

THE  
*Story*  
OF  
CHRISTmas

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DAILY READINGS FOR THE ADVENT SEASON

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# Acknowledgements

*“9 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!”*

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (ESV)**

The wisdom of Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 has been lived out in the process of creating the present Advent Devotional. This is not the work of any single individual, but rather a Spirit-filled outpouring of many saints from many journeys, many congregations, many cities and many states.

Thank you to each of our authors who have contributed wonderful daily devotional readings, reflective questions, and prayers. Each of you have given of your time and your talents. You have searched the scriptures, and God has deposited into your hearts just what He desired for us to hear in this journey. Thank you for being willing to be used by Him and for His glory.

I also want to thank Sister Veronica Maples and Lady Tearrah Brown who managed the administrative and editorial elements of this project respectively.

A special word of thanks must be given to Sister Camille Scott, CEO of The Clarice Desk (<https://theclaricedesk.com/>) for the beautiful print and digital layout and design of this book.

# Introduction

## What's the True Story?

A few years ago, I felt the unction of the Holy Spirit to take on the task of interviewing my grandfather, the late Bishop Matthew Nathaniel Richardson, who was in his 90's at the time. For the better part of 18-months, I shuttled back-and-forth from Kansas to California to sit at his side 2-3 days at a time to document his life's journey and all of the miracles God had wrought over nearly a century of life. From that effort came forth the publication of the book, "HE MADE A WAY OUT OF NO WAY: The life, legacy and lessons of Bishop Matthew Nathaniel Richardson."

I share this experience in my life to make this point; the purpose of walking alongside Bishop Richardson and capturing his words was to ensure that we got his story in his own words. The concern and burden that the Lord had placed upon my heart was the possibility of us eventually losing the truth of the many stories of Bishop's life that he would so often share with family to teach us life lessons. Because, if we are not careful, we can easily lose the truth of any story if we don't take time to go to the source.

In this season of Advent, and this holiday which we call CHRISTmas, if we do not intentionally go to the source and hear the story, we can lose the truth of the story in all of the distorted narratives of CHRISTmas and its purpose, which are promoted during the season. As you read, reflect, and pray through these devotional readings, we invite you to be reminded afresh that JESUS THE CHRIST is the only focus, the only feature, the only star, and the only purpose in the story of CHRISTmas. He is the reason that we wait with anticipation in this season of Advent.

Walking in the Truth,

Dr. Kneeland C. Brown  
Pastor of Tabernacle Bible Church



Week  
**1**

The Foretelling  
*Isaiah 9:6-7*

DECEMBER 1

*He Knows What He's Doing!*

*"Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"*

**Psalm 27:14**

I LOVE to cook. My weekly schedule doesn't allow me to do as much as I would like to but when I have some extra time, I can think of few things more relaxing than standing in my kitchen listening to some good Gospel music and burnin' (that means cooking).

Some dishes are ready to be eaten immediately, while others need to rest before they are eaten. A nice steak should be allowed to rest after cooking for at least 5 minutes before it is cut. I am a firm believer that gumbo tastes better when it has been able to rest overnight (just my opinion). By resting a dish, you allow all the flavors additional time to marry together and create an even richer flavor.

The foretelling of the birth of Jesus was spoken hundreds of years before it happened, but that doesn't mean God wasn't at work. God was bringing all the details together to prepare the world for the Christ child.

In my own life, I am learning to acknowledge that while I wait on God, He is at work preparing me for His next move. God is at work during the waiting, He is actively bringing all the flavors of my life together until I am fully ready for Him to move. So, trust God as you wait on Him and remember that you are His great dish, and He is simply resting you. Wait patiently and joyfully because God knows what He's doing and when He does move, its going to be GOOOOD!!

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Have you ever been ready for God to act in an area of your life, but it felt like He was just "resting" you and allowing you to wait?
2. What are good ways to encourage yourself that God knows what He's doing when you have to wait for Him to act?

### **Prayer**

Lord, I thank you that you always know what you are doing and when I need to wait on you, you are at work making all things work together for my good. Teach me to trust your good and perfect plan, even as I await your action. In Jesus' name, Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Dr. Kneeland C. Brown**

**Pastor**

**Tabernacle Bible Church, Wichita, KS**

DECEMBER 2

# The First Promise

*“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 (ESV)

In the book of Genesis, we learned that God created the heavens and the earth, and all things that inhabited it. On the sixth day He created man and woman in His likeness. He placed them in the beautiful Garden of Eden and supplied them with an abundance of everything they needed. God had given them access to everything in the garden, but He prohibited them from eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Both Adam and Eve were well aware of God's instructions, but they allowed the serpent to manipulate them to go against the will of God. On that day, the Lord let Satan know what He had in store for him.

When we live outside the will of God, just like Adam and Eve did, God still loves us. The birth of Christ is proof of that love. Jesus's birth marks the beginning of God's way of restoring our relationship with Him through the New Covenant. It took 20 generations from Adam to Abraham and 42 generations from Abraham to the birth of Jesus. The world had to wait on the promised Savior, the one that would defeat sin and death, because all things happen on God's time.

During the Christmas season, we should focus on God and how He kept His first promise to ensure that nothing will ever separate us from His love.

## Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever made a promise and for whatever reason, broke it? How did that make the person who received the promise feel?
2. Are we not blessed that we serve a God that stands by His word, even when we constantly go outside His will?

## Prayer

Heavenly Father, I come to you not worthy, but grateful for the promises you have made and the promises you have kept. Thank you for the greatest gift of all, redemption through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Doris Montgomery-Smith**

**HR**

**Tabernacle Bible Church, Wichita, Kansas**

DECEMBER 3

# The Promise of our Savior in Isaiah

*“Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.”*

**Isaiah 7:14**

*“Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.”*

**Isaiah 9:6**

In this scripture we have one of the most beautifully poetic promises of the Messiah’s coming reign. Yearly we recite this verse and hear it sung and celebrated during Christmas time. Yet this verse also contains a reference to one of the great, incomprehensible truths in the Bible: The incarnation – a child is born, a son is given. God would become a man, a newborn baby would be called “The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father.” We accept this truth by faith, but we cannot fully grasp what it meant for the second person of the God head to shed His eternal state and put on flesh, “which is the Christ, the only begotten son of God (St John 3:16).

