nature of God and being fully equal to God in every respect, did not thereby insist on holding onto all the privileges and benefits of his position of equality with God (the Father) and thereby refuse to accept coming as a man." – Bruce Ware*

## **Apply**

1. Think on the great distance that Jesus humbled Himself – and creating the universe by His Word from the throne of Heaven, to being born in the feeding trough of a small barn, in the humble town of Bethlehem. The very Word of God (John 1:1) held back His power, still remaining fully God, and required Himself to be taught how to read and write.
2. Since Jesus Christ is Lord and humbled Himself deeply, how is God calling you to humble yourself and serve others?
  - a. Serve someone in your church this week – in a practical way that meets a need they can't.
  - b. Serve someone in your neighborhood this week who you know doesn't have a relationship with Jesus. Bake them some cookies or deliver a gift card to their front door. This is the perfect time of year to start new relationships that can create inroads to the Gospel.

## **Pray**

*Lord Jesus, you have completely humbled yourself through human life, birth, and death. I will never be able to fully grasp the depths of your love and grace for me. Use the truths of your incarnation to continually transform my heart and mind, and conform them by your Spirit. Teach me to love and serve others in the same way you've served me!*

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:28-30). Our chief Shepherd knows us intimately, loves us sacrificially, and protects us eternally.

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## Family Discipleship

John 10:11-16 (or Psalm 23)

1. What does a good shepherd do for his sheep? Why would God (Jesus) use this example to help us understand who He is? (Shepherds love, protect, and speak to their sheep. This example fit the culture of biblical times so that people could understand. It's also interesting to think about how lowly the job of shepherding was viewed—they smelled bad, lived in the mountains alone, and slept on the ground. It was a difficult, thankless job.)
2. What proof does Jesus give them to show that He is the Good Shepherd? (He tells the people that He will lay down his life in death and rise again in three days. They didn't understand it, but He was explaining the crucifixion was the reason He came to become a sheep—the Good Shepherd became the Lamb of God.)



# Family Discipleship

Philippians 2:3-11

1. What does this passage say about God? How did He humble Himself and serve us? (He is Lord, and God has highly exalted Him. He became human, to die on the cross for us.)
2. Since Jesus humbled Himself to become a baby, how does the Bible tell us to humble ourselves? What does this passage say about ways we can love others? (Encourage and love one another. Be unified as Christians, under the joy of Christ.)
3. How can I love others perfectly when it seems so much easier to think about myself? (Jesus, by His grace, can change our hearts and give us a new love for others.)

# Jesus Came to Rescue

## Day 8

### Read

Luke 19:1-10, John 3:1-21

### Reflect

At the end of the day, Jesus came to rescue sinners. The manger, the cross, and the empty grave are all about God's rescue mission. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). This was the Lord's mission and the Lord's idea—only He could have imagined such a glorious rescue plan. As Jesus reminds us in John 3:18, the world was condemned already (meaning the world and all of mankind). We were condemned under the curse of sin even before being born into the world. This is the depth of sin's consequence flowing out of Adam and Eve's rebellion against the Lord.

In Luke 19, Jesus made His final march to Jerusalem for the Passover and His crucifixion. As always, there was purpose in His steps and intention in His words. He destroyed the religious leaders' assumptions of who the Messiah would be and what He would do. Rather than claiming a governmental throne, the Messiah chose to eat in the homes of tax collectors and sinners. Rather than lifting up the religious elite, Jesus loved and healed the social outcasts. He healed the wounded and broken-hearted. Zacchaeus and others were sheep without a shepherd—until now. They heard the words of Christ and responded in humility, repentance, and faith!

*"Jesus loved Zacchaeus when nobody else did. He was Zacchaeus' friend, even when no one else was. Because Jesus was showing people what God's love was like — his wonderful, Never Stopping, Never Giving up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Lord." – Jesus Storybook Bible*

Nicodemus serves as a stark contrast (culturally and socially) to Zacchaeus. This religious leader approached Jesus by night to learn more about who Jesus was. We usually give him a bad rap for doubting Jesus and making light of being "born again," but Nicodemus also affirms many true things about Christ. "This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him'" (John 3:2). He is later mentioned in John 19:39 when he came to anoint Jesus's body in the tomb. It is very likely that this conversation catapulted Nicodemus, a Jewish ruler, on the path toward faith and salvation.

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).*

Jesus Christ came to rescue sinners. This is a cause for great rejoicing! He is no respecter of family, income level, language, skin color, gender, or any other cultural division. Our God started a rescue mission in Genesis 3 and the Advent of Christ continued it.

## **Apply**

1. Praise God for this story of Zacchaeus' salvation. This is a huge message of hope for those of us who have realized our own brokenness and separation from God.
2. Remember that Jesus Christ has come to rescue you. He stands ready to offer grace and forgiveness to anyone who repents and turns to Him in faith. For Christ "is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).
3. Be ready to proclaim Jesus' rescue to those who are lost. If you already know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then write down a 3-minute outline of the Gospel message. Read through passages like Ephesians 2 to help prepare for conversations that can point broken and lost people to the Savior.

## **Pray**

*Lord Jesus, I praise you for your redeeming nature. Thank you for the redeeming love that drove you to come to earth on a rescue mission for my soul (and others). Thank you for rescuing me regardless of the baggage, brokenness, and sin I carry. You loved me when I was still your enemy. Use me as your messenger this Christmas. Give me the love and boldness it takes to tell others of the rescue you have already performed for their souls.*

# Family Discipleship

Luke 19:1-10

1. Why didn't people like Zacchaeus? Why did Jesus love Zacchaeus? (Because he was selfish and stole their money. Jesus loved Zacchaeus because He made Zacchaeus in His own image, and He wanted to give him a new heart.)
2. Was Jesus scared of what people would think if He showed that He was Zacchaeus' friend? (No, because Jesus cared most about loving Zacchaeus and showing him that God wanted to rescue his soul.)
3. How did Zacchaeus respond to Jesus after realizing that Jesus loved him and wanted to rescue him? (Zacchaeus gave all the money back to the people he stole from, and even more. Because Jesus loved him, he was able to love others.)
4. Is anyone too bad for Jesus to rescue? (No, Jesus' love and grace are greater than anyone's sin or evil heart.)



# Jesus Glorified the Father

## Day 9

### Read

John 12:27-36; 17:1-26

### Reflect

Jesus came to glorify the Father. Yes, Jesus came to be a servant and our Deliverer. However, the Advent of Jesus is most ultimately about the glory of God! God's plan is for His own glory to be made manifest throughout the universe so that we can find fulfillment in Him alone, worshipping His glory eternally. The Advent of Christ, the birth of Jesus in a manger, was an integral part of our Lord's mission. The Gospel of John is a magnificent account of Jesus' life — fully inspired by the Holy Spirit to give us a greater understanding of Christ as the eternal Son of God.

These passages in John 12 and John 17 both refer to the coming Crucifixion. Everything about Advent points to the Crucifixion, and the Crucifixion points to the Resurrection. Jesus came to glorify the Father in life and in death. His life pointed people to the Heavenly Father with every breath, every step, and every miracle. In the glorious mystery of the Trinity, God the Son is joyfully obedient to God the Father and glorifies His name: "...for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name" (John 12:27). Then, Jesus urged the crowd to "believe in the light, that you may become sons of light" (John 12:36). Jesus, the light of the world, is simultaneously glorified with the Father. In John 10:30, Christ already revealed: "I and the Father are one."

John 17 contains the High Priestly Prayer, Jesus' prayer over the disciples the night before His crucifixion. On the night before His torture and death, His highest concern was for the Father's glory and the Church's unity. Read over this chapter several times this week and let the richness of Christ's love transform your heart! Christ provided the world with the words of eternal life, thereby glorifying the Father and sealing the faith of those who believe. Notice the fervent prayer the Lord Jesus prays for us, the Church. His desire is for us to experience the same unity with one another (and with the Father) that He has with the Father.

The Advent of Christ is for our good, the Church's unity, and God's glory!

After the Resurrection, Jesus found the Apostles hiding in a locked room, afraid for their lives. Jesus responds with a loving command that is filled with all the authority of the Son of God. The One who has "authority over all flesh" (John 17:2) has sent His people with the power to go, make disciples, and bring glory to the Father."Jesus said to them again,

*"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." (John 20:21)*

## Apply

1. Have you trusted in Jesus, the Light of the World (John 8:12-18)? If so, then you are now a son or daughter of the Light—a child of God! If not, then read over Jesus' prayer in John 17 and think about what in your heart stops you from trusting Jesus completely and turning away from your sin.
2. Whenever you read the gospel accounts, pay attention to mentions of the Trinity. There are several places in Scripture that we read of Jesus praying to the Father, ministering in the Spirit, and glorifying the Father. God reveals His character and nature through all three persons of the Trinity (Father, Spirit, Son). Don't miss the beauty of the mystery!
3. Over 2,000 years ago, Jesus prayed for you! Whatever struggle you're in right now, whatever sin you are fighting against—know that Jesus is God in the flesh. He has authority over all, and He sits on His throne as your mediator. He has conquered the sting of death for all who are His.

