

The background of the entire page is a photograph of four lit candles in dark holders, arranged in a row on a rustic wooden surface. A pine branch is visible in the foreground. The background is a solid, vibrant red color. The text is overlaid on this scene.

Christmas

at

The **COMPASS**

ADVENT
READING
PLAN
2021

AN INTRODUCTION TO ADVENT

We live in a culture of instant access and instant gratification. From communication and devices to food and service, we expect things to be fast. We don't like to wait in line, in traffic, on the phone for customer service, or at the table of our favorite restaurants. Waiting is countercultural. But waiting is exactly what God prescribes for us in many ways throughout the Bible. In Genesis, it is the Sabbath. In Exodus, it is the Passover. In the history books, Israel waits for a Messiah. In Psalms, they wait on God in worship. In the Prophets, Israel waits on deliverance. In the Epistles, the church waits for the glorious return of King Jesus. In Revelation, God's people wait for rest. And in the waiting, God shows up.

Advent means "arrival" and it marks the weeks prior to Christmas for the Christian church throughout the world and throughout history. Advent is a season of waiting and focusing on the first coming of Jesus our Savior. It is a reminder that we are still waiting now for His second arrival, the glorious return of Jesus, our King. During Advent, the church lights a unique candle each weekend to celebrate a different part of Jesus' story and a different virtue to practice in our waiting: hope, peace, love, and joy. On Christmas Eve, as the church around the world gathers, the Christ candle is lit. It reminds us that in Jesus, the light of the world, we have abundant and eternal life.

This Advent, we invite you to join with The Compass Church in waiting with hope, peace, love, and joy as we remember the first coming of Jesus, our Savior, and look forward with great anticipation to His glorious return. It is our hope that Jesus will meet you as you read and reflect on your own or with family or friends. We hope that this guide sparks great conversation, draws us together in unity, inspires greater faithfulness, creates sustaining contentment, and helps us encounter Jesus as we journey through Advent together.

Prayerfully,

Your Naperville Campus Ministry Team

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE...

If reading the Bible is difficult for you, you are not alone. Most people feel intimidated by the Bible and struggle to read it because the Bible is no ordinary book. We cannot read it and interpret it the way we do ordinary books. This is because the Bible is filled with the very words of God, and it is God's instrument through which He speaks to you and me. Reading and understanding the Bible requires spiritual lenses or ears that are tuned to the Holy Spirit. When we have the right lenses and we are tuned to the Holy Spirit, we will not only better understand what the Bible is saying, we will also hear from God. This Bible PROMPT is a tool that will help you develop the right lenses and tune in to the Holy Spirit. To use it most effectively, you'll need a Bible, a notebook and pen, and about 15-20 minutes of quiet space.

The Bible PROMPT:

PRAY: Begin each Bible time with prayer asking God to open your eyes, ears, mind and heart to His Word. The Holy Spirit of God speaks to us through the Bible when we open ourselves up by reading and prayer.

READ: Follow along each day with the assigned reading in this Advent Plan. Sometimes it is helpful to read a passage more than once, especially as you begin the observation step.

OBSERVE: As you read each day, look for STARS. You'll want to use a journal for this step and write down your STARS. Take about 5 or more minutes for this observation time.

Something familiar (a name, location, object, or quote)

Themes (big Bible themes like love, faith, redemption)

Attributes of God (like love, power, grace, justice, truth)

Repetition (words or phrases that are repeated)

Something surprising (things that stand out or surprise you)

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MEDITATE on the MESSAGE: The Bible is a “living” book. That means, when we read it, God speaks fresh in the moment! God’s message for you can often be found as you think about your observations. As you reflect on your STARS, what stands out? What is God showing you? Capture the meaning in a single sentence or two. The meaning can take 2-3 minutes to reflect on and be many things:

A truth about God (Jesus and the Holy Spirit too)

A truth about You (both good things and hard things)

A truth about others (the lost, broken, poor, church...)

A command to follow (love your enemies...)

A promise to claim (God will never leave you...)

A verse to memorize (“A generous person will prosper.”)

PRAY: Take a minute or two to thank God for what He has shared with you and ask Him to help you remember it and apply it to your life. After you ask, you might also take a minute to just listen for the answer. God most often speaks when we are quiet and still.