Paul tells us that Jesus took the form of a servant and became a man. “Wherefore God also hath exalted him and given him the name which is above every name.” Phil 2:7-11 (please read)

## Reflection Questions

1. Can you identify a story from the Gospels (the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) which portray Jesus as a servant to others?
2. What does this story tell you about Jesus and the purpose of His coming?

## Prayer

We give God all the honor, all the glory, and all the praise for this great promise we have in His beloved and only son, Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Don Crowley**

**Pastor**

**First Church of God in Christ, Wichita, KS**

DECEMBER 4

# A Message of Hope

*“5 Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’”*

**Jeremiah 23:5-6**

In a time of great darkness, God promised to send a light who would shine on everyone living in the shadow of death. Jesus is both “mighty God” (all-powerful) and “Counselor” (all-loving). He is our message of hope which was fulfilled in His birth and the establishment of His eternal Kingdom. Jesus came from the house of David and took His throne to deliver all of us from the slavery of sin, John 3:16-17. It appeared that the royal lineage of David was cut down like a tree and only a stump remained. Yet God would take that stump and bring forth a green shoot, a **Branch**. The **Branch of righteousness** would come from the lineage of **David**, and lead God’s people as a successful **King**. Prosperity, justice, and righteousness will mark His reign. That King is Jesus!

Yes! In fulfillment of the prophecy foretold over 700 years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah declared in Isaiah 7:14, “*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel.*” Immanuel means “God with us.” Jesus Christ fulfills the prophecy foretold long ago, and just as God fulfilled His promise to send our great king, Jesus, we can always be grateful that through Jesus Christ He also kept His promise to save us from sin and death, delivering us into new life if we only believe.

## Reflection Questions

1. It is amazing that God can keep a promise He made 700 years in advance! How does God’s fulfilling prophecy of Jesus’ birth increase your faith in God?
2. How has the *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace* blessed your life with hope in the Christ Child?

## Prayer

Lord, I thank You for the Branch of Righteousness, the Christ who was foretold of long ago in the Scriptures so that I would believe and receive God’s love through salvation. Help me to continually seek the Scriptures for the truth of the prophecies of Christ, who came to save the world from sin. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Inez Daniels**

**Minister of Discipleship and Member Engagement**

**Tabernacle Bible Church, Wichita, KS**



DECEMBER 5

# Believe to Receive!

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*  
Isaiah 9:6

Foretelling is to tell beforehand. Foretelling and prophesying are synonymous. God used prophets to speak on His behalf. Prophets often foretold what was to come.

In 2 Kings 7, the prophet Elisha foretold of God’s deliverance for His people to the king of Israel. Famine struck causing prices for food to become overwhelmingly inflated (2 Kings 6:24-25). It got so bad that people delve into cannibalism (2 Kings 7:29), but the prophet Elisha prophesied deflation and abundance within 24 hours (1 Kings 7:1). The king’s officer heard what Elisha foretold and responded with doubt saying, “That couldn’t happen even if the Lord opened the windows of heaven.” As a result of the officer’s doubt, Elisha responded, “You will see it happen with your own eyes, but you won’t be able to eat any of it!” In other words, it’s going to happen, but you will not be able to receive it because you didn’t believe it.

Like Elisha’s foretelling, God uses the prophet Isaiah, in Isaiah 9, to deliver hope to God’s people. A Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace was foretold. God is not a man that He should lie (Numbers 23:19). Believing God’s word (the Bible) is an act of faith no matter our current circumstances. Let’s not be like the king’s officer who failed to receive because of his unbelief. How sad it would be to see Christ, yet miss out on Salvation because we chose not to believe (Hebrews 9:28, Daniel 7:18).

## Reflection Questions

1. Do you believe in Jesus? (Are you saved? John 3:16, Romans 10:9)
2. How has doubting God’s love for you kept you from receiving what God has for you?

## Prayer

Dear God, forgive me for allowing my unbelief to rule over my ability to receive that which you’ve reserved for me. I believe but help my unbelief. It’s in your son Jesus’ name I pray, believe and receive. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Christyn M. Gunter**

**Sr. Pastor**

**Rock Christian Fellowship, Wichita KS**

DECEMBER 6

# The Foretelling of God's Word

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”*

**Isaiah 9:6-7**

My son, Terrell, is captivated by meteorologists and has a profound passion for studying the weather. For every news forecast, Terrell listens intently as the Meteorologist shares the weekly outlook. To our delight, Terrell keeps my wife Natasha, and I informed about potential thunderstorms, reminding us to wear jackets as northern winds approach the city. He even urges us to locate flashlights in case of a power outage when severe thunderstorms are predicted. We know that meteorologists sometimes miss the mark; a slight shift in wind patterns can lead to unexpected changes in the forecast.

Similarly, the prophet Isaiah foretold the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. When Isaiah spoke, this prophecy had not yet materialized. But in God's perfect timing, His revelation emerged. Luke 2:11 tells us, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." This prophecy serves not only as a foretelling, but also as forth-telling. Hebrews 1:1-2 reminds us, "In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets, but in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son." This message underscores the continuity of God's voice.

God's word is steadfast and true, transcending all human wisdom and philosophy. These words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, have shaped moral values, societal norms, and cultural practices worldwide. God's word never falters!

Let God's holy foretelling through the scriptures bring you comfort. Even in a storm, find solace in His promises. When all else fades, His word will endure forever! Even when you cannot trace Him, His truth compels us to trust Him! Allow His truth to guide you in all things. Unlike meteorologists, God's prophecy is unailing!

