

The
Wonder
of Advent
DEVOTIONAL

*Experiencing
the Love and Glory of the
Christmas Season*

CHRIS TIEGREEN

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The Wonder of Advent Devotional: Experiencing the Love and Glory of the Christmas Season

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INTRODUCTION

IN A SMALL TOWN in Judea long ago, God clothed himself in flesh and began to live among us. It was a stunning move, revolutionary in its purpose, and it is still changing lives today. There's a reason the first coming of Jesus is so celebrated, and we don't want to miss it. By God's invitation, this is a story we can enter into every day.

That's the purpose of this devotional—to go deeper into the account of Christ's birth and to focus our thoughts on the riches of its meaning. We want not only to appreciate what happened in Bethlehem more than two millennia ago; we want to experience it in our lives right now.

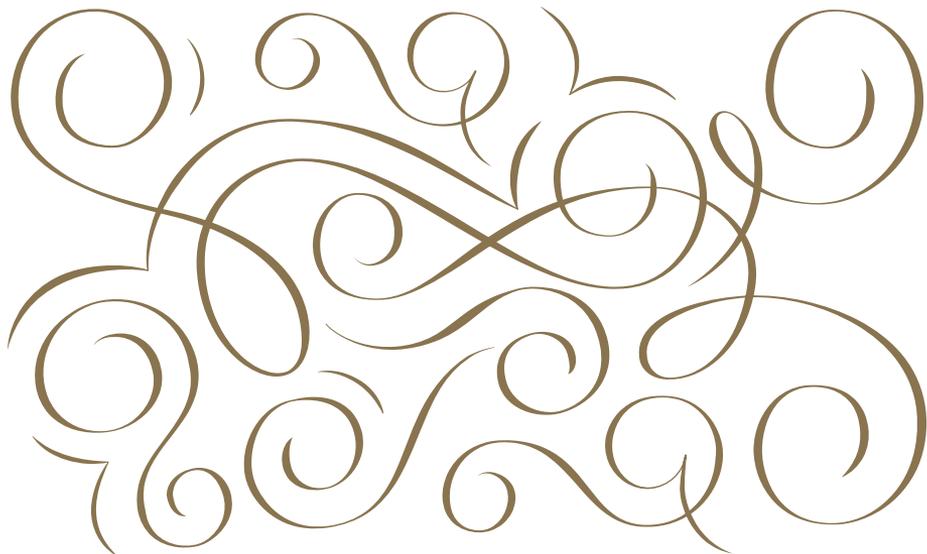
Advent is a time of anticipation and joy, but it can also be a time of busyness and stress. The turmoil of the season can distract us from the true message—though it may also lead us to long for a Savior. Either way, in the depths of



our hearts, we have not forgotten what the celebration is all about. We know it's a story that changed the world forever. And we desire to embrace it fully.

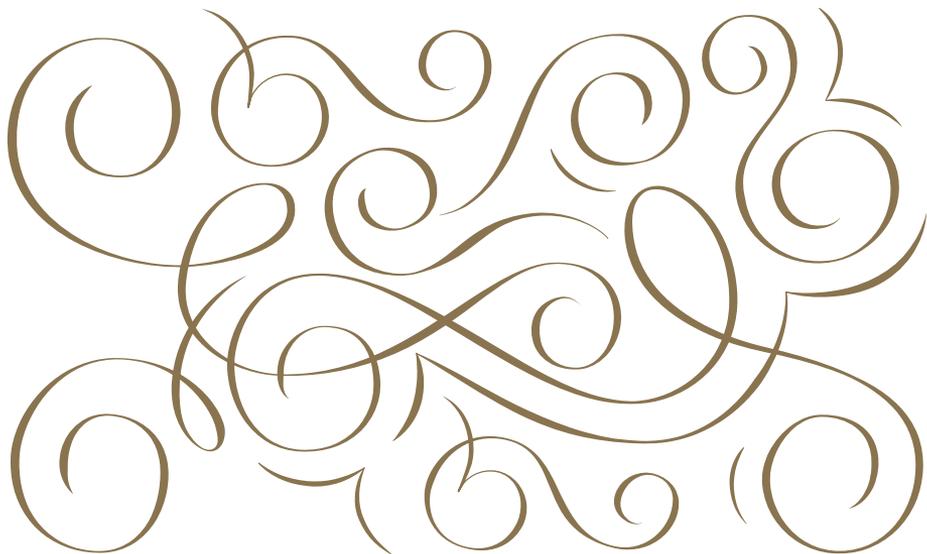
The readings in this book all point toward that goal. After a week of short daily readings leading into the Advent period, each devotion draws from a biblical text, explores its original context and its meaning for us today, prompts a time of reflection and prayer, and includes a quote from the wealth of Christmas music that has been passed down to us across eras and cultures. Taken together, these elements enable us to savor this remarkable divine story each day.

Throughout these readings, we will recall the prophecies of the coming Messiah and our desperate need for him, celebrate the announcement that he would come through a young woman named Mary, and meditate on the pregnancy of God's promises and our hope in them. We will take a few minutes each day to let the significance of the Nativity sink in and explore what it means for our lives and our world. This season is a special time on the calendar, but it's so much more. It is not only a time to remember a long-ago event; it's a time to experience God himself.



