



DEVOTIONS *for*
ADVENT



New Living
Translation®
SECOND EDITION

TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC.
CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

Visit Tyndale's exciting Web sites at www.HolyBibleMosaic.com, www.newlivingtranslation.com, and www.tyndale.com.

Meditations and Introduction adapted from *Holy Bible: Mosaic*, copyright © 2009 by Credo Communications, LLC. All rights reserved.

Cover design by Rule29

Cover images: mosaic of Jesus Christ copyright © by Hazlan Abdul Hakim/iStockphoto; atlas and map of Roman empire copyright © by Duncan Walker/iStockphoto; ancient mosaic copyright © by Claudia Dewald/iStockphoto; holy book in light copyright © by Peter Zelei/iStockphoto; crown of thorns on grunge background copyright © by Jill Battaglia/iStockphoto; Tuscan texture, Bible, and mosaic tiles copyright © by iStockphoto. Cover and interior icon copyright © by Dover Publications. All rights reserved.

Devotions for Advent includes Scripture portions from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation.

Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. All rights reserved.

The text of the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, may be quoted in any form (written, visual, electronic, or audio) up to and inclusive of five hundred (500) verses without express written permission of the publisher, provided that the verses quoted do not account for more than 25 percent of the work in which they are quoted, and provided that a complete book of the Bible is not quoted.

When the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, is quoted, one of the following credit lines must appear on the copyright page or title page of the work:

Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

When quotations from the NLT text are used in nonsalable media, such as church bulletins, orders of service, newsletters, transparencies, or similar media, a complete copyright notice is not required, but the initials *NLT* must appear at the end of each quotation.

Quotations in excess of five hundred (500) verses or 25 percent of the work, or other permission requests, must be approved in writing by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Send requests by e-mail to permission@tyndale.com or call 630-668-8300, ext. 8817.

Publication of any commentary or other Bible reference work produced for commercial sale that uses the New Living Translation requires written permission for use of the NLT text.

TYNDALE, *New Living Translation*, *NLT*, and the New Living Translation logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. *The Truth Made Clear* is a trademark of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

ISBN 978-1-4143-3578-0

Printed in Canada

15 14 13 12 11 10 09

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Tyndale House Publishers and Wycliffe Bible Translators share the vision for an understandable, accurate translation of the Bible for every person in the world. Each sale of the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, benefits Wycliffe Bible Translators. Wycliffe is working with partners around the world to accomplish Vision 2025—an initiative to start a Bible translation program in every language group that needs it by the year 2025.

Introduction

For some Christians, “Advent” is a strange word vaguely equivalent to the “Christmas season.” While that is true on the surface, Advent is so much more. Advent is a four-week season leading up to Christmas, a time when Christians have historically prepared their hearts for the coming of Christ as a baby in Bethlehem and a time when we actively anticipate his promised return. At Advent, there should be a palpable sense of celebration for God’s revelation of himself to the world—in the past, present, and future.

Advent also marks the beginning of a new church year. The church year might not be familiar to everyone who uses this book, but it is an excellent way to help focus our attention on God. Rather than following the solar calendar’s more familiar structure, organized by the rhythms of nature, the church calendar is organized around God and his activity in the world. The church calendar follows six seasons of varying length: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. More information about the church year and how it can shape your spiritual life can be found at www.HolyBibleMosaic.com.

Each of the following weekly meditations is labeled with a week from Advent, and the Scripture readings are drawn from the passages that are traditionally read during that week by churches around the world. If you choose to follow this plan for reading the Bible, you will truly be connected with the global, historic church. And if you enjoy your Advent experience, extend it by using *Holy Bible: Mosaic*, which contains meditations for the entire church year, following the rhythms of God’s redemptive work in the world.

ELEMENTS OF WEEKLY MEDITATIONS

Each weekly meditation centers around a specific theme and uses several elements to create an environment for a meaningful experience with God. A brief introduction at the beginning of each weekly collection will start you on the path, and the remaining elements will help guide you along the way. This sampler will give you a taste of what is available throughout the year in *Holy Bible: Mosaic*.