## **Reflection Questions**

1. How will you allow the word of God to become the solid foundation of your daily walk?
2. Knowing that God’s word is speaking for our present time, what commitments are you willing to make to ensure your witness speaks louder than your words?

## **Prayer**

Our Father and our God, we thank you for the wisdom that your word gives. We thank You for the gift of Your son, Jesus Christ, that all men are saved in His name. Please help us to reflect on the truths of your unailing word. Let your word be hidden in our hearts that we may be found holy and acceptable unto you. Let our faith become the salt that preserves the decaying and the light that reflects your glory in this dark world. In Jesus name, we do ask, Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

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DECEMBER 7

# Praying During Christmas Season

*“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”*

**Ephesians 6:18**

Isaiah 9:6-7 tells of the coming of Christ and His role as Prince of Peace. *Understanding the true meaning of Christmas*, which is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, can significantly impact our daily lives by *reminding* us of God's unconditional love for humanity and His desire for reconciliation between Himself and His creation.

My family always looked forward and was overjoyed during the Christmas season because it was a time when we came together to read scripture, pray, and praise God, celebrating the birth of Jesus. One year, we planned a Christmas program and dinner focusing on the birth of Jesus and how to help others. We even invited our friends to join us.

Praying during the Christmas season has a profound impact on our prayer lives. It gives us hope and faith in Jesus. We should gather together and meditate on God’s word. His words remind us of God’s love for us, demonstrated by sending His only Son into the world (I John 4:9-10). I pray that this Christmas season will bring you closer in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

## **Reflection Questions**

1. How can spending time together as family improve your prayer life?
2. How does understanding Jesus Christ affect your view on prayer?

## **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, into this world. As we celebrate His birth during this joyous Christmas season, may we be ever mindful of the true meaning of His arrival: salvation, redemption, and eternal life. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Lola Hunt**

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Week  
2

The Announcement

*Luke 1:26-33*

DECEMBER 8

# Announcing Joy to The World

*“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”*

**Luke 2:11**

Some of the most precious and priceless moments in my life revolve around the responses received when my husband and I announced that we were expecting a baby. And of course, upon announcing the birth of the baby, as well as the name, gender and other details, the responses were even more precious and priceless. It was simply amazing to witness such excitement over the announcement and birth of a baby. The response to our announcements brought about a special kind of joy that remains forever etched in my heart and mind to this day. I was simply a witness to pure and undiluted, undeterred joy among my family!

I was the oldest of nine children and also the oldest grandchild on both sides of my family. So you can imagine how pumped up each family member was to finally become a grandparent or an uncle or aunt. The hugs, high fives, tears, smiles, laughter, competition, jokes, etc were endless acts of love! The baby showers were phenomenal! Every holiday and birthday was extraordinary! Every day and every ‘first anything’ was reason to celebrate! We couldn’t get enough of the fact that a new life had begun.

As I think back on that special time of my life, it becomes easy to understand and comprehend the joy that burst forth among the Christian world in response to the announcement of our Savior’s birth! Now at last, the prophecies become realities.

First, His coming birth was announced to His earthly father, Joseph (Matthew 1:18-24); secondly, His coming birth was announced to His earthly mother, Mary (Luke 1:26-38); and third His coming birth was publicly announced to the shepherds (Luke 2:1-19) which then spread like wildfire. Such joy has never been known before...angels singing, shepherds rejoicing, wise men worshipping, and the brightest star shone around the world in response and in honor of the announcement of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Lord. His family around the world erupted with undiluted and undeterred joy, not only on that holy bright and silent night, but forevermore!

## **Reflection Questions**

1. Can you recall an announcement of such pure joy in your life which helps you to understand the joy of Jesus’ birth?
2. What was it about the announcement that brought you so much joy and what is it about this announcement of Jesus’ birth that brings you so much joy?

## **Prayer**

Father God, we give you all the glory, all the praise and all the honor for our Savior, Jesus Christ, the Lord. Thank you God for the gift of Your Son who alone is able to redeem us back to you and to reconcile us with one another. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

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**Tabernacle Bible Church, Wichita, KS**



DECEMBER 9

# Unlimited Access to God

*“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”*

**Philippians 4:11-13**

Life is messy and unpredictable. Imagine Mary and Joseph—away from home, giving birth in a barn surrounded by animals. It’s far from ideal, yet in the midst of this chaos, an angel of the Lord speaks to them. They find strength not in their circumstances, but in God’s promises. They hear from Him, stand on His words, and trust His plan. Jesus has declared who we are in Him: children of God, forgiven, redeemed, sanctified, and precious. We belong to Him. These truths anchor us when life feels overwhelming.

Paul’s life exemplifies this trust. His missionary journeys are riddled with shipwrecks, imprisonment, and fierce opposition (Acts 13–28). Yet, Paul remains steadfast, hearing from God in every trial. Through the Holy Spirit, he knows he has constant access to God, drawing strength to endure and thrive. His faith builds communities, inspires letters, and makes him a mouthpiece for God’s voice.

Paul’s relationship with God is unshaken by circumstances. His all-access pass to God ensures no tragedy, success, or failure can separate him from divine love and guidance. Like Mary, Joseph, and Paul, we can hear from God no matter where life takes us.

## Reflection Questions

1. Satan's primary tactic is deception (John 8:44), and he wants you to believe that you are far from God and that God is not speaking. What circumstances or emotions make you feel distant from God or as if He is silent? What lies have you believed when you’ve felt that God is silent or distant?
2. When you reflect on your life, what situations or moments make you feel close to God? Do you notice any patterns in how you hear God’s voice? For example, through Scripture, nature, conversations with others, music, art, or other experiences?

## Prayer

Jesus, thank You for Your constant presence through the Holy Spirit. Help me to recognize and pursue Your voice in every circumstance. Give me ears to hear You when You speak boldly and when You whisper softly. I long to know Your voice more deeply and follow You with all my heart. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Jonathan Gordon**

**Co-Lead Pastor**

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DECEMBER 10

# Trust His Will

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding."*

**Proverbs 3:5**

Life often presents us with challenges that seem unbearable and push us to confront our own capabilities. However, it is reassuring to remember that we are not alone in our journey.