## Pray

*"Lord Jesus, you are the Messiah, the king of Israel. All nations will come and bow down before you. God wields the world to see that you are worshiped. Therefore, whatever opposition I may find, I joyfully ascribe authority and dignity to you and bring my gifts to say that you alone can satisfy my heart, not these." – John Piper\**

# Family Discipleship

John 17:20-26

1. Was Jesus angry or upset that the Father sent Him to earth to rescue us? (No, Jesus came joyfully so that we could see the wonderful glory of God and that one day we can be with Him in Heaven.)
2. This was the night before Jesus died on the cross, and Jesus knew that. Is this what most people would pray about on such a sad and scary day? (No, our natural instinct is to protect ourselves and ask God to keep us safe. But Jesus loved us so perfectly that He prayed for us to understand and love God's Word so that we can be saved by the message of Truth. John 14:6 shows us that Jesus is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He is our way to the Father!)
3. What does it mean for us (Christians) to "be one"? (Jesus prayed that all Christians, spiritual brothers and sisters, would love and care for one another in perfect unity. Just like Jesus and God the Father have a perfect relationship, with no barriers between them, Jesus desires the same thing for all Christians. After we are connected to Jesus with a new heart, He connects and reconciles us to our new brothers and sisters in the family of God.)

# Jesus Gives Us Peace With God

## Day 10

### Read

Romans 5:1-21

### Reflect

Paul, the writer of this letter to the Roman church, gives us an amazing reminder of what Christ accomplished on the Cross! Through Christ, we can receive peace with God through faith (Romans 5:1). The Christian has been justified by the blood of Jesus and his or her relationship with the Creator has been made right in every way. Jesus is the "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:25-26). The first few chapters of Romans are incredibly direct and highlight the separation of our sinfulness from God's righteousness. But, praise God that He sent Christ to provide peace with Himself through faith.

Without a doubt, we are all ungodly (Romans 5:6) and enemies of righteousness (Romans 5:10). There is no denying that the brokenness of our hearts and our world deserve the holy wrath of Almighty God. Our very existence stands in rebellion to our Creator's identity (Romans 1:18-32). But this is not the end of the story. One day, a baby was born in Bethlehem. This baby, God in the flesh, would destroy the curse our sin by living the holy life we could not. He died the perfect death we could not, and carried our sin upon His shoulders. On our own, we are without hope and separated from the Father. Jesus is the One who came from the seed of the woman (Genesis 3), and He alone is able to reconcile us back to God.

*"God's purpose is to give you peace by being the most glorious person in your life. Five times in the New Testament He is called 'the God of peace' (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20). And Jesus said, 'My peace I give to you' (John 14:27). And Paul said, '[Jesus] himself is our peace' (Eph. 2:14)." – John Piper*

*"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." (Romans 15:13)*



## Apply

1. Do you feel far from God right now, or do you feel the Father's pleasure filling you with peace? Romans 8:1 tells us that there is "no condemnation" for those who are found in Christ. You can be at peace with the Father, through the Son. Rest in that and remind yourself of this truth daily!
2. Remember, you were once an enemy of God without any hope of new life or reconciliation. The Advent changed this. The coming of Jesus paved the way for us to have rich personal fellowship with God the Father.
3. Think back through this past year and evaluate whether or not you've walked in the peace of Christ. If you're a child of God, then remember that the Lord lovingly looks on you with the grace and peace that Christ has provided. Nothing can separate you from His love.

## Pray

*Father, thank you for the eternal peace you've provided us through the coming of your Son. Through Christ, you enabled us to be redeemed and reconciled to yourself—even though we were enemies of your holiness. Forgive me for the times I haven't received and walked in your peace. And remind me, through your Spirit, of my new identity found in Jesus.*

## Family Discipleship

Romans 5:1-5

1. Paul is writing this letter (Romans) to Christians in Rome. What does it mean when he says, "we have been justified by faith"? (Jesus can wipe our sin away and bring us into a perfect relationship with Himself.)
2. How can Paul and the Roman church rejoice in suffering? (Because they rejoice in the hope of God's glory. The glory of God outshines any suffering in this world. Jesus gives His people a joy that overwhelms any sorrow or suffering.)
3. Who is the Holy Spirit? (The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God that comes into a person's heart after they repent and trust in Jesus.)

# Jesus Gives Us Peace With Others

## Day 11

### Read

John 15:18-16:33, Romans 12:9-21

### Reflect

On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus closed His final instructions to the twelve apostles with these words: "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace." Jesus promised there would be tribulation for them. In fact, 10 were martyred for their faith and John was exiled to the island of Patmos. "But take heart," Christ encouraged them. "I have overcome the world." Even before the Crucifixion and Resurrection, Christ had already overcome the world. Long before the manger, Christ had purposed to overcome the forces of evil by coming as the seed of man (Genesis 3:15). Once our God promises something, we can consider it done. Christ has overcome the world and now we can have peace with others (in the world) through Him. This is not a peace that comes from the goodness of our hearts or the supposed "good" at the root of mankind. It is a joyful peace that comes from Jesus Himself, the "God of Peace" (Philippians 4:9). Jesus reconciles us to the Father and He reconciles us with others.

We will face trouble, and we will face persecution, but our battle is not with "flesh and blood." It is against the "spiritual forces of evil" (Ephesians 6:12).

Romans 12 points us toward our high calling of joyful love in obedience to Christ. Once our mind is transformed by Christ (Romans 12:1-2), then we will begin to see others more highly than ourselves. This is the posture of Christ and it is the posture of His people! The love that the family of God has for one another is a display of God's love to a hurting world. This visible message speaks volumes to a hurting world! Read Romans 12:9-12 and ask the Lord to reveal areas of your heart that don't exhibit love and peace toward others.

The Gospel message unites the Church as one body. Reading over Paul's plea (Philippians 4:2-9) to Euodia and Syntyche should burn mercy and love in our hearts toward our brothers and sisters. These women, who had labored with Paul in ministry, were at odds with one another. Paul doesn't reveal what the issue is, but we don't need to know. We only need to obey the principles that God's Word lays out for us. Because we have the God of Peace in our hearts, transforming our hearts and minds, we are commanded to "agree in the Lord" with one another. Outside of major doctrinal issues or unrepentant sin, we are to work towards sweet fellowship within the body. We are a family!

## Apply

1. Are you at peace with those around you? The hurried frenzy of the Christmas season can be enough distraction to help us forget broken relationships with friends or family. Don't allow that to happen. Christ reconciled mankind to Himself by humbling Himself and visiting His enemies. By His power, we can do the same.
2. There are hurting people all around us, and they are often hurt by one another. Rather than swooping into conflict and trying to fix the symptom, pray for them and introduce them to Christ. Until someone is reconciled to God, they won't be able to reconcile with anyone else. We first need to lead them to the peace of Christ.

## Pray

*Father, thank you for giving me peace with those around me—even when they don't realize it. Help me to look toward others with love and compassion rather than with pride or frustration. Give me opportunities (and boldness) to share the good news of Jesus in a way that resonates with them. Soften my heart towards others. Remind me continually of the deep reconciliation you've provided and teach me how to speak your peace into the lives of others.*

## Family Discipleship

Romans 12:9-13

1. What does the Bible say is genuine (true) love? (It is a love that shows others more honor than ourselves. True love is joyful, patient, and constantly in prayer for others.)
2. How should we show genuine love toward others? (The Bible tells us to hold onto what is good, but stay away from any sign of evil in our hearts. We are to love others in ways that serve them and not ourselves. We also get to rejoice with them, and be patient with them when necessary.)
3. Discuss ways you can meet others' needs and show hospitality this month, and start godly habits for your family that stretch into next year.

# Jesus Came to Crush Satan

## Day 12

### Read

Genesis 3:1-24

### Reflect

From the very beginning of time, God promised to send His Son to crush the serpent. Yes, Jesus had to die (symbolized by the bruised heel), but He rose victoriously! The entirety of the Bible is a story that points to Jesus, the God-man. We often think of the curses handed down to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, but forget the finality of the serpent's curse. Satan had his day of short-term victory at the cross (still under the sovereign hand of God). But that battle is over. Jesus has won the war. The power of hell and the eternal grip of sin have been conquered. We have a rescue made available by the Lamb of God, God Himself who made atonement for our sins.

Jesus is greater than Satan and Jesus is greater than our sin. He crushed both. Victory over Satan was promised in Genesis 3, confirmed by the Old Testament prophets, begun at His birth, continued at the Cross, finished in the Resurrection, and will be consummated in His Second Coming! Jesus did win, is winning, and will win. Period.

John writes, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). The destruction of Satan wasn't a side note in the Advent. God's Word says that the very reason Jesus came was to destroy the work of Satan. The devil's goal is to tempt our flesh, lie to our hearts, confuse our minds, and steal our joy. But Jesus, in His compassion and grace, protects His people. Our God is never reactive but rather set His plans in motion long before Satan ever acted. God the Son became man so that He could become the perfect man — completely right with God and holy in every way.

"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." (Hebrews 2:14)

At the end of Romans, Paul leaves the church with some final instructions and encouragement. His words reflect the promise and power of Christ Jesus over Satan:

*"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." (Romans 16:20)*

Jesus is our "God of Peace" but He is Satan's destruction.

## Apply

1. How often do you read the Old Testament? If it's been a while, read back over some of the narratives, poetry, and prophetic books. Look for the crimson thread of Christ's coming that is woven from Genesis to Revelation. Remember that "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
2. Remember that our God, Yahweh, remains the same. He never changes. Have you ever thought the Old Testament showed different characteristics of God than the New Testament? Our God never changes. Our sin in Genesis earned just condemnation, but God's grace and mercy are ever-present. Rest in that hope today. Genesis 3:15 is a curse for Satan, with a promise for us. Don't miss that!
3. Praise Jesus for His coming. Remember how lost we would be without the hope of Christ's birth, and His resurrection.

