

The Long-Awaited Promise:
Advent Reflections on the God Who
Keeps His Word

An Advent Devotional and Study Guide

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COME, THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS
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COME, THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS,
BORN TO SET THY PEOPLE FREE;
FROM OUR FEARS AND SINS RELEASE US,
LET US FIND OUR REST IN THEE.
ISRAEL'S STRENGTH AND CONSOLATION,
HOPE OF ALL THE EARTH THOU ART;
DEAR DESIRE OF EVERY NATION,
JOY OF EVERY LONGING HEART.

BORN THY PEOPLE TO DELIVER,
BORN A CHILD AND YET A KING,
BORN TO REIGN IN US FOREVER,
NOW THY GRACIOUS KINGDOM BRING.
BY THINE OWN ETERNAL SPIRIT
RULE IN ALL OUR HEARTS ALONE;
BY THINE ALL SUFFICIENT MERIT,
RAISE US TO THY GLORIOUS THRONE.

Welcome Message

Advent is a season of waiting, longing, and hope—a time when we remember that God’s promises never fail and His timing is perfect. From the earliest pages of Scripture, God’s people anticipated a Redeemer who would crush the power of sin, restore what was broken, and reign forever as the true King. The story of Jesus’ birth is not the beginning of that plan—it is the glorious unveiling of what God had promised all along. In Jesus, every covenant, every prophecy, and every thread of redemption finds its fulfillment.

Matthew’s Gospel reveals Jesus as the long-expected Messiah—the Son of Abraham and the Son of David, the one in whom all nations are blessed and through whom God’s kingdom comes to earth. As we move through this series, we’ll see how Jesus’ story mirrors Israel’s history, how His birth fulfills divine prophecy, and how His presence brings light into our darkness. This Advent, we are invited to look back with gratitude, to live now with awareness of His presence, and to look forward with joyful anticipation to His return as the uncontested King of kings.

Week 1: The Genesis of Jesus

TEXT: MATTHEW 1:1–17

Advent begins with hope—the kind that reminds us God always keeps His promises. In Matthew’s first chapter, we find the family story of Jesus. The word Matthew uses for “genealogy” is actually the same word as *Genesis*—the very first book of the Bible. That word means “beginning,” reminding us that with Jesus, God is bringing about a new creation and a fresh start for His people. Just as Genesis told the story of how life began, Matthew tells the story of how new life begins in Christ.

It’s like a long family tree filled with all kinds of people—some faithful, some flawed, and all part of God’s plan. There’s Abraham, who trusted God enough to leave everything behind and follow Him. There’s Ruth, a woman from another land who chose to believe in the God of Israel. There’s David, a shepherd who became king but also made mistakes. And there’s Mary and Joseph, who said “yes” to God even when it was hard.

Through every generation, God was weaving His promise together until it led to Jesus—the One who brings hope and salvation to us all. This Advent, as we read these stories, we can remember that God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things, and that His plan is always unfolding, even when we can’t see it yet.

Week One Activity Suggestions:

- **Advent Tradition:** Light the first candle on your family's Advent wreath. Use the Advent readings on the next page to celebrate and reflect together as a family.
- **Light in the Darkness:** Take a walk one evening and look for small sources of light—stars, porch lights, candles in windows. Reflect on how hope shines in dark places.
- **Hope Tree:** Cut out paper ornaments and have each person write a prayer of hope for themselves, someone else, or the world. Hang them on your tree or a branch in a vase.
- **Acts of Hope:** Choose one way your family can bring hope to someone else this week—send an encouraging note, bake cookies for a neighbor, or donate to a local ministry. Pray together for the person or group you bless.
- **Music Moment:** Listen to or sing “*O Come, O Come Emmanuel*” together. Talk about what it means to wait with hope, just as God’s people did before Jesus was born.

Week 1 Advent Reading: The Promise of Hope

Reader: In the beginning, God created light and called it good. Even when darkness entered the world, His promise of hope remained.