Scripture. The first and most important element is the weekly listing of five Scripture readings. Four of these readings are adapted from standard lectionaries used by different Christian traditions around the world. These selections provide one reading each from the Gospels, the Psalms, the Old Testament, and the New Testament. The Suggested Reading is specifically chosen to complement the other readings in connection with the weekly theme.

Scripture is at the heart of each weekly meditation. Read these passages. Meditate on them. Read them again. Allow the text to penetrate your soul throughout the week as you engage with the other elements. Don't let the other elements eclipse the Scripture in your devotional time. They should complement the Scripture readings, not supersede them.

Historical and Global Contributions. One major distinctive of *Holy Bible: Mosaic* is the collection of reflective material from every continent and every century of Christian history. This material comes in many different forms that work together in each week's collection. You will find full-color artwork, excerpts from influential Christian thinkers throughout church history, quotes from brothers and sisters in Christ who have wrestled with ideas related to each week's theme, and worshipful pieces (including prayers, hymns, and poetry), all designed to bring you into contact with the global, historic church as you engage with God's Word.

Meditations. Each week also features an original meditation that connects the weekly theme to the modern world. These meditations were written specifically for this Bible by Christians engaged in living out the gospel in their own communities.

Whitespace. In addition to the lined spaces inviting you to write your thoughts down, ample space was purposefully given for you to draw, write, or interact with the material in any way that is helpful to you. Make use of the space however you want.

WAYS TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

Individually. Use this Advent devotional in your personal devotional time, and allow the Scripture readings and meditative elements to serve as a springboard for your own prayer and reflections. Read the Scripture from the back of this booklet, or use your own Bible and see the readings in context.

In a Group. Families, Bible studies, and small groups can use this devotional to share in the experience together. Read the Scripture together, discuss the quotations and readings as a group, and talk about what God is doing in your lives through the Scripture and other material.

Any number of other ways might be imagined for using this book. Please feel free to share the unique ideas you have by e-mailing us at NLT@tyndale.com or by logging on to www.HolyBibleMosaic.com. There you will also find resources to extend the experience beyond the printed page, and you can add your piece to the Mosaic by contributing to the community forum or commenting on the blog.



THE ANNUNCIATION—EL GRECO (GREECE/1541–1614)



Longing

Advent, Week 1

ISAIAH 2:1-5 † P. 31 • PSALM 25 † P. 32

1 CORINTHIANS 1:4-9 † P. 33 • MATTHEW 24:32-51 † P. 33

Waiting doesn't resonate well in our culture. Our spending habits serve as one good example. Because we need it *now*, we rack up outlandish debts we may have no plan for repaying.

The Christian life is—and always has been—filled with waiting. Whether it was the Old Testament anticipation of the promised Messiah or the New Testament eager expectation for Jesus Christ's return, believers are often focused on what is to come.

It seems that God teaches us the most poignant lessons when we pay attention to the ways in which his Kingdom is upside down from ours. Perhaps God wants us to feel strongly dissatisfied with the imperfections of our current state and long for what is to come. Could it be that in those moments of yearning we grow to better understand the ways of our Lord?

SUGGESTED READING: ISAIAH 11:1-16 † P. 34

*You also must be ready all the time,
for the Son of Man will come when least expected.*

—MATTHEW 24:44

Longing

“Advent . . . helps us to understand the fullness of the value and meaning of the mystery of Christmas. It is not just about commemorating the historical event; which occurred some 2,000 years ago in a little village of Judea. Instead, we must understand that our whole life should be an ‘advent,’ in vigilant expectation of Christ’s final coming. To prepare our hearts to welcome the Lord who, as we say in the Creed, will come one day to judge the living and the dead, we must learn to recognize his presence in the events of daily life. Advent is then a period of intense training that directs us decisively to the One who has already come, who will come and who continuously comes.”