TAKE-AWAY: Now that you’ve heard from God, what will you do with what you’ve heard? To walk away from time with God in his Word and not make an adjustment to your life is like looking in the mirror and walking away without wiping the food off your face! God’s Word is meant to change us. In fact, God wants to use his Word to transform us into the likeness of Jesus. When you reflect, consider what you can remember, do, or say to look more like Jesus. Write it down and take it with you throughout the day!

WEEK 1: HOPE – THE PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS

“O Holy Night” not only sings of the “thrill of hope,” its history conveys a remarkable hope. It was originally written by Placide Cappeau, an unchurched French poet commissioned by his parish priest. It was then put to music by Adolphe Adams, a famous Jewish composer, and was brought to North America where it was translated by John Sullivan Dwight. Dwight was an ardent abolitionist who was deeply moved by the song’s third verse which says, *“Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love and His gospel is peace. Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother, and in His name all oppression shall cease.”* The hymn quickly found favor, especially in the North. Legend has it that it was the singing of this hymn by a French soldier in the middle of the battlefield that drew both German and French troops out of their trenches to join along and enjoy a 24-hour ceasefire on Christmas Eve, 1870 in the middle of the Franco-Prussian War. Just 35 years later to the day, Reginald Fessenden, a university professor, and former colleague to Thomas Edison, read Luke 2 into a microphone, becoming the first to broadcast the human voice over the radio. He followed his reading by picking up his violin and playing “O Holy Night,” the first song ever sent through the airwaves. May the story of this sacred hymn remind you that God brings forth hope from and within the most unexpected places.

O Holy Night

Written by Placide Cappeau, music by Adolphe Adams, translated by John S. Dwight

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining;
It is the night of the dear Savior’s birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.

A thrill of hope- the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!

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O night divine, O night when Christ was born!
O night, O holy night, O night divine!

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming,
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,
Here came the Wise Men from Orient land.

The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our Friend.
He knows our need— to our weakness is no stranger.
Behold your King, before Him lowly bend!
Behold your King! Your King! Before Him lowly bend!

Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother,
And in His name all oppression shall cease.

Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we;
Let all within us praise His holy name.
Christ is the Lord! O praise His name forever!
His power and glory evermore proclaim!

His power and glory evermore proclaim!

Sunday, November 28

Isaiah 7:14 & Luke 1:35

PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS: THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Ryan Worsley

Someone once asked Larry King to choose the person he would want to interview above all. He famously responded that it would be Jesus and said, "I would ask him if he believed that he was born of virgin birth, because whatever the answer is changes or reinforces the world." Even Larry King, a Jewish agnostic, recognized the significance of the claim of the virgin birth, for it would mean Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy and set into motion the plan of redemption for the entire world.

Many people wrestle with the veracity of the virgin birth, wondering how it could be true. But, when we remember that Jesus was both fully God and fully man, the Immaculate Conception paints a beautiful picture of God's design for Jesus' birth. This Christmas may the wonder of God's plan to redeem mankind bring you hope in a darkened world.

Monday, November 29

Hosea 11:1 & Matthew 2:14-15

PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS: OUT OF EGYPT

Kim Huffman

If you would have told me growing up that I was going to become a marathon runner, I would have laughed long and hard. I hated running. But God knew. And He knew the exact time (age 44) to call me to run (during my first missions' trip to Kenya) for His purposes, so I would be ready to run my first marathon for orphaned kids in Kenya.

God also knew the exact time and circumstances (political, social, etc.) under which the Messiah would arrive. God wanted everyone to know that He knew well in advance, and so He left some tell-tale clues through His prophets about the coming Messiah. One of those clues was a location, spoken through the prophet Hosea about God's son being called out of Egypt. Sure enough, 700 years later, a threat to the newborn Messiah sent His family to Egypt, where He would need to be "called out" when the time was right. God knew.

Take a moment to celebrate that God knows. He knows your days and is directing your path. Ask Him to show you what He is calling you "out of" or what He might be calling you "to."

Tuesday, November 30

Micah 5:2 & Matthew 2:4-6

PROPHESIES ABOUT JESUS: BORN IN BETHLEHEM

Paul Giersz

The Savior of the world born in Bethlehem? No way! That's what the people of the day would have said. They would have thought He would be born in Athens (the cultural hub) or Jerusalem, the religious center. If Jesus was coming today, it would be like saying the Savior of the world is going to be born in LeRoy, Illinois. Where is LeRoy? Exactly!