All: Our hope is in the Lord, who keeps His promises.

Reader: To Abraham, God said, “Through you, all nations will be blessed.” And Abraham believed, trusting that God’s word was true.

All: Our hope is in the Lord, who keeps His promises.

Reader: To Ruth, the outsider, God gave belonging and redemption. Her faith became part of the story that led to the Savior.

All: Our hope is in the Lord, who keeps His promises.

Reader: To David, God promised a kingdom that would last forever. Even when kings and kingdoms failed, God’s plan stood firm.

All: Our hope is in the Lord, who keeps His promises.

Reader: And to Mary, God sent word of a child—Immanuel, God with us. Through Jesus, every promise of God finds its “Yes.”

All: Our hope is in the Lord, who keeps His promises.

Reader: As we light the first candle of Advent, we remember: God’s story began long before Bethlehem, and His light still shines in the darkness.

All: Our hope is in the Lord, who keeps His promises.

Day 1 – The Promise Begins

Read: Genesis 3:15; 12:1–3

Focus: God’s redemptive plan began long before Bethlehem. From the moment sin entered the world, God promised a Redeemer who would crush the serpent’s head.

Devotional:

Long before the angels sang over Bethlehem or the shepherds hurried to the stable, God was already writing the story of Jesus. When Adam and Eve first disobeyed God, sin entered the world—and so did pain, shame, and separation. But even in that heartbreaking moment, God made a promise. He spoke of a future Redeemer who would crush the serpent’s head and defeat evil once and for all. From that moment, hope was planted in human history.

Generations later, God called Abraham and promised that through his family, all nations would be blessed. That blessing was pointing straight to Jesus—the Savior who would come to bring us back into relationship with God. From the very beginning, God’s plan was about love, restoration, and hope. He never gave up on His creation, and He never gives up on us.

Reflect: How does it make you feel to know that God had a plan to send Jesus even before we knew we needed Him? How can your family remind each other of that hope this week?

Prayer Prompt: Thank God that His promises never fail and that His plan for redemption includes you.

Day 2 – The Royal Line

Read: 2 Samuel 7:12–16; Isaiah 11:1–2

Focus: God promised David that one of his descendants would reign forever. Jesus is that eternal King, reigning in righteousness and peace.

Devotional:

God's promise to David was more than a royal blessing—it was the beginning of something eternal. David had been a shepherd, a warrior, and a king, but God told him that one day, one of his descendants would sit on the throne forever. That promise wasn't about an earthly kingdom or a palace made of stone. It was pointing ahead to Jesus—the true and everlasting King whose kingdom would be built not by power or politics, but by love and righteousness.

When Jesus came, He didn't rule with armies or crowns of gold. He ruled by serving others, healing the broken, and showing mercy to sinners. His throne isn't in a castle—it's in the hearts of those who follow Him. As we prepare for Christmas, we remember that Jesus' reign brings peace where there is chaos, and hope where there is fear. He is the kind of King who invites us close and leads us with gentleness and strength.

Reflect: What does it mean for Jesus to be the King of your heart and home? How can your family show that He is in charge of your lives this Advent season?

Prayer Prompt: Worship Jesus as your King today and invite Him to reign in your heart.

Day 3 – Grace in the Family Tree

Read: Matthew 1:1–6; Ruth 4:13–22

Focus: Matthew includes unexpected names—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba—showing God’s grace at work in broken stories.

Devotional:

When we open Matthew’s Gospel and begin reading Jesus’ family tree, we find something surprising. It’s not a list of perfect people—it’s a story of God’s grace. Matthew includes names that might seem out of place: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Each of these women had a complicated story, but God was present in every one of them. Tamar faced injustice, Rahab had a past, Ruth was a foreigner, and Bathsheba experienced deep sorrow. Yet God wove their lives into the line of His Son, showing that His love reaches into every broken and forgotten place.