As illustrated in Luke 1:26-33, the angel Gabriel delivered a message to Mary, announcing her miraculous conception of Jesus, the Son of God. This profound event emphasizes that what appears impossible can indeed happen through faith and divine guidance. It is a testament to the power of obedience and the importance of placing trust in God's plan.

Even in difficult times, remember Proverbs 3:5, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." This scripture shows us that we need to give God complete control of our lives. Although it may be hard, he gives us these words to activate our faith and allow him to guide us. We must acknowledge God in everything we do so he can guide our paths.

We must remain steadfast in our faith, recognizing that if God has called us to take action, we must respond with courage. Embracing this belief can empower us to transcend obstacles and achieve what we initially deemed unreachable. May we continue to find strength in our faith and follow the path laid out for us with confidence..

## **Reflection Questions**

1. Has God asked you to do something lately? If so, what is it?
2. Do you trust God's plans?

## **Prayer**

Our Father who art in heaven, give us this day Father, You offer us abundant grace, mercy, and forgiveness through Your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Help me to live a grace-filled life as Mary did by believing in your promises. Amen!

*Devotional Contributed By:*

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**Tabernacle Bible Church, Wichita, KS**

DECEMBER 11

# Jesus, Messiah, Returning Savior

*“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

**John 3:17**

*“This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”*

**John 6:58**

Genesis 3 is often referred to as The Fall. In this moment in the creation story man was separated from God by his desire to act on his own in open rebellion to the command of God not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam’s disobedience and sin, and his refusal to admit his mistake or apologize, betrayed the relationship between God and man. This set the precedent for all humanity’s sin and the required death. But, the All Knowing God, in His infinite wisdom and love, predestined (planned in advance) Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son to be the Savior of all humanity.

Both the coming of Jesus as a Child and His sacrifice on the cross was prepared before the foundation of the world (Revelation 3:18) and is mentioned when Moses writes, “God said I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:15). This means that when the Angel Gabriel announces the coming of baby Jesus to Mary, God is now activating his great plan to provide just what we need to be rescued from our fallen state, and what we need is Jesus. It is for this very reason that Jesus declares, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” (John 6:35) In this world broken by the fall into sin, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6) are blessed to find satisfaction in Jesus.

## Reflection Questions

1. Have there been moments in your life in which you have made a mistake but like Adam resisted the opportunity to admit the mistake and find forgiveness?
2. How can you overcome the temptation to hide your sin and instead receive the forgiveness and satisfaction found in Jesus?

## Prayer

Father God in heaven, thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ who died for us, and whom you raised from the dead so that we can be forgiven our sins and spend eternity with you. We confess any sin that we have committed knowingly and unknowingly. Thank you for rescuing us from our fallen state. In you name we pray. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Cornell Hill**

**Sunday School Teacher and Men’s Chorus**

**Tabernacle Bible Church, Wichita, KS**

DECEMBER 12

# Faith Over Fear

*“Don’t be afraid, Mary,’ the angel told her, ‘for you have found favor with God!’”*

Luke 1:30 NLT

Mary had found favor with God even without her knowing it. She was a virgin and betrothed, and now informed by the Angel Gabriel that she would conceive a child, and He would be the Christ. God is known for using the unlikely to get the attention of the world. Mary was in the right place and her situation was all God ordained.

Sometimes it scars us when God calls on us, but when it sets in, it all works for our good. The angel told Mary not to be afraid because she had found favor with God. These words are powerful for anyone to take in, but when you’re in God’s Favor, God’s power rest upon you and all things are possible. In spite of Mary’s age, fear, and circumstance, God used her for His will to be done.

When God calls you out of your comfort zone, fear is the first thing that sets in. But with His call comes everything needed to accomplish His will. *2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) says, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”* When we trust Him and give into our Faith Over Fear, victory is won.

## Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever experienced a call from God to move or do something outside of your comfort zone?
2. Have you ever felt a move of the Holy Spirit to say or do something to or for someone, but you didn’t? How did you feel as a result?

## Prayer

Father in the name of Jesus, we ask thee for clarity of sight, wisdom and understanding to do Your will in Your way, that we may hear Your voice clearly and give You Glory in all that we say and do, that we may edify Your people. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

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DECEMBER 13

# What Child is This...

*“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”*

**Luke 2:11**

There is something about the expectation of a brand-new baby that brings excitement to all those who are waiting. As soon as the pregnancy is announced, the anticipation begins. We start counting the days and weeks and doing everything that we can to prepare for the precious new life that we are expecting.

Once the baby arrives, our lives are changed from that moment on. All of our anxieties, worries and expectations are replaced by feelings of love, joy and peace that cannot be described as we celebrate and admire the wonderful gift that God has given us.

When we consider the story of the Birth of Jesus, it’s incredible to think that there is a birth that is more precious and more important than that of our own children. But this child, who was born of a virgin, who was visited by angels, shepherds and wisemen had a far greater purpose to fulfill. He came to save all people from their sins.

He is a holy child, and He is the Son of God, the promised Messiah. The hymnologist penned the words that say: ‘This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing.’ He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; The prophet Isaiah wrote that His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace.

In this baby, we have been given the greatest most precious gift that mankind will ever receive, and that is the Savior of the world. Many will go about their daily routines and get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season, but whatever you do, don’t forget to thank God for giving us His immeasurable gift that is Jesus Christ.

## **Reflection Questions**

1. What are you doing this Christmas to receive the Christ child?
2. What can you do differently this Christmas season to ensure you don’t get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season?