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, thank you for your perfect and joyful (yet painful) obedience to the Father. You bore the weight of our sin in death, but you rose victorious over sin, Satan, and death itself. Your love and grace are beyond my understanding but thank you for making yourself accessible to me. Teach me to value the promises of your Word and to study them so that I can know you more deeply.*



## Family Discipleship

Summarize Genesis 3 in conversation if your kids are young, or read "The Terrible Lie" chapter in the Jesus Storybook Bible.

1. What did God say to Adam and Eve about the tree and the fruit? (Don't eat it, you will die.)
2. What could the man and woman eat? (Fruit from every other tree in the garden.)
3. Why did Adam and Eve listen to Satan's lie, instead of following God's perfect plan? (They wanted to make their own decision, and Satan promised a way to do that. They wanted to be in control, kings and queens of their own lives.)
4. Where was Adam when Eve tasted the fruit? (He was right beside her, but didn't protect her from the lie.)
5. Who does the Bible say will crush the Satan's head? (The offspring of woman, speaking of Jesus Christ. Jesus was born as a human so that He could fulfill the promise made to man.)
6. Is God or Satan more powerful? (God is! He is always in charge and is always the most powerful. Satan will never win, and Satan will one day be destroyed forever when Jesus comes back again.)

# Jesus Fulfilled the Covenant

## Day 13

### Read

Genesis 15:1-6; 17:1-14; 21:1-7; 22:1-19

### Reflect

Yahweh is a God of promise, and He keeps His promises. Genesis 15:1-5 is the first of several recordings of the promises given to Abraham. This was not merely a promise for numerous children and ethnic offspring. God promised, repeatedly, that Abraham would be "the father of a multitude of nations" (Genesis 17:4-5). God is made a covenant with Abraham that would extend to that offspring. All who trust in Jesus Christ as Lord receive that covenant of sonship with the Father. The Lord promises, "I will be their God" (Genesis 17:8). What greater promise can be made?

Isaac was the first representation of the promise. God gave Abraham and his family signs along the way that pointed to Christ's coming—the fulfillment of God's covenant. Genesis 15:7-20 showed us that this covenant was so complete and perfect that only God could fulfill it. Abraham was incapable of keeping the covenant, so God kept it for him. We are unable to keep the requirements of the covenant with God, so Christ fulfills it for us. Covenant keeping was about more than the sign of circumcision for the Israelites. It was about hearts that were completely submitted to the Lord. God knew that the righteousness and holiness of this covenant required more than physical obedience — it required the obedience of faith (in Christ).

"And Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'My father!' And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, 'God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.' So they went both of them together." (Genesis 22:7-8)

In the moment of Isaac's almost-sacrifice, Abraham exemplified this faith in God. Abraham trusted God and He trusted God's plan. At other times in Genesis, Abraham walked in unfaithfulness. Praise be to God, however, that we are not saved by our ability to keep God's law but rather by the perfect blood of Jesus that covers our weakness. Our hearts and our actions are littered with pride, selfishness, and self-preservation—rebellious postures against the Lord.

But, Christ confirmed the Old Testament promises because His Word never fails (Romans 15:8). His promises never falter. In spite of our sin, God reigns true and calls His people to Himself. And, one day, John the Baptist saw Jesus approach and exclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). God provided the Lamb for His people.

## Apply

1. God makes and keeps His promises. Remember this daily. It is vital that we read and study God's Word so that we can discern (by the Holy Spirit) which promises apply to us now. We can be sure of this: God provided the Lamb for our atonement!
2. Don't forget to read the Old Testament in unison. The God of the Old is the same God of the New. Everything in the Old Testament points forward to Jesus' Advent. And, everything in the New Testament points backward to Christ's Advent and forward to His second coming. We have the blessing of looking back on the promises that the Lord has already fulfilled. Take confidence that He will also fulfill promises He made while on earth. Jesus said things like "I will not leave you" (John 14:18). Hebrews 13:5 reminds us "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

## Pray

*Father, thank you for providing the Lamb of God for my forgiveness. I am unworthy of your love and unworthy to receive your promises. But I praise you that your righteousness and holy love do not depend on my ability to love and obey you. Thank you for sending Jesus to live the perfect, obedient, worshipful life that I am unable to. But, Lord Jesus, give me the joy and gratitude to live a life of thankful worship that brings you glory. Thank you for making me your child and bringing me into your covenant promise.*

# Family Discipleship

Jesus Storybook Bible – read or watch the videos

- *"Son of Laughter"*
- *"The Present"*

1. God gives these stories in the Bible so that we know He always keeps His promises. Who is the Son of God that the Bible promised would come? (Jesus who was born as a baby in Bethlehem. He was the Son of God and Son of Man.)
2. Did God already know whether Abraham trusted Him or not? (Yes, God knows what is in all of our hearts. He wanted to show Abraham and Isaac that He would always be faithful to them, and teach them how to trust His Word no matter what.)
3. Abraham is called the father of many nations. What does this mean? (Jesus was born through the family of Abraham, the Israelites. So, everyone who is a Christian is joined to Jesus in faith. We are adopted by God as sons and daughters once we trust Jesus by turning away from our sin and trusting Him.)
4. Compare Isaac and Jesus. What are their similarities and differences? (Isaac was born as a miracle to Abraham and Sarah, but was still just a sinful man. His sacrifice could not erase the consequence of sin. Jesus was also born as a miracle to Mary, without a human father. But, He was perfect and holy in every way. Jesus is the only one who was born without sin and never sinned! His sacrifice on the Cross is able to pay for our sins and give us new life.)

# Jesus Fulfilled Prophecy

## Day 14

### Read

Isaiah 9:1-7

### Reflect

The prophecies of Isaiah give us beautiful insight into the coming Christ child and His role in the grand scheme of redemptive history. Miraculously, the prophet records this vision in past-tense. Isaiah, writing around 740 B.C., could view the events of Christ's birth as if it has already happened. We serve a magnificent God! The Advent of Jesus wasn't a mere afterthought or knee-jerk reaction to sin. For thousands of years, God was preparing the times, the people, and the nations for the coming of Christ. The Lord wasn't just waiting for the right time, but rather He was preparing the right time.

*"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." (Galatians 4:4-5)*

### Things Isaiah tells us about Jesus:

1. He will be born to a virgin, as a man (7:14).
2. He will be Immanuel "God with us" (7:14).
3. He will know how to understand good and evil and choose the good (7:15).
4. He will reign over the nations (9:6).
5. He is the Wonderful Counselor (9:6).
6. He is the Mighty God (9:6).
7. He is the Everlasting Father (9:6).
8. He is the Prince of Peace (9:6).
9. His government will never end (9:7).
10. His peace will never end (9:7).
11. He will come from David's lineage (9:7).
12. He will be sent by the zeal of Yahweh (9:7).

Jesus is the only Son of God (John 3:16), who reigns eternally. In addition to these glorious names and realities of Christ, He is also the King of Kings. We need Jesus to be all of these things because we are needy people. We need the Wonderful Counselor and we need the Mighty God. We also need an Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace. The Bible's point here is that the promised Messiah is coming. This Messiah, Immanuel, would be completely and wholly complete in Himself. He fulfills the deepest needs of God's people.



*"Christmas is the reassertion of the foundation of all truth and goodness and beauty, because Christmas means: God is truthful." (John Piper)*

Jesus came to earth in a specific way, at a specific time, and to a specific family that the Lord had prepared—to bless the nations eternally (Revelation 7:9-12). Jesus Christ is the greatest gift the world has ever seen. "To us a Son is given!"

## Apply

1. Spend time meditating on all the prophecies required for Jesus to be the promised Messiah, Immanuel. Have you considered the magnitude of God's love for us? He orchestrates the movements of nations, languages, and people. The zeal and passion of Yahweh is strong for His people.
2. Think over the characteristics of Christ in this prophetic passage. Have you recognized and praised His might, wonder, counsel, fatherhood, and peace? Encourage your family and friends with these truths during this month. Jesus was sent to us and for us. Be thankful and joyful!

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, I praise you not only for your love but also for your glorious grace in showing us your love personally. You came as the Messiah, but you have also given us your Word of promise (the Bible) so that we can know and understand your character more deeply. Thank you for adopting me as your child and for making the way for us to know you deeply. You are the King of Kings and yet you are the everlasting Father for all those who trust in you by faith.*

## Family Discipleship

Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7

1. Why was Jesus called "Immanuel?" What does that mean? (Immanuel means "God with us." Jesus was God's Son who came in the body of a man so that He could rescue His people. Jesus was fully God and fully man.)
2. What four names (or roles) does Isaiah say that the Messiah will fulfill? Which is your favorite? (Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace)
3. Will Jesus' Kingdom ever end? (No, the Bible promises that Jesus will be the King forever in Heaven and that everyone who places their faith in Him will experience His peace forever.)

# Jesus is the Root of David

## Day 15

### Read

Isaiah 11:1-10

### Reflect

The family of Abraham (Israel), and more specifically the family of David (Jesse's son), played a huge role in God's plan to redeem a people for Himself. God had made a covenant with David, just like He did with Abraham, and Isaiah's prophecy reminded the Israelites that God was still on His mission—undeterred. Speaking of David, Paul preached during his first missionary journey: "Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as He promised" (Acts 13:23).