—**POPE JOHN PAUL II** (POLAND/1920–2005)

*Now you have every spiritual gift you need
as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

—**1 CORINTHIANS 1:7**

“Let us then continually persevere in our hope, and the earnest of our righteousness, which is Jesus Christ, ‘who bore our sins in His own body on the tree,’ ‘who did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,’ but endured all things for us, that we might live in Him. Let us then be imitators of His patience; and if we suffer for His name’s sake, let us glorify Him. For He has set us this example in Himself, and we have believed that such is the case.” —**POLYCARP** (TURKEY/69–155)

C. 349



C. 407

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (ANTIOCH)

Prayer and converse with God is a supreme good: it is a partnership and union with God. As the eyes of the body are enlightened when they see light; so our spirit, when it is intent on God, is illumined by his infinite light. I do not mean the prayer of outward observance but prayer from the heart; not confined to fixed times or periods but continuous throughout the day and night.

Our spirit should be quick to reach out toward God not only when it is engaged in meditation; at other times also, when it is carrying out its duties, caring for the needy, performing works of charity, giving generously in the service of others, our spirit should long for God, and call him to mind, so that these works may be seasoned with the salt of God's love, and so make a palatable offering to the Lord of the universe. . . .

Prayer is the light of the spirit; true knowledge of God, mediating between God and man. The spirit, raised up to heaven by prayer, clings to God with the utmost tenderness; like a child crying tearfully for its mother, it craves the milk that God provides. It seeks the satisfaction of its own desires, and receives gifts outweighing the whole world of nature.

Prayer stands before God as an honored ambassador. It gives joy to the spirit; peace to the heart. I speak of prayer, not words. It is the longing for God, love too deep for words, a gift not given by man but by God's grace.

REFLECTION



Imagine

MATHEW WOODLEY

A few years ago, on the first Sunday of Advent, I played John Lennon's song "Imagine" right before my sermon. It wasn't a universal hit. The lyrics may be controversial; he imagines a live-for-today existence with no heaven and no hell, but he longs for a better place where "the world will be as one."

In my defense, I clearly stated that, contra Lennon's lyrics, I believe in heaven, hell, the blood of Jesus, and things worth dying for. But Lennon was right about one thing: This world is broken, and we should yearn for its healing. Our hearts should ache for a better world.

Sadly, our culture often fosters a complacent, blasé, smug approach to Christianity. In the words of C. S. Lewis, "We are far too easily pleased." We're happy to numb and freeze our restless ache for a better world.

Advent is the season of the church year that ignites that longing in our hearts. Before we rush into "Happy Holidays," we pause and let longing rise up within us. Throughout Advent we catch glimpses of a better world.

And as we catch glimpses of this Messiah-healed world, we long for its coming now. All of the best Advent hymns capture this spirit of groaning and longing for Messiah's better world. When we sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," with its dark, unresolved melody, it cracks our hearts open with longing's wound. And yet, we know Messiah *has* come, even as we wait for him to come again. Advent is a deliciously painful mix of joy and anguish.

This Advent-like longing is at the heart of Christian spirituality. Augustine's Latin phrase *desiderium sinus cordis*—"yearning makes the heart grow deep"—became a central theme in his pilgrimage on earth. Augustine cried out, "Give me one who yearns; . . . give me one far away in this desert, who is thirsty and sighs for the spring of the Eternal country. Give me that sort of man: he knows what I mean."

C. S. Lewis claimed that in this life the Advent-like stab of longing serves as a spiritual homing device, placed deep in our heart by God to lead us back to him. Thus, as Psyche realizes in *Till We Have Faces*, "It almost hurt me . . . like a bird in a cage when the other birds of its kind are flying home. . . . The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing . . . to find the place where all the beauty came from. . . . The longing for home."

Advent trains us to ache again. Of all the seasons of the church year, Advent is the time to acknowledge, feel, and even embrace the joyful anguish of longing for Messiah's birth and the world's rebirth. So we sing our aching songs while we light candles and festoon the church with greenery. That is Advent longing, and we couldn't imagine it any other way.