## **Prayer**

God, thank you for the greatest gift ever given, your son Jesus Christ, the Savior of the entire world. Thank you for being a wonderful counselor, a mighty God, an everlasting Father and our Prince of Peace. In your name we pray. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Roderick Houston**

**Lead Pastor**

**Greater Harvest Tabernacle Christian Fellowship, Wichita, KS**



DECEMBER 14

# Do You Hear What I Hear?

*“Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.”*

**Jeremiah 33:3**

We live in a noisy world! In many ways I have become used to the noise which surrounds my life every day. A few years ago, someone challenged me to ride in my car without playing any music, listening to any podcasts, making any phone calls or engaging any other forms of noise. The challenge was to simply drive from point A to point B surrounded by quiet. I must report that when I started it, the silence in the car was DEAFENING.

But then it became so delightful to drive in complete silence. So much so that I have taken it up as a part of my routine. I occasionally get into my car and ride from one place to the next with no additional noise.

The story of Mary being visited by the Angel Gabriel (Luke 1:26-33) and told that she would be the mother of the Christ child is mind-blowing. Not just the message, but the method of its delivery. God dispatched an angel from His throne room in glory to pass a message to a young woman in a little out of the way town called Nazareth. This means that God does not mind speaking to ordinary people leading ordinary lives, and that's where the challenge is. What if one of the great lessons in this story is not that God is willing to speak to ordinary people, but it is actually that ordinary people must be listening for His voice.

I want to do better at quieting my world and listening for the voice of the God of all creation who speaks to ordinary people like you and me. I invite you to join me in the exercise of cultivating sacred silence and listening for God's voice in your own life.

## **Reflection Questions**

1. In what ways and in what moments during your day can you create silence in your life?
2. As you spend time in prayer and reading your Bible, in what ways have you heard God speaking to you?

## **Prayer**

Lord, thank you for speaking to ordinary people in ordinary situations. Help me to remember each day that you are desiring to speak to me so that I can follow your plan for me. Show me how to cultivate sacred silence in my life so that I can hear your voice throughout my days. In Jesus' name, Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Dr. Kneeland C. Brown**

**Pastor**

**Tabernacle Bible Church, Wichita, KS**

Week  
3

The Journey

*Luke 2:1-5*

DECEMBER 15

# Purpose on The Path

*"1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child."*

**Luke 2:1-5 (ESV)**

The decree from Caesar Augustus, calling for a census, was more than an inconvenience. For Joseph and Mary, it was a call to obedience, requiring a 90-mile journey while Mary was near delivery. Though the decree likely stemmed from a ruler's greed and pride, its timing aligned perfectly with God's plan to fulfill the prophecy (Micah 5:2), bringing the Messiah to Bethlehem, the city of David.

Joseph and Mary's response reflects humble submission to life's seemingly arbitrary yet binding demands—as they trust in God's presence as comfort for life's burdens. Their path to Bethlehem wasn't just about duty—it became a path to unforeseen blessings. Though they likely faced challenges, God provided safe passage and the profound blessing of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, marking the beginning of a hope-filled promise to the entire world.

Sometimes, God's most profound blessings are revealed when we follow Him in obedience, even when the path is difficult or doesn't align with our plans. Like Mary and Joseph, we are invited to trust that God uses all circumstances—even those that feel imposed upon us—to bring about His good purposes (Romans 8:28).

## Reflection Questions

1. What areas in your life feel like burdensome obligations rather than blessings?
2. How can Mary and Joseph's journey encourage you to discover unanticipated blessings in your own circumstances?

## Prayer

Lord, help me to trust You and respond in obedience, even when the path is hard. May I find courage in knowing that You are working through all situations for my good and Your glory, revealing blessings I might not expect. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Carnell Borden**

**Senior Pastor**

**Bethel Church of Christ (Holiness), Los Angeles, California**

DECEMBER 16

# The Journey To Bethlehem

*“So Joseph and his wife, Mary, left Nazareth, a village in Galilee, and journeyed to their hometown in Judea, to the village of Bethlehem, King David’s ancient home. They were required to register there, since they were both direct descendants of David. Mary was pregnant and nearly ready to give birth.”*

**Luke 2:4-7 TPT**

Taking a meaningful journey requires time and preparation. Some years ago, it was necessary for me to spend some significant time, during the winter months, in Washington DC for a graduate academic program at Wesley Seminary. The change from the warmth of the deep South, where I resided, to the cold icy climate of the Northeast sector of the United States, was abrupt. My whole system was often in shock. It seems as though the three-and one-half hour flight was never enough time to adequately prepare my mind and body for the change of weather.

Can you imagine not having a season of Advent, no time to prepare for the blessed Christmas event? Perhaps you have had the strange sensation that felt like you have gone to sleep on Thanksgiving and awakened on Christmas. For those of us needing a little time to get into the Christmas spirit, it is important to prepare for the coming of the Christ Child.

The Bible lessons, daily and weekly, telling the story of the coming of the Messiah, are important as preparation for His coming. To hear again the prophet’s proclamations that “every valley shall be exalted” and “unto us a child is born”, to listen with the heart to the angels singing “Glory to God in the highest”, and to stand in wonder with the shepherds and in adoration with the wise men, are all important parts of the journey to Bethlehem.

This is Advent! How much poorer we would be without it. When one prepares spiritually and emotionally for the holy season, the culmination of it is filled with joy and fulfillment.

## **Reflection Questions**

1. Reflect on a time that you felt unprepared for celebrating Christmas spiritually. What happened?
2. What are some of your important practices which help foster the spirit of goodwill during Advent?

## **Prayer**

God of Hope, this Advent season, fill your people with all joy and peace in union with Christ. So that in preparing for the journey to Bethlehem, all may by the power of the Holy Spirit abound in hope. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Rev. Dr. Victor T. McCullough**

**Senior Pastor**

**Saint Mark United Methodist Church, Wichita, KS**

DECEMBER 17

# Risks Worth the Promise

*4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.*

**Luke 2:4-5 (ESV)**

I wouldn't consider myself a risk-taker at all. I find safety in routine and trust that if I stay in my comfort zone, I avoid all the scary things that come with the unknown. But what if Mary & Joseph never took the risks that gave us a Savior?