Jesus’ genealogy reminds us that no one is beyond redemption. God doesn’t hide the messy parts of the story—He redeems them. The same grace that ran through His family line still runs through ours. No matter what your past holds or where your story has been, God’s mercy can bring beauty out of what feels broken. The family of Jesus is made up of people who experienced God’s grace firsthand—and we are invited into that same story today.

Reflect: Talk about how God can use ordinary or even difficult parts of your story for His good purposes. Who in your family tree—or in your life—has shown you what God’s grace looks like?

Prayer Prompt: Thank God for weaving His grace into your life and using your story for His glory.

Day 4 – The Fulfillment of Every Promise

Read: Matthew 1:7–17; Galatians 3:16, 29

Focus: All generations lead to Christ, the ultimate fulfillment of God’s covenant promises.

Devotional:

As Matthew continues Jesus’ family story, we see a long line of generations—kings and servants, the faithful and the forgetful—all leading to one moment in history: the birth of Christ. Every name in that list represents a piece of God’s unfolding plan. Through ups and downs, triumphs and trials, God never stopped moving His promises forward. From Abraham to David, from exile to restoration, every generation carried the hope of a Savior who would fulfill what God had spoken long ago.

Paul reminds us in Galatians that all of God’s promises find their “Yes” in Jesus. That means every word God has spoken can be trusted, and every covenant finds completion in Him. Sometimes it’s hard to see how God is working when we’re in the middle of the story—but just as He was faithful through centuries of waiting, He will be faithful to you. His timing is perfect, and His promises never fail.

Reflect: Can you think of a time when you had to wait and trust that God was working, even when you couldn’t see how? How might your family practice trusting His timing together this Advent?

Prayer Prompt: Ask God to deepen your trust in His perfect timing.

Day 5 – Hope That Endures

Read: Luke 1:46–55; Romans 15:12–13

Focus: Mary’s song celebrates God’s faithfulness. True hope rests in His unbroken record of love and mercy.

Devotional:

When Mary learned she would give birth to the Savior, her heart overflowed with praise. Her song—often called *The Magnificat*—celebrates God’s faithfulness through every generation. She rejoiced that the same God who helped Abraham, David, and countless others was now fulfilling His promise through her. Mary’s words remind us that true hope doesn’t depend on what we see, but on who God is. His mercy never runs out, and His love never fails.

Paul echoes that same message in Romans: Jesus is the fulfillment of every promise, and through Him, we can overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Even when life feels uncertain, our hope is secure because it rests in a faithful God. Advent invites us to wait with expectation—not a wishful kind of hope, but a confident trust that the One who promised is still working today.

Reflect: How can your family live as people of hope this week? What are some ways you can remind each other of God’s faithfulness—through prayer, kindness, or worship together?

Prayer Prompt: Thank God for writing you into His redemptive story and teaching you to live with enduring hope.

Summary: The Genesis of Hope

From the very first promise in Genesis to the song of Mary in Luke, the story of Jesus reminds us that God's faithfulness stretches across every generation. He was planning redemption long before Bethlehem, working through the lives of people who trusted Him—sometimes imperfectly, but always with hearts open to His grace. Through Abraham's faith, David's promise, Ruth's loyalty, and Mary's obedience, we see that hope is never lost when God is writing the story.

As your family begins this Advent journey, remember that the same God who kept His promises then is keeping them now. Jesus is the fulfillment of every covenant and the living proof that God's love never fails. No matter where your story has been or what you're waiting for, His hope endures—and it's still unfolding in you.

Go Deeper Discussion Questions

- What does biblical hope look like compared to the way our culture usually talks about hope?
- Where in your life do you find it hardest to keep hoping right now?
- How does remembering God's past faithfulness help renew your hope for the future?
- In what ways can you be a source of hope for someone else this week?
- How can Advent help us practice the discipline of hopeful waiting rather than anxious striving?