MEDITATION

OUR HEARTS ARE RESTLESS

Everlasting God,
in whom we live and move and have our being:
You have made us for yourself,
so that our hearts are restless
until they rest in you.

—**AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO** (ALGERIA/354–430)



GENERATIONS WAITED FOR WHAT WE LOOK BACK AND CELEBRATE
—E. JOHN WALFORD (ENGLAND/CONTEMPORARY)



Hoping for Hope

Advent, Week 2

ISAIAH 40:1-11 † P. 36 • PSALM 85 † P. 37
2 PETER 3:8-14 † P. 38 • MARK 1:1-8 † P. 38

Advent is a time of hope; the spirit of eager anticipation pervades the senses. Even in the refuge of your own home, the season is inescapable as carolers dismiss the social inhibitions that dominate the other eleven months of the year. But when tragedy, depression, or loneliness steals your joy, you can almost resent the hope that others have.

When we think our hope unfulfilled, we adjust our expectations. We take on new causes, reconsider our optimism, or sometimes become leery of new endeavors. We can even become angry with God, feeling desolate or abandoned. But even if we lose our hope in God, he will never give up on us.

God doesn't share our limited perspective, and that is one of the reasons that the hope of Advent isn't dependent on how we are feeling. It can be comforting to rely on the one who gives us hope, even when the light of that hope doesn't seem to penetrate our temporary darkness.

SUGGESTED READING: **PSALM 71 † P. 39**

*“Comfort, comfort my people,”
says your God.*

—ISAIAH 40:1

1789



1850

AUGUSTUS NEANDER (GERMANY)

The death of Christ annihilated at a stroke the Messianic expectations of the Apostles. Their dejection was complete. But if, of all that they had hoped, nothing was ever realized, this dejection could not have passed away. . . .

We cannot explain (not bare conceivable possibilities, but) the actual state of the case, viz., the dejection of the Apostles at first, and what they were and did afterward. There must be some intermediate historical fact to explain the transition; something must have occurred to revive, with new power, the almost effaced impression; to bring back the flow of their faith which had so far ebbed away.

The reappearance, then, of Christ among his disciples is a connecting link in the chain of events which cannot possibly be spared. It acted thus: Their sunken faith in his promises received a new impulse when these promises were repeated by Him, risen from the dead; his reappearance formed the point of contact for a new spiritual communion with him, never to be dissolved, nay, thenceforward to be developed ever more and more.

According to their own unvarying asseverations, it was the foundation of their immovable faith in his person, and in himself as Messiah and Son of God; as well as of their steadfast hope, in his communion, of a blissful, everlasting life, triumphing over death. Without it they never could have had that inspiring assurance of faith with which they everywhere testified of what they had received, and joyfully submitted to tortures and to death.

“Christianity has always been the hope of God through Jesus played out in the lives of real people living in real circumstances.”

—**DOUG PAGITT** (USA/CONTEMPORARY)

MEDITATION

GOD'S GRANDEUR

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
And, for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastwards, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

—GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS (ENGLAND/1844–1889)

Tesserae

A Map for the Mosaic

A mosaic is made up of many small pieces of marble, glass, or tile called “tesserae.” This devotional is adapted from *Holy Bible: Mosaic*, which is made up of hundreds of tesserae, the words and art of believers from throughout the centuries and across the globe. Each piece is taken from a larger whole, and this page is a roadmap to guide you in tracking down each piece in its original context.

Advent, Week 1: Longing

El Greco (Greece/1541–1614), *The Annunciation*, c. 1570. Photo: Bridgeman Art Library.

Pope John Paul II (Poland/1920–2005), “Advent Address, December 18, 2002.”

Polycarp (Turkey/69–155), *Letter to the Philippians* 8:1-2.

John Chrysostom (Antioch/c. 349–407), “The Prayer of Longing.”