Caesar Augustus has put out a decree, calling people around the world to go back to their ancestral homes. This moment is important to note, because although secular powers authorized this act, it was God's divine plan! Doing this would lead Mary & Joseph into Bethlehem, where the Messiah would be born. This was foretold in Micah 5:2. Was this convenient for the young couple? Absolutely not, but when we reflect on the importance of family lineage and how God's wonders worked through family lines, bringing Joseph back to his home was significant to the prophecy.

As Mary & Joseph traveled, imagine the conversations they had on the way. The journey ahead was filled with uncertainty, discomfort, and most certainly risks. Mary was in her final stage of pregnancy. The physical toll of traveling for days had to be exhausting and uncomfortable. God showed the couple His plans for them, but they probably still dealt with the thoughts of wondering, "Why us"? Although her pregnancy was from the Holy Spirit, Joseph risked his reputation reentering his homeland knowing what others may have thought.

God does not show us all the details or outcome of our daily walks of life. He calls us to trust in Him, even when the journey is risky. We should be reminded through Mary & Joseph's journey that courage and faith are essential in order for His promises to come to fruition.

## **Reflection Questions**

1. Think about the human risks associated with fully trusting in God. What are the spiritual rewards given by God when we trust in Him?
2. What's an experience on your Christian Walk that you've gone through that had many obstacles, but was ultimately worth the journey?

## **Prayer**

Lord, as we reflect on the journey of Mary & Joseph, teach us to walk with faith, despite the obstacles and risks we face daily. Thank you for being my constant guide and walking with me in all things. May we take each step boldly, and remember your love never leaves us alone. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Camille Scott**

**Teen Leader – Children & Youth Ministry**

**Tabernacle Bible Church, Wichita, KS**



DECEMBER 18

# Waiting

*“But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.”*

**Luke 1:7**

The word *Advent* means "the arrival" or "the coming", and it carries with it the idea of waiting. Waiting can be challenging. It reveals the truth that we are not in control. However, if stewarded rightly, waiting can bring transformation to our character. We wait for relationships to come, for depression to pass, for our financial situation to change, and for social change in our communities. Waiting is part of our journey through life with God. If we hold our season of waiting before God, it can become profitable for our lives. The biblical narrative is full of men and women who have had to wait.

In Luke 1:5-6, we are introduced to a couple who are no strangers to waiting—Elizabeth and Zechariah. Luke offers a brief biographical sketch of their character: they were righteous, devoted to God, obedient to the Lord's commands, above reproach, and part of a priestly lineage. A 1st-century Jew would have been impressed by these credentials—until you reach verse 7. They were old, childless, and unable to have children. In their cultural context, this would have brought shame and disgrace. Children were considered a tangible sign of God's blessing. Imagine the toll that years of unmet expectations would have taken on their souls. To make matters worse, Zechariah's name means “whom the Lord remembers” and Elizabeth's means “my God is abundant.” What happens when your name means one thing, but your reality tells a different story? It must have seemed as if God had forgotten them.

What ministers to me about Zechariah and Elizabeth is that they remained faithful in their waiting. They were committed to the Lord, even in their waiting. The hope of a future Messiah lifted them beyond their present circumstances. It seems that, regardless of their situation, they were determined to remain faithful to God. What I find especially beautiful about their story is that, in verse 11, it says, “Then an angel of the Lord appeared...”, God intervened. Let this elderly couple be an example to us as we navigate our own seasons of waiting.

## **Reflection Questions**

1. Do you feel that you are in a season of waiting? If so, identify and journal about what you are waiting for in your life.
2. Read Luke 1:5-80. How can you remain faithful in your waiting, like Elizabeth and Zechariah? What promise of God can you cling to in this season?

## **Prayer**

Lord, fill me with Your presence today. Give me eyes to see and ears to hear how You are working in me. Grant me the strength and endurance to wait. Help me remain faithful to You in this season of waiting. Help me to focus on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Morgan Burns**

**Co-Lead Pastor**

**Redeemer Church, Wichita, KS**

DECEMBER 19

# Life is a Journey

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*

**Psalms 119:105 NKJV**

Joseph & Mary had quite a journey, from the happiness of betrothal to the shock of an unexpected pregnancy, from traveling at the most difficult time of pregnancy to the joy of having Jesus. No matter the course, the ups and downs of a journey always lead to a final destination.

In 2001, I began a journey of taking what I loved, cooking, and started my own catering business. I was excited! My dreams were high. I wanted to be successful. Unfortunately, the reality of not knowing food costs, labor, overhead, my worth as a caterer, and not having a wise business support team, I traveled from excitement to having all my money wiped out from my bank accounts by the IRS. With the threat of losing my home, I felt like I was losing my mind.

I knew God had not given me a spirit of fear, yet I couldn't eat or sleep, and the only thing I could do was lay on the floor crying out. **BUT GOD!** When we travel without total understanding but still trust God, He makes sure we arrive at our final destination safely. (Read Deuteronomy 31:8)

Because I allowed God to be my GPS (God's Purposed Solution), I was able to come out from bankruptcy, not lose my home, and I even met the love of my life, Ronnie. God worked everything out for my good. When you allow God to lead you in your journey like Joseph & Mary did, and surrender to God who fulfills our journey, you always arrive at the destination He has planned just for you (Read Jeremiah 29:8).

## **Reflection Questions**

1. Have you ever had God take you in a different direction than planned?
2. Recall a time when the journey was anything but comfortable; what did you do?

## **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank You that You see us as we move forward in all that You are calling us to do. Keep our mind surrendered to Your instructions on our journey. No matter how much we have going on, help us so that we can hear from You clearly to follow Your direction. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Debra Kelley**

**Teen Sunday School Teacher**

**Tabernacle Bible Church, Wichita, KS**

DECEMBER 20

# The Hopeful Journey

*“18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”*

**Matthew 1:18-20**

The Advent season of 2021 was my first without my Dad. It was a new journey in a new season. I so missed my Dad who was my Dad, my Pastor, my mentor, and my friend for the first 60 years of my life. As I entered this new journey in unfamiliar territory, there was a lot of things to consider, mostly in fear since this was an unplanned event, not in my life script, and not my preference. David Tripp says, “Christmas is the sufferers' holiday. If there was no pain, discouragement or death, there would be no need for Christ.” When Joseph learned of Mary being found to be with child, he started the journey. The journey began with compassion, he resolved to divorce her quietly, though a good plan, not God’s plan.