Not only would this righteous branch of David delight "in the fear of the Lord," but also "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him" (Isaiah 11:2-3). The Spirit of God would rest upon God the Son, who would be sent by God the Father. The trinitarian nature of God has never been more visible and more clear than in the Incarnation of Christ, the Advent! This great, great, great, great grandson of Jesse would not judge through human means, but by the righteousness of God. This promised Messiah would be known by His righteousness and faithfulness. The former prophets (Isaiah included) spoke the words the Lord gave them to utter. They were mere mouthpieces. However, the coming Immanuel would "strike the earth with the rod of His mouth" (Isaiah 11:4). No iniquity would be able to dwell in Him or in His presence, but He would uphold the Lord's holiness.

*"...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9)*

*"In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious." (Isaiah 11:10)*

Paul, in Romans 15:12, quoted Isaiah 11:10 and pointed to the hope Christ made available to Jews and Gentiles. Jesus came through the family and lineage of David but came to rescue people from all tribes and tongues. Looking back to the covenant God made with Abraham, the Messiah would come to bless all nations in salvation by grace through faith.

*"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Behold, your king is coming to you;  
righteous and having salvation is he,  
humble and mounted on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey."  
(Zechariah 9:9)*

## **Apply**

1. God worked His plans, for generations and generations, to send the Son for our salvation. If you lived in the period prophecy, 700 years before Christ's birth, would you have been looking for the Savior to come? Would you have hoped for His very presence like some or would you have hoped only for the gifts He was expected to bring (worldly peace, kingdom on earth, etc.)?
2. Why do you worship the Lord? The gift Jesus brought the world on Advent was Himself. This was the promise! He is the "signal for the peoples" and He is the glorious "resting place." This Christmas, make certain that you are worshipping Christ for the gift of who He is, not merely what He provides.

## **Pray**

*Lord Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man, you alone are the Righteous One. Thank you for giving us yourself in the Advent. You are our greatest gift. Fellowship with you is far beyond my understanding! I know that you alone stand as a sign for salvation to the nations and provide yourself as the glorious resting place. Teach me to rest in you alone.*

# Family Discipleship

Isaiah 11:1-5

1. Who was Jesse's son? (King David was Jesse's son, the shepherd runt who was chosen as King of Israel by God and called "a man after my own heart.")
2. Did this prophecy, being born in Jesse's family line, come true? (Yes, the genealogy in Matthew 1 shows us highlights from David and Jesse's line. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy.)
3. What was special about the Israelites (like Abraham, Jesse, and David)? Were they perfect? (No, Jesus is the only one who lived perfectly. The Israelites were sinful just like everyone else, but God chose their family to be the family that Jesus would one day be born into—by the miraculous virgin birth.)
4. Did Jesus come only to save the Israelites? (No, the Bible tells us that people from all nations and languages will one day be saved and worship Jesus in Heaven. Jesus was a "signal for the peoples.")
5. Does the Bible talk about how the Spirit of the Lord rested on Jesus? (Yes, Jesus's baptism shows us this prophecy happening in the gospel accounts.)

# The Bright Morning Star

## Day 16

### Read

Numbers 24:15-17; Revelation 22:16-17

### Reflect

Back in the book of Numbers, God was already using the star and scepter as symbols of kingly promise for His people. This oracle from God was spoken through Balaam in Numbers 24 specifically to Balak (King of Moab), regarding the physical freedom of Israel. We look forward to the "bright morning star" mentioned in the final chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22. Jesus, "the root and descendant of David" is the eternal King. Jesus himself speaks through the apostle John in Revelation to give hope to the seven churches in Asia Minor. Christ our King reminds them: "...let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price" (Revelation 22:17).

What is our response to the Star of Jacob? The wise men in Matthew 2 followed the Star of Bethlehem to worship the King it pointed to. They traveled for months and brought priceless gifts of worship-worthy for an earthly king. In a similar way, we are pointed to the Bright Morning Star, the eternal King of Kings. May we offer our lives in joyful worship of His glory.

*"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'" (Matthew 2:1-2)*

## Apply

1. Remember, Jesus is enthroned above. He accomplished all that the Father commanded and now He is sitting again in His place of authority over all earthly and heavenly powers. Our eternal King, the Bright Morning Star is worthy of all honor!
2. When you think of the Star of Bethlehem, does it remind you of the Bright Morning Star or simply a directional sign of where some wise men should drop their Christmas presents? Some of the final verses in Scripture (Revelation 22:16-17) remind us that Jesus is the Star, the eternal King. If you're thirsty for hope and peace right now, look to the Bright Morning Star. He gives the "water of life without price." This water is priceless beyond all measure, but it is offered as a gift to all who trust in Him.

## Pray

*Jesus, you are the Bright Morning Star. You are the eternal King who has miraculously come to earth through David's family line. Thank you for giving me your Word so that I can look back to the prophecies you have fulfilled and look forward to promises you will fulfill. I praise you for the water of life you provide. Teach me to hunger and thirst for you alone. Teach me to desire and worship you alone.*

## Family Discipleship

Numbers 24:15-17; Revelation 22:16-17

1. What does it mean when Jesus says, "I am the root and descendant of David" in Revelation? (Jesus was reminding them that He is the Messiah who came to rescue His people, just like the Old Testament promised.)
2. Does it cost us anything to come to Jesus and trust Him as the water of life? (No, salvation is a free gift. We can't do anything to earn Christ's love and grace. But it cost Jesus everything. So, when we come to Jesus that means we are laying down everything else we trust, and saying that Jesus is the only one who is worthy of our trust and faith. He is the only one who can forgive our sins and give us new hearts! – Philippians 2:5-7, Ephesians 2:1-10)



# The Genealogy of the King

## Day 17

### Read

Matthew 1:1-17; 2 Samuel 1-29

### Reflect

The genealogy of Christ is read often at Christmas, but too many of us breeze right through. We forget that lives are attached to the names included in Matthew's list. In all reality, not every one of Jesus' ancestors are actually mentioned. Matthew's goal is to highlight Christ's kingship in the Davidic line. He also included several non-Israelites and many Israelites with less-than-desirable backgrounds. It's worth noting that Matthew includes five women (unusual for this time).

Matthew was writing his gospel account for Jews, so he used stories and people that the average Jew would recognize and understand. Notice he highlights the fathers of the faith: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matthew 1:2). Matthew starts the second section with David, pointing to Christ's kingly role through David's family. Jesus fulfilled God's promise in the Davidic covenant (Matthew 1:6; 1 Samuel 16:1-2; 2 Samuel 7:1-17).

Everything about Christ's ancestral line screams anything but holiness and divine kingship. Even the Hebrew patriarchs were full of scandal! Matthew doesn't highlight people because of their holiness or perfect pedigree. Rather, he traces the path to God's covenant promises. Christ will not be deterred from coming to rescue His people (from all nations).

#### The Ancestors of Jesus

David, whom God called "a man after my own heart," committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband, Uriah (1 Samuel 13:14; 2 Samuel 11). Sin and brokenness ran rampant through the line of Israel. Likewise, sin runs through every other family since Adam and Eve took the forbidden fruit and rebelled against our Creator. But this doesn't stop God's plan. Yahweh is not driven off track by the sins of man, but rather redeems the darkest realities through the light of Christ!

In this male-ruled society, it's a big statement for the Bible to include women in the family line. Christ's Advent not only crossed gender barriers but also bridged ethnic divisions. Rahab was the Canaanite prostitute who aided Israel's victory over Jericho, and Ruth was a Moabite. And, finally, the angel came to Mary and announced that Jesus would come as a baby out of wedlock. The virgin would give birth to the miraculous Son of God (Isaiah 7:14). These women were grafted into the lineage of Christ, and Christ will continue grafting people from all nations into the family of God. Praise God that He is not concerned about cultural appearances or ethnic boundaries.

The Advent of Christ proclaims the wonder of God's grace to a sinful world.

## Apply

1. Have you considered the cultural shame that Jesus was born into? More personally, have you ever felt the shame of society bearing down on you? Christ provides grace and freedom in spite of it. The honor of Jesus overcomes any shame this world can place on anyone — because He bore the weight of our shame at Calvary.
2. Do you know people living in the shame of culture? If not, you should invest in new friendships with those tossed out by the world. After all, Jesus came to heal the sick and shamed—not those who think themselves well. Jesus Christ came to save those who are sinners, ready to admit their guilt and repent. Find ways to remove shame from others by investing in new relationships this year. Sit down and share a meal with new people who don't know Jesus personally. Spend time with those who don't have friends or family nearby, and point to the Gospel which can reconcile us all into the family of God.

## Pray

*Jesus, you are the promised King of Kings. I praise you for not shuddering at my own sin or the sin of others. Rather than fleeing the presence of sin, you came and inserted yourself into the depths of human depravity. Instead of running from darkness you chose to come as the Light of the World. Thank you for loving me in spite of my shame. Thank you for making a way for people of all nations, all families, and all ethnicities to join in your Kingdom plan.*

# Family Discipleship

Matthew 1:1-17

1. Do you recognize any of these names from the Old Testament? What do you remember about them?
2. Do any of these people seem like the perfect family members for Jesus to be born into? Are there any perfect families or perfect people that Jesus could have come from? (No, every person and every family is sinful. Jesus is the only perfect and holy person because He is Immanuel, "God with us.")

# The Word Became Flesh

## Day 18

### Read

John 1:1-18

### Reflect

John 1 is one of the most glorious declarations of Christ's deity. In one chapter, the apostle John captures the fullness of the Advent. In the beginning, before the beginning, Jesus was there. Jesus Himself is the very Word of God made flesh, the Word that spoke creation into existence. "...The Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). In His breath was life, and that life brings light to mankind. Christ spoke light and plants into existence, and He breathed life into our first parents. Still, now He breathes eternal life into "all who receive Him." By His grace, this light shines into the darkness of our world. Without the Messiah coming to deliver us, we don't even see the darkness we live in.