Mathew Woodley, “Imagine.”

Augustine of Hippo (Algeria/354–430), *Confessions*, Book 1, Chapter 1.

Advent, Week 2: Hoping for Hope

E. John Walford (England/Contemporary), *Generations Waited for What We Look Back and Celebrate*, 2007 (www.flickr.com/walford/).

Augustus Neander (Germany/1789–1850), *The Life of Jesus Christ in Its Historical Connexion and Historical Development* 5.2.8.

Doug Pagitt (USA/Contemporary), *A Christianity Worth Believing* (2008).

Gerard Manley Hopkins (England/1844–1889), “God’s Grandeur.”

Alex Davis, “Elusive Hope.”

Bosco Peters (New Zealand/Contemporary), “Hold Fast to Hope” (www.liturgy.co.nz/).

Vaclav Havel (Czech Republic/Contemporary), *Disturbing the Peace* (1986).

Advent, Week 3: Active Anticipation

Mosaic from inside the Church of the Resurrection of Christ in St. Petersburg, Russia, c. 1907. Photo: Alexander Zotov/iStockPhoto.

Paul W. Harrison (USA/1883–1962), *Doctor in Arabia* (1940).

The Sarum Breviary (England/1085), Section 138.

James Orr (Scotland/1844–1913), *The Christian View of God and the World as Centring in the Incarnation*, Lecture 1.

Book of Common Prayer (England/1662).

Brian McLaren (USA/Contemporary), Interview on *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, July 15, 2005.

Brad Harper, “A Theology of the Future.”

Advent, Week 4: Preparation

Fr. John Giuliani (USA/Contemporary), *Guatemalan Nativity*. Bridge Building Images.

Artist Unknown (Hong Kong/Contemporary), *Jesus Born in a Manger*. Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre.

Artist Unknown (Cameroon/Contemporary), *The Birth of Jesus*. Vie de Jésus MAFA (www.jesusmafa.com).

Raphael (Italy/1483–1520), *Madonna dell Granduca*, 1505.

Lorenzo Ruiz (The Philippines/1600–1637), Traditional martyrdom quote.

A. W. Pink (England/1886–1952), *Redeemer’s Return*, Chapter 1, Section 2.

Don Williams, Jr. (USA/Contemporary).

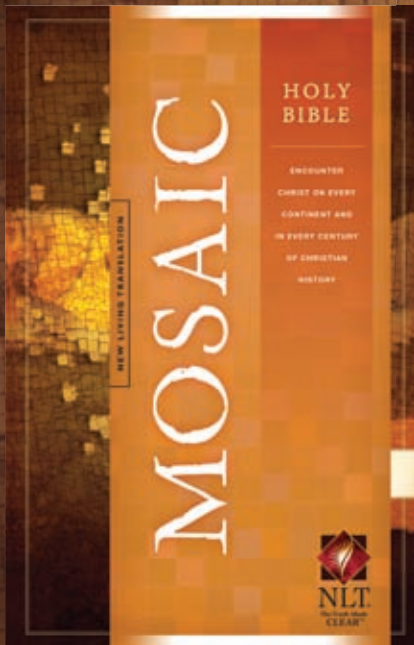
Henry Burton (England/1578–1648), “There’s a Light upon the Mountains.”

Elizabeth Honeycutt, “Anticipation and Preparation.”

The Trisagion Prayers (Greece/c. 440).

Erwin McManus (USA/Contemporary), *An Unstoppable Force* (2001).

Encounter Christ Every Day



Holy Bible: Mosaic

helps you encounter Christ in a deep and authentic way, through insight from every continent and century of the Christian church. Historical and contemporary art and writings from across the globe offer a depth of scriptural wisdom and understanding as you read and reflect on God's Word.

HARDCOVER
ISBN 978-1-4143-2203-2

Preview features, see endorsements, read blog and twitter posts, and more at HolyBibleMosaic.com

Available at bookstores and online retailers