We get through our journey of fears by hope in God’s plan. Joseph’s reaction demonstrates the kind of mercy and righteousness God would have looked for in the man who would care for His Son. I have learned from Joseph’s response to the new journey, as he followed the message of the angel of the Lord and turned the journey of fear to a hopeful journey. My new journey of celebrating the Advent season without my Dad was filled with uncertainty, emotion, and anxiousness, yet understanding that is why Jesus came, that Christmas is the suffers’ holiday, and that the Lord is with me has turned it to a hopeful journey.

## **Reflection Questions**

1. How will you navigate the journey in a season of grief?
2. What will you need to turn your journey into a hopeful journey?

## **Prayer**

God, you are God, and you are good. Thank you for the advent season that is for me, one that turns my grief into grace and my fears into hope. Remind us why. Why you came. Why you called. Why you are present. In the precious name of Jesus, Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Dr. Paul A. Flores**

**Pastor**

**Church of the Redeemer, Baldwin Park, CA**

DECEMBER 21

# The Journey to Bethlehem

*“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while [a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register.*

*4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.”*

**Luke 2:1-5**

I think back to the first road trip I took with my wife and first-born child. The planning and preparation needed before the trip started. Time spent packing, printing the road map (pre-GPS), making sure we had enough bottles and pampers, filling up with gas and grabbing our favorite beverages. At the start, unaware of any issues or detours we might encounter. I am certain we said a prayer to calm any anxiety and for traveling mercies.

Joseph and Mary traveled back home to Bethlehem to register in a census by decree of the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus. Their journey would take place while Mary was pregnant with Jesus. Prior to their journey God sent the Angel Gabriel to Mary, to inform her that she would give birth to a son, to be named Jesus, the Son of the Most High. One might assume based on this news that Joseph and Mary would not face any challenges or obstacles going forward. However, they would in fact face challenges and obstacles on their path to delivering Jesus to the world.

Just like any road trip, the Christian journey will come with challenges and obstacles. Your journey may take you through hills, valleys, and wilderness, but it is important to remain on the path. The book of Matthew tells us we can only enter through the narrow gate and difficult is the way. Stay on the path of righteousness throughout your journey, it leads you to the Savior, Jesus Christ!

## **Reflection Questions**

1. How are you equipping yourself spiritually for your daily journeys?
2. What obstacles in your life are you allowing to detour you from the path of righteousness?

## **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, I humbly come before You, asking for unwavering faith in my Christian journey. As I face life's challenges and obstacles, please grant me the strength to endure and stand strong. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Jimmy Washington**

**Deacon in Training**

**Tabernacle Bible Church, Wichita, KS**

Week  
4

The Birth  
*Luke 2:6-19*



DECEMBER 22

# A Promise Fulfilled

*“For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”*

2 Cor 1:20 KJV

Has anyone every made you a promise? A promise is a wonderful thing; it fills you with excitement and expectation. As a child, each Christmas my mother would allow us to pick three gifts we would like. She always promised that we would get at least one of those things we selected. We eagerly awaited Christmas morning in hopes that mother would keep her promise. Sometimes we would get all of the three things that we wanted. It was always exciting when we found on Christmas morning that she had kept her promise.

We find in the scriptures that God, our loving Father, made us a promise in Isaiah 7:14. “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” This promise was given in the Old Testament and became the hope of all of Israel. Israel had to wait for hundreds of years before they would receive the promise. What a blessing to know that God is faithful and keeps all His promises. Even though it might take a long time.

God is faithful and He kept His promise to send us a Savior. On this Christmas let us relish in the reality that once again God was faithful in keeping His promise to us all. No greater promise was ever given to mankind and here we have that promise fulfilled. Christmas is about a faithful God keeping faith with you and with me. Christmas is about us receiving the greatest gift of all, Jesus the fulfilled promise of God.

## Reflection Questions

1. What promises in the Bible has God fulfilled in your life?
2. Have you kept the promises to God that you have made, especially during times of trial?

## Prayer

Lord, please help me to embrace the promises you have given to me and give me the patience to wait for you to fulfill them. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Rev. Charles A. Brown**

**Pastor**

**Saint Mark Community Church, Vallejo, CA**



DECEMBER 23

# Divine Birth

*“6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”*

**Luke 2:6-7**

The birth of a baby is a blessed event, which is full of anticipation followed by a degree of anxiety, and even some fear. The timing of the labor process is generally unknown and though expected, it is still surprising when what had been occasional contractions become regular and increasing in intensity and pain. As deep concern develops to find a place of safety to bring the new life into the world, the mother confines herself and settles into the work of expelling the baby out of her body. The culmination of the process brings great joy and relief. (John 16:21)

Think of Mary and the divine nature of her conception and the probable mental uncertainties and fear of what was to happen. Surely she had some worrisome days and nights, especially considering she was very young and perhaps living with social pressures as a pregnant girl who was not yet married. God, through His angel Gabriel, had equipped her to make it through the long pregnancy, but she, like us, had human fears and anxieties nagging at her internal peace. Her faith and resolve were tests daily and all she had was what she and Joseph, her fiancé, had been told by the angel Gabriel. Mary had to trust and believe that she was in fact the chosen vessel to be the mother of the Messiah, who was the Son of God. Love for God and faith in His lordship was surely profound or this young woman. Her belief and trust sustained her on the journey to Bethlehem and kept her as she gave birth to the Savior. The world was forever changed by her faith and act of obedience.