The Light of life, the Creator of the world, came into His world as one of the created. The Most High God came as the lowliest of babies in the lowliest of families. Christ became one of us, but much of the world did not receive Him. Many of the Jews did not receive Him as the Messiah. But, anyone who believes in His name and receives Him as their Deliverer can become a "child of God." Those who are children of God are born again into a "living hope" — by the will of God (1 Peter 1:3). What greater name and standing could we receive?

The Incarnation, more than any other point in history, made the glory of God visible. Jesus is the "only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14; John 3:16).

## Apply

1. Meditate on Jesus as the Word who became flesh. How deeply do you value the Word of God? How readily do you receive and obey the Word of God? How powerful is the Word?
2. Walk in the power of God's Word. Make a list of everything the Word of God accomplished (spoken by God and Christ in Scripture, or written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit). The list should include things such as creating the universe, healing the sick, forgiving sins, calming storms, and raising the dead.
3. Have you received Jesus as His Word reveals Him? Receiving by faith requires much more than mere acceptance of facts. James writes that true faith will show itself through obedience to the Truth. Are you trusting Jesus as your Deliverer, or are you depending on your good morality? Are you trying to change yourself to become acceptable by God, or are you abiding in God's Word so that the Holy Spirit can do that work in you?

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, you are the Word that became flesh. You are the only Son of God but you made yourself the Son of Man so that you could come into our darkness. This Christmas, teach me to receive your Word as grace and truth. Thank you for giving me your Word. Help me to abide in you by resting in your Word daily! Give me hope, strength, and boldness to proclaim your glory to others.*

## Family Discipleship

John 1:1-5

1. Who created the world? How was it created? (God the Trinity, by the power of His Word.)
2. What else did God make? Is there anything that God didn't create? (Everything. Nope, only God is powerful enough to create.)
3. The Bible says that Jesus gives us the light of life. Is there any darkness that is strong enough to stop Jesus' light? (Never. Jesus is the Creator of all things and the most powerful King of Kings. He is the light of the world, and His light stops all darkness. Jesus has conquered all evil and one day all bad will be ended when Jesus comes back again.)

# The First Miracle Birth

## Day 19

### Read

Luke 1:1-25

### Reflect

We can never overlook the author, audience, and purpose of each book of Scripture as we study. Thankfully, Luke is helpful for us in the beginning verses. He wrote an "orderly account" to a particular person, Theophilus, so that he "may have certainty concerning the things" he was taught (Luke 1:1-4). So, we know that Luke's account of Christ's life, death, and resurrection is in the format of a record. Luke is a doctor in his day job and a stickler for the facts. He was also a steadfast disciple of Jesus who devoted his life to making disciples and equipping the early churches. We can assume that Luke realized if he wrote an orderly account of Christ's life then more than Theophilus would benefit from it. And, praise God, we can be confident that the Spirit of God moved him along as he penned the very Word of God. Our Lord's sovereign hand has preserved the Bible for thousands of years so that we can have it now, in our language.

The first miraculous event that happened in the Christmas timeline was when an angel of Lord (Gabriel) spoke to Zechariah in the temple. He and his wife, Elizabeth "were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord" (Luke 1:6). It appears that they were also regularly in prayer before the Lord (Luke 1:13), and Zechariah was obeying the Old Testament commands for priests (Luke 1:8). Zechariah was fulfilling his priestly duties of burning incense on behalf of God's people. And, suddenly, an angel appeared and started speaking to him on the right side of the altar. Naturally, he was overcome by fear. Luke's detailed account of the event is marvelous!

### The announcement of John's birth:

- The Lord has heard Zechariah's prayer.
- A son will be born to Elizabeth in her old age.
- You shall call him John.
- You will have joy and gladness.
- Many will rejoice at his birth.
- He will be great before the Lord.
- He must not drink wine or strong drink.



- He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, from birth.
- He will turn many Israelites back to the Lord.
- He will walk in the power and spirit of Elijah (the prophet).
- He will turn the hearts of fathers to their children (quotes Malachi 4:6).
- He will turn the disobedient toward the wisdom of the just.
- He will "make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

"Zechariah's response seems fairly natural: "How shall I know this?" But, the angel doesn't give a direct answer. Rather, he reveals his identity and his general task from the Lord. As a priest who knew God's Word, Zechariah would have likely recognized Gabriel as the same angel mentioned in Daniel 8:16 and 9:21. Gabriel essentially answers: you can know this will happen because of who I am and the glory of the God who sent me. Because Yahweh is Yahweh (the great 'I AM') and Gabriel stands in His presence, Zechariah can trust this prophecy. Still, the angel gave him an immediate sign to confirm the Lord's plan. The Lord took away Zechariah's ability to speak, until John's birth (Luke 1:20-23). For nine months, he couldn't speak a word!

*"Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist..." (Matthew 11:11)*

*"I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John..." (Luke 7:28)*

## Apply

1. How do you spend your "waiting"? Zechariah and the rest of Israel had not heard the Lord speak (even through a prophet) for 400 years. That's a long time to wait patiently, but Zechariah and Elizabeth were being faithful to what they knew the Lord had last commanded. They longed for the Lord to reveal Himself. They longed for the Deliverer, but only heard silence.
2. Think on the Lord's grace in sending John the Baptist as the forerunner to Jesus' birth. Before Jesus arrived on the scene, God sent John to prepare the way. Meaning that John spoke the words of God to the Israelites and raised the alarm that the Messiah was here. Even if someone missed all the other signs, they were going to hear it in plain language from John.
3. God works through normal people (like Zechariah, Elizabeth, and John). A normal, obedient walk is the mark of a faithful life. They were humble and patient, and praised God for His goodness. God is working in and through you today if you are submitting your ways to Him. Faithfulness always matters.

## Pray

*Father, thank you for the life of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Thank you for their faithfulness to your Word and to your promise. But, I know they were just sinful people like me. I praise you for using them and using me in your work. You didn't need them, you didn't need John, and you don't need me. Thank you, however, for choosing to use your people in your Kingdom plan. Teach me to wait patiently and hope for your return, and to point others to watch with eyes of faith.*

## Family Discipleship

John 1:8-17

1. Who were Zechariah and Elizabeth? (They were Israelites in their older years. Zechariah was a priest who gave offerings to God in the temple, and Elizabeth was a relative of Mary. They would soon become the parents of John the Baptist.)
2. What was Zechariah's first reaction when the angel appeared? (He was afraid because a powerful angel from Heaven showed up suddenly.)
3. What did the angel tell Zechariah? (That he and Elizabeth would have a baby son, even though they were much too old. This baby boy would be called John, and he would play a big role in telling people to turn back to God and follow Jesus.)
4. Who was Elijah? (Elijah was one of the most important prophets in Israel's history. He was a prophet in the Old Testament, and told people promises from God that Jesus would one day come.)

# Gabriel's Announcement to Mary

## Day 20

### Read

Luke 1:26-38, Isaiah 9:1-7

### Reflect

Gabriel, the same angel that visited Zechariah, came to announce the news of the Advent to Mary. No other person would be so intricately woven into the miracle birth of Christ than Mary! She was engaged to be married to Joseph, from David's family line, and was still a virgin. We don't know much about Mary's background or her personal life, but we do know here that God chose to give her favor. Mary, a normal, Israelite teenager, would carry God the Son in her womb. Like Zechariah, Elizabeth, and John the Baptist, she was granted favor by God and used for His purposes.

Her reproach, giving birth out of wedlock, will make way for the Messiah—the promised Deliverer! It is easy to sympathize with Mary's question, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34). Gabriel's response seems cryptic to us, but there is no explanation that we or Mary could have understood. The virgin birth of Christ was a miracle beyond our understanding! We aren't meant to understand it, and neither was Mary. Rather, we simply learn that the Holy Spirit came upon her and placed the baby in her womb. This is the seed of the woman that was spoken of in Genesis 3:15. And, this is the child spoken of in Isaiah 9:1-7. As if to give Mary comfort, Gabriel announce to her that God has also placed a baby in Elizabeth's womb as well. Elizabeth's barrenness and Mary's virginity would be used to send the Messiah and His messenger. After all, Yahweh is the great "I AM" (Exodus 3:14). He is the God who has been working miracles since before the beginning of time. "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

*"Mary lived in the world that was made, and the Maker of the world was the sole author of what could and would happen here. The Holy Spirit would overshadow her, and when he pulled that shadow back, this virgin would become a mother to a son. How this would happen was less important than the fact that it would. And God would be the one to do it." (Russ Ramsey)\**

## What this passage teaches us about Jesus:

1. His birth was a miracle.
2. He would be born to Mary, a virgin.
3. His name was chosen by God.
4. He would be great.
5. He would be called the Son of the Most High.
6. He would serve as the eternal King of Kings, in David's line.
7. He would reign over Israel, and His Kingdom would never end.
8. He would be holy.
9. He would be the Son of God.