NOVEMBER 24-30

Preparation



NOVEMBER

24

PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11

He gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.

PHILIPPIANS 2:7

A^{DVENT} celebrates the Incarnation—the divine taking on human flesh. One of the briefest but most profound summaries of this story is a poetic excerpt in Philippians 2, which describes how the Son left the privileges of deity behind when he came from heaven to earth. He entered human flesh to be like us, but also to be something more—humanity as we were designed to be, unfallen and filled with the presence of God. He showed us what a human being can do by faith when fully submitted to



the Father. Prepare your heart this week by reflecting on Christ's purpose in coming to this world as an infant.

REFLECTION

How does God becoming flesh redeem the human race?
What do you think the Incarnation was like for Jesus?

NOVEMBER

25

JOHN 6:35-40

I have come down from heaven to do the will of God
who sent me, not to do my own will.

JOHN 6:38

WHY DID JESUS COME TO EARTH? He gives several purpose statements in the Gospels, and we will explore some of them this week in preparation for Advent. In John 6, Jesus said he came to do the will of the Father—and that the will of the Father was to call people to faith and to raise them up at the last day. In other words, this was a divine rescue mission. The ministry of Jesus consistently demonstrated his desire to save. Even his birth stories reflect God's purpose—in reaching shepherds, magi from



the East, people longing to see the Messiah—and give us clues as to the nature of his mission.

REFLECTION

What did Jesus come to save you from? What did he come to save you for?

NOVEMBER

26

MARK 1:35-39

Jesus replied, “We must go on to other towns as well,
and I will preach to them, too. That is why I came.”

MARK 1:38

JESUS DID NOT remain in one place. It’s true that he never ventured far beyond Judea and Galilee, but he had some influence among Gentiles and sent his followers into all nations before he ascended. What began in a village called Bethlehem was intended to reach into every corner of the world—a single seed that would cover the planet with its growth. This is why he came. The Incarnation—the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus—was the central event in a global mission.



REFLECTION

What does it say about God's mission that the Nativity took place in Bethlehem rather than in a more prominent place?

NOVEMBER

27

MATTHEW 10:34-36

Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth!

I came not to bring peace, but a sword.

MATTHEW 10:34

THE NIGHT OF JESUS' BIRTH, the angels declared "peace on earth" to the shepherds in the fields (Luke 2:14). But Jesus said peace was not his mission. Why the discrepancy? Because God does want peace—the *shalom* of his Kingdom—to invade the hearts and lives of those who seek him. But it's also clear that the message of Jesus would be controversial to many, exposing hearts and dividing loyalties. Humanity will never be fully united in faith before God makes all things visible at the end of the age. Yes, he



wants us to be at peace—in *him*. But many will not accept peace on those terms. The Messiah’s mission was—and still is—contested.

REFLECTION

In what ways do you see opposition to Jesus’ mission today?
How does it play out in your life?

NOVEMBER

28

MATTHEW 5:17-20

Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets.

No, I came to accomplish their purpose.

MATTHEW 5:17

A LITERAL TRANSLATION of Romans 10:4 says Christ is the “end of the law.” But does that refer to the abolition of God’s law or the fulfillment of it? If the latter, which seems to be the clear meaning in light of Jesus’ words, then our salvation implies change. Jesus not only lived up to the law’s requirements; he also puts a righteous nature within us. He did not come to tell us to be good; he came to make us new. The law gave us a standard but no power to meet it. Jesus came to transform us from within.



REFLECTION

Why is it necessary for us to be made new? How does the Incarnation—the divine nature in the flesh—foreshadow what God wants to do in us?

NOVEMBER

29

ISAIAH 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, for the
LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted
and to proclaim that captives will be released
and prisoners will be freed.

ISAIAH 61:1

JESUS QUOTED this messianic prophecy from Isaiah when he taught at his hometown synagogue in Nazareth and declared the prophecy to be fulfilled (Luke 4:16-21). If we want to know what God-in-the-flesh is like and what he intends to accomplish in our lives, this is it: He brings good news, meets the needs of the poor, comforts the brokenhearted, and releases captives, reaching into every area of fallenness—spiritual, physical, emotional, relational . . . all



of it. The child in Bethlehem came with a comprehensive mission to bring God's Kingdom into our lives.

REFLECTION

What do you need God to accomplish in your life? What aspect of Jesus' ministry applies most to your situation today? How does his promise stir up your faith to receive this renewal?

NOVEMBER

30

ISAIAH 61:1-3

He has sent me to tell those who mourn
that the time of the LORD's favor has come.

ISAIAH 61:2

ISAIAH'S MESSIANIC PROPHECY—one among many—promises a crown of beauty in the place of ashes, a blessing in the place of mourning, and dancing and praise in the place of despair. As people who have experienced the wounds and brokenness of living in a fallen world, that's really good news for us to hear. We long for beauty, blessing, and dancing. We need this coming Messiah. And we need him to be very real in our lives.



REFLECTION

In what places of ashes and mourning would you like God to provide restoration? What holes in your heart do you want him to fill?