## Reflection Questions

1. Have you had the spiritual knowledge of God and the Holy Spirit require that you totally surrender?
2. Have you seen through the hardship of following God's direction a great blessing after all is said and done?

## Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for the perfect selection of the person, the way, and the means of sending Jesus into the world. Please, Heavenly Father, give us the measure of faith and obedience to follow your direction in the confusing times in our lives. Thank you for your love and grace. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Dr. Arthur and Patricia DeHart**

**Deacons Ministry**

**Tabernacle Bible Church, Wichita, KS**

DECEMBER 24

# The Birth

*“16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child..”*

**Luke 2:16-17**

Just as the angel had said, shepherds found baby Jesus lying in a manger. Shepherds were considered insignificant and of a lower class. Imagine the stench of manure as they cared for the sheep. What a lowly task! Yet, God chose them to be among the first to witness the miraculous birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and they shared the great news abroad.

Like the shepherds, my dad experienced a relationship with Jesus Christ, and he was excited about sharing this great news! An avid student of the Bible, he shared the gospel every opportunity he had, initially to his family and then to others. “Have you ever been saved?” This was the first question asked to segue into a conversation leading others to Christ.

Prior to his conversion, dad was a professional jazz musician. He played the upright bass in jazz bands in nightclubs, including the famous Cotton Club in New York. He was living his dream life but spiritually he was an agnostic. Once he experienced the Glory of the Lord, his life changed forever!

Later after my dad became a mature Christian, he began assisting my mother with Children’s Ministries. Now playing the guitar, through his musicality he found another way to spread the birth of Christ, as he accompanied the Children’s choir playing songs like, Silent Night and Away in A Manger.

As we celebrate the advent season of Christ, let’s remember the great commission, spreading the Birth of Jesus Christ.

## **Reflection Questions**

1. How has Christ’s Birth impacted your life; have you been saved?
2. How can you spread the news of the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ to agnostics and other unbelievers?

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank you for your birth and for making salvation a possibility for everyone. Please bless all who have experienced your love and forgiveness. Help us to use our abilities to act with urgency by spreading your Great News to those that you’ve placed in our care, to plant and water your Word. It is in your precious, holy, and divine name Jesus, I pray. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Rebekah Miller**

**Adult Sunday School Teacher**

**Tabernacle Bible Church, Wichita, KS**

DECEMBER 25

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

*“...but [He] emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form.”*

**Philippians 2:7 NRSV**

What does it mean to be spiritual today? For some persons, to be spiritual means refraining from involvement in the affairs of the “world.” “Don’t relate to or speak to social, political, and economic issues,” they say. “Leave these concerns to the experts in those matters. The church should stick to preaching about Jesus.”

This sacred-secular tension has been with the church for a long time. Why must one make a choice? God was moved by compassion to give the world a Great Savior who is concerned with both the spiritual and social realities of the world. A scripture from the Bible that arrests our attention at Advent is John 1:14 MSG. *“The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish.”*

During this holy season, the church prepares in word and deed to reflect and point toward the One coming. The one who left the heavenly place of preeminence to revolutionize the earthly domain. Jesus urged that if we are truly spiritual, we would feed the hungry, give the thirsty drink, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, heal and visit the sick, liberate the oppressed, and love those who hate us.

So, as the church prepares for the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom of redemptive power and liberation, let’s remember a church that is not relevant in the social contexts will lose its way, but a church that is not spiritual has already lost its way.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. If you can imagine Jesus reading the morning paper, do you believe that he would be oblivious to the plight of immigrants, the unhoused, those out of work, and corporate greed?
2. How can a faithful church and/or a conscientious spiritual leader better prepare to serve as Gospel ambassadors to the crisis’ in our surroundings?

### **Prayer**

O come, o come, Lord Jesus, and by your saving power, redeem your captive people. Make us impatient with the lack of compassion and social relevancy of the church in this post- Christian 21st century. Set us ablaze to present a holistic gospel to those who know and those who need to know Jesus the Christ and His kingdom of liberation. Amen.

*Devotional Contributed By:*

**Rev. Victor T. and Rev. Nancy McCullough**

**Pastor and First Lady**

**Saint Mark United Methodist Church Wichita, Kansas**

# Plan of Salvation

The true story of CHRISTmas is the foretelling, announcement, journey, and birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The birth of Jesus is like no other birth in the history of the world because He was born with a divine purpose. John 3:16 declares, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” This lets us know that God the Father sent his Son (Jesus) to be born and to live amongst us for our benefit, but what was the benefit of His coming? If you continue reading this same passage in the Gospel of John, it says, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3:17)

God the Father gave His only Son because we needed to be rescued. Yes, we all need to be rescued from our own sin and brokenness. God loves us so much that He does not attempt to look past our sin and brokenness. God sees our sin, God loves us in spite of our sin, and in His unending love, God sent Jesus to save us from that sin through His death on the cross, burial, and resurrection.

If you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you would like to, I invite you to pray this prayer.

*Jesus, I thank you that I have been able to spend time in this Advent devotional study and for the ways you have spoken to my heart. I thank you for the true story of CHRISTmas, for being born to save me from my sins.*

*Jesus, now in this moment, according to Hebrews 10:9, I confess with my mouth that you are my Savior! I believe in my heart that you are Lord, that you love me, and that you showed your love for me by giving your life on the cross, and then being raised victoriously by God the Father, conquering the sin and death which held me captive.*

*Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner. I have made mistakes and many bad decisions; I have done wrong in my thoughts, words, and deeds. I ask your forgiveness, and I ask you to come now and live in my heart.*

*Thank you, Jesus, for coming into my heart and for making me new. Thank you for your Holy Spirit that now lives in me and thank you that you have made me a new creation in you!*

*In Jesus' name, Amen.*

If you have just prayed this prayer for the first time, Congratulations, you are officially a member of the family of God. We would love to know that you joined the family. Please reach out to us at

<https://tabernaclebiblewichita.com/forms/decision/>.



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