*"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)*

## Apply

1. Nothing is impossible with God. Our God, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, does what He wants when He wants. He is on a mission to redeem the world to Himself. This mission is on His timetable and He will use the methods He chooses. He uses the people He chooses because the work of redemption depends upon His power — not ours.
2. Respond with humble submission to God's Word. The Kingdom of God is brought about by the mission of God. But we, as Mary exemplifies in Luke 1, are joyfully invited and commanded to join into His plan. The angel of God came to announce a specific role to Mary, and she responded with humble obedience. Christian, you have the Holy Spirit speaking directly to your heart. And, we also have the Word of God and the people of God (the Church) to help guide our understanding.
3. Praise the Lord for His past works and obey the Lord in His current works. The New Testament is full of directives for both individual followers of Jesus and, corporately, the body of Christ. Namely, Jesus gave us the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). The Great Commission is Jesus' invitation for obedience and participation in His Mission. Work to create habits of immediate obedience to His Word in all areas of life.

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, your coming is beyond my understanding. But, I can believe in your miracle birth because your Word says that it happened. You were born to an Israelite girl by a miracle of the Holy Spirit. You were both God and man, but you held back your power as God so that you could feel the weight of brokenness and pain our world carries. Thank you for humbling yourself and using created people in your eternal plan. Teach me to look to your example of perfect obedience to the Father, as my picture of faithfulness. Give me grace to trust your forgiveness when I fail.*

## Family Discipleship

Luke 1:26-38

1. Can you name the people in this Bible story? What are some details about them? (Mary the mother of Jesus, was engaged to be married. Joseph, was going to be Mary's husband. He was one of David's great, great, great, grandsons. Gabriel, who was the angel that also visited Elizabeth to announce John the Baptist's coming birth.)
2. What does this story tell us about Jesus? (His birth was a miracle, because He was the Son of God promised to be born to a normal woman, Mary. He is the Son of the Most High and His Kingdom will never end. Jesus is the Creator, so nothing is impossible for Him.)
3. Who are some people that we can share this story with (who don't already know it)? (Make a list of friends or family members that don't know the Gospel message or have previously rejected that Jesus is God the Son. Pray for them right now, and plan a time to share this simple story with them.)

# The Magnificat: Mary's Song of Praise

Day 21

## Read

Luke 1:39-56; Isaiah 7:14-16

## Reflect

Soon after learning she would bear the promised Messiah in her womb, Mary went to visit her relative, Elizabeth. It appears the two shared a loving relationship. They were both carrying children of promise that showed God's 400 years of silence was not in vain. The waiting was no longer! God was sending the covenant Deliver to His people. Notice the humility and joy Elizabeth shows her younger cousin. She, like her son and husband, was filled with the Holy Spirit and addressed Jesus as "My Lord" while He was still in Mary's womb (Luke 20:42; John 20:28; Luke 2:11). There was no hesitancy in Elizabeth. Even without seeing an angel herself, she knew that the blessing of a child in her old age was a miracle from God. And, God was giving her faith to trust His plan—and find joy in it! May we all point to the goodness of God as boldly and joyfully as Elizabeth.

The Magnificat (Mary's Song of Praise) is one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible. Her declaration came from a trust in God that went deeper than what her eyes could see. She was pregnant with the Child of God, but this was only the first step in God's fulfillment of His promises. In many ways, her outburst of worship reminds us of Hannah's prayer in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 2:1-10). Right from the onset, she exclaims: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior..." Yes, Mary is excited to have a baby. But she finds her ultimate joy in her Deliverer. She rejoiced in God—her Savior. Just like Hannah, Mary considered herself a "servant" of the Lord (1 Samuel 1:11). There is no hint of pride or ambition in Mary's words. By God's grace, she is overwhelmed with unworthiness before the holy Lord.

Mary, the lowly teenage girl, was being lifted up by the Lord to His Son into the world. To those around her, she was seen as an unfortunate mistake who didn't wait for marriage. Not everyone around believed the miraculous conception by God. But the Lord was lifting her head to see the glorious salvation that her baby son would bring to His people. There was nothing special about Mary, she recognized that. But there was everything special about the One who would be born to her!



This song of praise points us to the Lord's might, holiness, mercy, and strength. He cares for the lowly, provides for the needy, and judges the proud. Yahweh has not forgotten His people! God who "helped his servant Israel" as He promised through the prophets long ago (Isaiah 44:21, 49:3). Through Elizabeth's Spirit-enabled encouragement, Mary can't contain praise for her God!

*"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted." (Isaiah 7:14-16)*

Yahweh is who He said He was. Yahweh is doing what He promised He would. And Mary has a front-row seat. Her reproach in this world would continue. One day, she would be the weeping mother of a wrongly accused criminal. Her heart would soon be broken so that it could be remade by the Messiah who became her child. Her joy in the eternal reign of Jesus would give her hope in the suffering. The King had returned for His people!

## Apply

1. Take in the glory of Jesus – Mary, in her hour of fear and uncertainty, clung to her wise and faithful cousin. Elizabeth pointed her immediately to God's eternal promises and His never-ending faithfulness. The Holy Spirit enabled her to truly feel the joy that Mary needed in this moment. The Lord has likely provided these types of people in your life—cling to them! Find someone who is in love with Jesus and sees the reality of God's glory, and then ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the glory of our King. He is worthy of honor and wants us to be satisfied in Him.
2. Proclaim the glory of Jesus – Fill your mind with God's Word. Enrich your spirit in prayer. Fill your heart with the encouragement of godly brothers and sisters, and then praise Him! Find ways to personally and publicly proclaim the glory of Jesus. This will refresh your soul beyond understanding. Worshipping Christ for His goodness and holiness is the most authentic, true thing we can do.
3. Journal short prayers daily this week – Ask the Lord to help His praises ring boldly on your lips as you interact with people about the wonder of Christ's coming. Christmas is about more than trees and gifts. Calling it Jesus' birthday is only surface-level. Christmas is the coming of the eternal God-man and the rescue He accomplished is eternally effective for all those who trust Him in faith. Speak this joyful truth to all those around you!

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, you are worthy of all praise and glory. You came to earth in a completely humble and unexpected way, because your purposes and glory are beyond understanding! Your faithfulness and goodness are inconceivable to us. I rejoice in your power, your might, your humility, and your patient love. Teach me to speak often and clearly about your glory and truth to others. Help me to become so overcome by your goodness that your Holy Spirit speaks the Gospel from my mouth on a daily basis. This Christmas, help me abide in your presence!*

## Family Discipleship

Luke 1:39-56

1. Who was the baby in Elizabeth's womb? (John the Baptist, Zechariah's son.)
2. What does Elizabeth say about Mary? (She says she is blessed among women because she is carrying the promised Messiah in her belly.)
3. Who does Elizabeth call "my Lord?" (Jesus, the baby still in Mary's belly.)
4. How does Mary react to Elizabeth's wonderful excitement and encouragement? (Mary agrees and thanks God for His goodness, strength, and mercy.)
5. What are some things Mary says about God in the song she sings? (Mary says that He is mighty and has done great things for her, even though she is lowly and normal. He shows mercy to all who fear and trust Him, but judges those who are proud. He has remembered His people, Israel, and is coming back for them.)

# The Birth of John the Baptist

## Day 22

### Read

Luke 1:57-66

### Reflect

Nine months have passed since the angel Gabriel visited Zechariah, and now the time has come. Luke records these first few verses as if everything is normal. But, Elizabeth gave birth to the miracle child at an old age. Naturally, her neighbors and relatives "rejoiced with her." To safely give birth to a healthy child was difficult in the first century and even more unlikely for women of Elizabeth's age. Yahweh had surely "shown great mercy to her." God's promise regarding their son (Luke 1:12-13) is already coming to fruition! Their miracle son is here, and many are rejoicing at his birth. Zechariah and Elizabeth took the baby to be circumcised on his eighth day of life, according to the Old Testament law (Genesis 18:12). From everything we read in the first chapter of Luke, the couple has continued their faithful and obedient lifestyle. For nine months, the elderly couple seems to have consistently trusted the Lord to hold true to His promises. Think what a wonderful testimony this was to their neighbors and family.

This was more than a surprise baby. This was an impossible (but healthy) pregnancy and birth. The Lord was highlighting His power over every aspect of life. Every breath of life is a gift from the Author of life! Christ's theme of raising the lowly and lowering the proud has already begun.

Verses 59-60 signify a turn in the narrative when Luke records Elizabeth's conversation about John's name. Naming him John was a significant cultural shift by the joyful parents, as he should have taken his father's name (Zechariah). But John's parents were not worried about honoring their own legacy. This was not about their family name being carried on. John the Baptist was born to proclaim the arrival of Abraham's seed who would rescue God's people from sin. They were grateful for this small role they could play and were most concerned about honoring the Yahweh. Personal preference didn't matter and cultural standards didn't matter. What did matter was God's Word spoken to them through Gabriel. The Lord had blessed them with a son—He would call the shots.

Zechariah hasn't been able to speak for nearly a year, and his first words are words of blessing to God! The gift of a son overwhelmed any trials he experienced through being mute. For nine months, God's praises had been welling up inside his soul.

There wasn't anger at God or frustrations with others hanging on his lips. Rather, he couldn't wait any longer to proclaim words of exaltation to his King. Most of us can't sit silent and listen to a short conversation, or focus long enough to read a chapter of the Bible. Zechariah, on the other hand, had been dwelling on the wondrous gift of life he was watching bloom before his eyes. He could have selfishly focused on his own muteness. But instead, he glorified God for restoring his voice. He could have idolized his new son. But instead, he worshipped the Giver who created Him in His own image.

These signs and responses together formed an effective witness to the Lord's glory. People all across the land thought on John's birth and wondered about what role it would play in the Advent of the Messiah. Without a doubt, they knew the Lord was with John the Baptist. "For the hand of the Lord was with him." Elizabeth's faithful obedience mattered. Zechariah's worshipful thankfulness mattered.

## Apply

1. Think about your decisions and actions. Are they pointing to the glory of the Giver of life? Or, do they serve your own legacy and comfort in this world?
2. Think about your words. Does your mouth pour out thankful blessings to God or selfish frustrations to those around you? Has your heart been abiding in Christ and meditating on His goodness, or have you been pining over what you don't yet have?

## Pray

*Lord, thank you for intricately preparing the way for your Son to come. I praise you for using sinful, normal people in your plan and making your name great by blessing your children. Teach me to obey and praise you in every situation. Help me exhibit your glory to my neighbors and friends.*

## Family Discipleship

Luke 1:57-66

1. What does it mean that God showed Elizabeth "great mercy"? (God was giving her a son at an age much older than was physically possible.)
2. Why did Zechariah and Elizabeth name him "John"? (Because Gabriel, the angel, told them to call him "John" when he announced that God was going to give them a son.)
3. How long was Zechariah not able to talk? Was he angry or sad when he was able to talk again? (During her entire pregnancy, Zechariah couldn't speak for at least 9 months. When he spoke again, he was thankful to God. He praised to the Lord.)

# Zechariah's Prophecy

## Day 23

### Read

Luke 1:67-80

### Reflect

Zechariah's prophecy (v. 67-75) is one long sentence. "It is often called the 'Benedictus,' from its first word in the Latin Vulgate" (ESV Study Bible). His prophecy begins with the same word, "blessing", that Mary's song did, just like many Old Testament psalms and prophecies (1 Kings 1:48; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Ezra 7:27; Psalm 41:13; Psalm 72:18; Psalm 106:48). Zechariah was intricately aware of the words he chose. He launched into a plethora of reasons the Lord is worthy of honor and praise.

The "God of Israel...has visited and redeemed His people." This name, "God of Israel," is used in both the Old and New Testaments (Isaiah 29:23; Matthew 15:31; Acts 13:17). God Himself had come. Jesus was no mere slave, servant, or messenger. He is God the Son—God in the flesh. He came from the line of David and He was spoken of by the prophets of God. Jesus was both servant and prophet, but that is not all. He is the Savior and Redeemer promised in 2 Samuel 22:3 and Psalm 18:2.

*"The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,  
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,  
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."  
(Psalm 18:2)*

Zechariah ties Jesus' coming to both David's line and the Abrahamic Covenant: "holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham" (Luke 1:72-73). Zechariah brings clarity to Christ's messianic Advent that many others missed. Christ's fulfillment of His covenant stretches far beyond mere earthly kingdoms. There was more at stake than conquering pagan armies and achieving world peace. The Lord desired that His people "might serve him without fear," empowered by grace rather than the worldly fear that typified false gods (Luke 1:74). Christ came to conquer the enemies of pride, self, Satan, and sin. His purpose was to make His people holy and righteous (Luke 1:75; Jeremiah 32:39; Matthew 28:20). The Lord "has visited and redeemed His people!"

*"Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and 'God has visited his people!'" (Luke 7:16)*

In verses 76-79, Zechariah directs the prophecy toward his new son, "John the Baptist." John would be known as the "prophet of the Most High." Jesus and others confirmed this reality (Luke 7:26; Luke 20:6; Matthew 11:9; Matthew 14:5). John served as the last human prophet before Christ, the final prophet. He prepared the way for the Lord himself to come, by preaching salvation through the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28; Mark 1:4). Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, is the "sunrise" that came to "visit us from on high" (Luke 1:78). Jesus pierced the darkness to deliver those sitting in the shadow of death (Isaiah 9:2; Matthew 4:16; Acts 26:18; John 8:12). Those who trust in His name (John 14:6) are guided into the way of peace (Luke 2:14).

## Apply

1. Jesus came to rescue us from our enemies. When you hear this statement, where does your mind immediately turn? Do you think of good health, kind neighbors, and politicians that favor Christian morals? Ask the Lord to turn your eyes toward the reality of sin in your own heart. He came to rid you of its death grip. Sin ravishes and terrorizes every area of life, personal and social. Don't make the mistake of the Pharisees and look for a mere earthly king.
2. Remember Christ's purpose for saving His people. We are designed and called to "serve Him without fear" — in holiness and righteousness, for eternity. Christ came so that we might abide in Him without the barrier of sin separating us. He has torn the curtain. He has broken down the dividing wall built by our rejection of His Lordship.
3. If you are already a follower of Christ, make a list of the enemies Jesus rescued you from (internal and external). If you don't yet trust in Jesus as your Lord, then make a list of enemies that you need deliverance from. The Lord's mission is to bring us back into a pure and whole relationship with Him.

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, thank you for proving yourself powerful over the enemies in my heart. You alone are capable of conquering the power of sin and temptation. You alone can change the momentum of generational brokenness. You alone, by your grace, can make me holy and righteous.*



# Family Discipleship

Luke 1:67-80

1. Do you know what a prophecy is? (It's something that is said about things that haven't happened yet. If the prophecy comes true, and it glorifies the Lord by following His Word, then we know it is from God.)
2. Did Zechariah's prophecy come true? (Yes, Jesus did all of the things that Zechariah said. Jesus is who Zechariah said He was. The second section, about his son (John), showed that Zechariah trusted the promises that he heard from Gabriel.)
3. What does this passage tell us about who Jesus is? (He is the "Lord God of Israel" who was promised in the family of David and Abraham. He is also called the "Most High.")
4. What does this passage tell us about what Jesus would do? (He was coming to visit and rescue His people. He would deliver them from their enemies and enable them to serve Him. He is merciful and is bringing salvation for all who will repent and turn to Him.)

# The Birth of Jesus Christ

## Day 24

### Read

Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-7

### Reflect

#### **Joseph, the adopted father.**

Matthew 1:18-25 is a fantastic summation of Christ's birth from the perspective of Joseph. We've read plenty about Mary and her response to the Lord's work through Luke's writing, but Matthew focuses more on Joseph. After all, Mary and Joseph were already engaged to be married when the Holy Spirit placed Jesus in her womb. What did he think about this surprise baby that wasn't his (Luke 1:27)? Since he was a "just" and honorable man, he planned to quietly divorce her according to Jewish law—preventing her from public shame. Divorce was provided for in the Old Testament law, but was the grievous result of deep marital unfaithfulness (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). As betrayed as Joseph must have felt, he didn't want to drag Mary through the mud. But God, in His glorious sovereignty, sent an angel to visit Joseph in a dream and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife. "...that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:20-21).

Imagine the emotions running through his mind and heart that night. He went from thinking his fiancée had cheated on him to realizing that Yahweh had placed a miracle child in her womb. And, that baby would save people from their sins. We aren't told of his immediate reaction, but he must have been humbled by the news. He obeyed the angel and "did as the Lord commanded him." Joseph woke up the next day and obeyed God. He exhibited simple and immediate trust of His Word. Joseph, the carpenter from the backwoods town of Nazareth, was set apart to raise the Son of God as the stand-in human father. He would teach the one who spoke the universe into existence to swing a hammer and build furniture. He would teach the Light of the world to keep a fire warm. He would change the diapers of the eternal Son of God. There is much we can learn from Joseph's humility, perseverance, and faith in God's promises.

This interaction with Joseph came about to fulfill the promises of God in the Old Testament. God could have dropped a newborn baby on Mary's doorstep with a letter that said He was the Messiah. Or, He could have let Joseph walk away and guided Mary to raise Jesus single-handedly. But that wasn't the plan. And, God always keeps His promises.

God's people would be saved from their sins by Immanuel, a son born to a virgin in Bethlehem of Judea (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 2:11; Acts 3:26, 4:12, 5:31, 13:23, 13:38).

## **Bethlehem, the city of David**

God is in control of all life and childbirth, and He is also over all kings and nations as well. Throughout the Old Testament, the Deliverer was prophesied to be born in Bethlehem (the city of David). Luke gives us a few more details about how they ended up there. His goal was to give Theophilus an orderly account that included facts that could be verified by witnesses. People were still alive who could testify to the accuracy of the events. Mary and Joseph were forced to travel from Nazareth (in Galilee) to Bethlehem (in Judea) because Joseph was from the family line of Judah. Sound familiar? Bethlehem was the city of David. Caesar Augustus just wanted more tax money, but Yahweh was coming down as the Messiah on this fateful journey. The empire of Rome was being used as a pawn by Almighty God to provide the time and place for Christ to enter the world! There was only a stable for Mary, Joseph, and Jesus to lodge, but His coming would bless all nations.

*"And there, in the stable, amongst the chickens and the donkeys and the cows, in the quiet of the night, God gave the world his wonderful gift. The baby that would change the world was born. His baby Son." The Jesus Storybook Bible (p. 18)*

"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). As simple as that, God the Son was born in a human body. We don't get many details other than it happened among dirty animals, in a lowly barn or cave, and he was wrapped in swaddling cloths. Among the lowliest of circumstances and humblest of people, Jesus Christ came into the world as a pure and holy child.

*"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world."  
(Hebrews 1:1-2)*

## Apply

1. How do you respond to the Lord when He calls you to obey in the face of fear or consequence? We can't expect the same angelic dream that Joseph received, but we do have God's Word and the Holy Spirit who spurs us on in godliness. Notice that God asked Joseph to do something that added nothing to himself. In fact, Joseph isn't even mentioned outside of the first several years of Jesus' life.
2. Are you walking by faith or by sight? Do you respond to the Lord's leading in humble and immediate obedience? Or, does your flesh win out as you wait timidly for the Lord to prove His trustworthiness all over again? Let's make sure that we aren't letting human logic and reasoning supersede the Lord's supernatural power.
3. Don't forget that our Lord is sovereign over all things—life, death, nations, politics, family, and everything in between. He is always working towards His eternal plan to redeem a people to Himself. Never underestimate His involvement in everyday life.
4. Mary and Joseph were the first to know that the Messiah was coming, but they still had to deal with everyday pains of living in a broken world. The Romans were still in control. They were still poor. They still had to travel to Bethlehem pregnant, without a minivan. They still got sick and labor was painful. They were still tempted by impatience, selfishness, and pride. They sometimes sinned. But, they lived with the hope of Yahweh right in front of them. In the same way, make sure that you are facing the trials and temptations of this world system by focusing your eyes and heart directly on Jesus.

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, thank you for keeping your promises. Thank you for coming in the humblest of circumstances and identifying with me in weakness and temptation. You are my only hope, but you are the only one worthy of my focus and worship. I praise you that you are able to lift my head and heart above the everyday life facing me. Whatever happens today, I know that you are in control and that you are making me more into your image. You are on a mission to rescue a people for yourself from every tribe and tongue, and nothing can stop you.*

# Family Discipleship

Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-7

1. How did Joseph react to the dream from the Lord? (He listened and obeyed immediately the next morning.)
2. Where were Mary and Joseph living when she became pregnant with Jesus? (Nazareth) Where did they have to travel to be counted in the census for Caesar Augustus? (Bethlehem, the city of David.)
3. Is there any person or king who is more powerful than God? (No, God worked all of the details together in history so that Jesus would be born on this specific day, to this specific couple, in this specific town, and in the hay of this specific manger.)

# Some Worship and Some Reject

## Day 25

### Read

Matthew 2:1-23; Luke 2:8-40

### Reflect

Today is Christmas. What better way to celebrate Christ's Advent than to join the worship of those who were there to witness the miracle of the Messiah? Each person in the Christmas story reacted to the birth of Christ in different ways. Some worshipped, and some planned murder. The contrast provided by the gospel writers is staggering. The divide in peoples' responses to Christ would only grow as He began His earthly ministry.

#### Angels

The angels were the first to let forth the resounding announcement that the Messiah had arrived. The host of Heaven proclaimed the wonderful news to shepherds who were watching their fields, saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:14). They realized that this wasn't just a miraculous birth. Jesus was the Savior spoken of by the prophets of old and promised by Yahweh. This was "good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10)! The angels didn't need salvation. They didn't harbor sin that needed atonement. Rather, they have worshipped the Lord and rejoiced that He had come down to rescue His people. This rescue is worth proclaiming everywhere, to everyone. As the angels said, the Savior "unto you is born..." (Luke 2:11, emphasis added).

#### Shepherds

"When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.'" (Luke 2:15)

The shepherds responded with faith toward the angels' announcement. Luke 2:16 tells us they "went with haste" to find Mary and Joseph. Upon arriving, they blurted out all the angel had told them about Jesus' identity to Mary and Joseph. These men were not keeping this glorious news to themselves, but because this message was for "all the people." God was blessing all nations through the seed of Abraham. He crushed the power of Satan by the seed of man.



The Son of God came as the Son of Man. Mary "treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). These were words of praise and promise for her baby boy that would never grow old! "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them" (Luke 2:20).

### Wise men

We aren't told how the wise men heard of Jesus' birth, except that they were looking for a baby who was born "King of the Jews." The Jews didn't reside in one country at this point. They had been dispersed by centuries of war and occupation by pagan nations. They wanted to worship Him, but we can assume they weren't looking for an earthly king. They had read enough of the Old Testament to know who they were looking for, and they knew He was worthy of the highest worship. "And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11). Their immediate response to seeing Jesus was to fall on their faces in worship!

### Herod

"Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men." (Matthew 2:16)

Herod's story is intertwined with the wise men, as they visited him first to find out if he could help them find their way to Christ's birthplace. Tragically, Herod had different motivations driving his search. Herod heard the biblical prophecies as they were read to him (Matthew 2:3-6) and his first thought was self-preservation. Rather than celebrating the eternal reign of the King of Kings, he started looking for ways to keep grasp of his small kingdom. Anyone who desires to experience the salvation of Christ must lay down their selfishness and pride at His feet. Jesus later taught, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Herod wasn't interested in this type of surrender. Instead, he set a plan in motion and killed every male child in Bethlehem. But God, in His perfect sovereignty, had already warned Mary and Joseph. They were already fleeing to Egypt. The shepherds and wise men responded in worship, but Herod responded with murder.

## Simeon

Luke 2:22-38 records the marvelous account of Jesus being presented in the temple. Mary and Joseph brought Him to Jerusalem, to be dedicated to the Lord according to the Law of Moses. The irony is beyond obvious. Jesus is the firstborn of all creation, meaning that He was The Beginning. He was never made but always existed. Jesus was presented to the Lord as Joseph's firstborn son, but He is the LORD of Lords.

Simeon was a "righteous and devout" man in Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit guided him to the temple on this very day. Upon seeing the Christ child, Simeon exploded into worship and praise to God (Luke 2:27-32). The Lord had promised that he would see the baby Messiah before his death, and the Lord fulfilled His promise! Simeon declares Jesus as the Lord's very "salvation" and "light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:30-32).

## Apply

1. **Christ is born! What is your response to Him?** Have you laid down your weapons and removed your walls of pride, to surrender to the King? Or, like Herod, do you find your self working frantically to maintain status quo, with some semblance of control over your own destiny?
2. **If you recognize Christ as the one true God, God the Son who came to earth to rescue us from slavery to sin, then rejoice!** Rejoice internally through prayer. Rejoice externally through retelling the story of Christ's birth to friends and family. True joy compels us to speak the news of Christ to everyone around us!
3. **Write down 2 names today.**
  - a. Write down the name of someone you know who already knows Jesus as their Savior, but needs encouragement. Maybe they need a deeper understanding of biblical theology, or maybe they just need to be reminded of basic Gospel truths. Pray for them and plan a time for coffee or lunch this week.
  - b. Write down the name of someone you know who is lost and without Christ. Without a relationship with Jesus, they are walking with no hope in this world. Their days and weeks are filled with darkness, but their eyes might not realize it. Pray for them. Plan a time to connect with them that enables a Gospel-focused conversation. This might happen at church, or it might happen while grabbing a burger and fries. Pray fervently for the Holy Spirit to prepare their heart, and be bold but gracious. Love them with the Truth of the Christ who came to rescue them!

## Pray

*Lord Jesus, I praise you for your Advent. Thank you for visiting the world as a baby, to rescue people for yourself. I can never fully comprehend the humility you showed in loving me, a rebellious sinner. Give me a deeper understanding of your glory. Help me to rest and rejoice in your coming. Your mission was to save us by sacrificing yourself on the Cross. Give me a joy that carries me to always tell others this great news!*

## Family Discipleship

Luke 2:1-40 (or the Jesus Storybook Bible chapters below)

- "The Light of the Whole World"
- "He's Here!"

1. All types of people and angels rejoiced in the birth of Jesus and worshipped Him. What sort of things did they say? (Jesus is Christ the Lord, Glory to God, Jesus is God's salvation made visible, Jesus is the light of revelation to Gentiles, Jesus would cause many in Israel to rise and others to fall, Jesus is a sign from God that people will oppose, Jesus will reveal the hearts of people)
2. How did Herod react to the news of Jesus' being born? Why? (Herod lied about wanting to worship Jesus and wanted to kill Him. Herod's heart was blinded by sin and pride. He wanted to protect his earthly throne instead of worship Jesus—the King of Kings. Just like Adam and Eve, he wanted to be the ruler of his own life.)
3. Was Jesus really God? Was Jesus really a man? (Yes and Yes. Everything in the Bible teaches us that He was fully human and fully God, the perfect Son of God who became one of us yet never sinned. He lived the perfect life that we couldn't and died the death that we should have. He carried our sin on His shoulders to the Cross so that we can be forgiven and be given new life with Him forever! We must repent and turn from our sin, to trust Him in faith.)

# Appendix: Recommended Resources

There are countless Bible study, prayer, and discipleship resources available to the Church that we are forever grateful. For centuries, God has used His people to produce biblical content that is worthy of reference. Below are a few resources that we utilized when building this Advent guide, and we recommend you and your family do the same.

- *The Advent of the Lamb of God* – Russ Ramsey
- *Crazy Busy* – Kevin DeYoung
- *The Cross of Christ* – John R. W. Stott
- *The Dawning of Indestructible Joy* – John Piper
- *Deepen Discipleship* – International Mission Board (IMB)
- *Every Holiday a Holy Day* – Bruce Ashford
- *Family Worship: In the Bible, In history & In your home* – Donald S. Whitney
- *Good News of Great Joy* – John Piper
- *The Man Jesus Christ* – Bruce A. Ware
- *Praying the Bible* – Donald S. Whitney

## For younger children:

- *The Biggest Story ABC* – Kevin DeYoung
- *The Biggest Story: How the Snake Crusher Brings Us Back to the Garden* – Kevin DeYoung
- *Jesus Storybook Bible* – Sally Lloyd-Jones and Jago



"And the Word became flesh and dwelt  
among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as  
of the only Son from the Father, full of grace  
and truth."  
(John 1:14)



"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and  
teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we  
may present everyone mature in Christ. For  
this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he  
powerfully works within me."  
(Colossians 1:28-29)