But was Bethlehem really that obscure? Not to God. Bethlehem means the "house of bread" and it was the hometown of Ruth's father-in-law, Elimelech. This is where Ruth met Boaz, a man who married, protected, and provided for her. Boaz was Ruth's kinsman redeemer. Jesus is our kinsman redeemer from Bethlehem. He paid the price of death to redeem us and continues to protect and provide for us.

God always has a *grand plan*. Even though we don't always recognize it.

Today, think about the ways that God has surprised you with the ways He has protected and provided for you.

Wednesday, December 1

Genesis 3:15, Matthew 1:20, & Galatians 4:4

PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS: BORN OF A WOMAN

Diane Beers

There are numerous thoughts that can overtake our minds when tragedy or sin strikes. A common question we ask is “why me?” The answer is. . . . *“And 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). Due to the Fall, we all experience loss, pain, disappointment, rejection, illness, and more.

Let’s reflect a bit on Eve and the HOPE that is offered through her. Eve is Adam’s helper. She is the first woman, first wife, and first mother of all humanity. She shares in the image of God. Eve is a vigorous woman, a woman with hefty responsibilities who also gives birth to the first naturally born human, Cain. Additionally, she was part of the Fall. Through her comes both life and death, both curse and cure, both hurt and hope.

HOPE is intertwined throughout the Bible and God figuratively and literally offers both Mary and Joseph significant glimpses of HOPE through their obedience. *“Do not be afraid,”* the angels said, *“because what is conceived in her (Mary) is from the Holy Spirit.”* (Matthew 1:20) God was moving, reminding them of the promise He made at the beginning in Genesis 3:15. Reread that verse now.

Though Eve’s offspring would be wounded, ultimately the offspring of Eve would crush the head of the serpent, foreshadowing Jesus’ triumph over sin and Satan at the cross. Jesus showed complete dominance over Satan by a crushing, mortal wound to his head. Because of the promise, the victor of Genesis 3:15 had to be human, *“born of a woman,”* (Galatians 4:4) to redeem all of humanity.

It is inspiring to remember that each woman, from Eve to Mary to each woman today, has been called by God to fulfill His purpose. Ladies, you are part of God’s great plan of redemption. Through your obedience and faithfulness, Jesus, our Victor, will be delivered to a hurting world in need of a Savior. Gentlemen, let’s treasure the ways God is using our wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters to show us and others the love of God in Jesus the Son.

Thursday, December 2

Isaiah 40:3-4 & John 1:23

PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS: JOHN THE BAPTIST

Gerald Aloran

Israel's history is filled with glorious victories and horrendous decay. The people were only an independent nation for a short time compared to the long history of enslavement by the surrounding nations. They were in darkness, but God, through the prophet Isaiah, said that the Savior King was coming. There would first need to be a herald, one who comes before the King enters. That would be John the Baptist, who proclaimed that he was not the Messiah but the one preparing the way for Him.

Christmas celebrates the arrival of our King, while Advent is preparing the way for the King. How are you preparing yourself for Christmas? Our culture waits expectingly for shopping deals, presents, families, parties, Christmas movies, and religious services. I personally love this season and what it brings.

The ancient Christians saw Advent not as the enactment of the birth of Jesus but as remembrance that we are between the resurrection and second coming of Jesus. While living in our failing world, let us continue to hope like the ancient Israelites who were in darkness, but believed that the King is coming. "Come Lord Jesus, Come!"

Friday, December 3

Daniel 7:13-14 & Luke 1:30-33

PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS: THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM

Pete Sutton

What does Daniel have to do with Mary? And what do Mary and Daniel have to do with us today? Babylon. Daniel's vision came while in exile in the kingdom of Babylon, under the rule of Belshazzar. Mary's angelic visitation came to her in Nazareth, a city pinned under the thumb of King Herod and the Roman Empire, a symbolic Babylon captured in the visions Daniel received and interpreted in Chapters 2 and 7 in the book of Daniel.

Today, we too live in a symbolic Babylon, where those of the Kingdom of God live as foreigners and exiles in this world (1 Peter 2:11). Empires rise and empires fall, but there is One King who remains enthroned and sovereign through it all. This truth comforted Daniel as he awaited return to the Land of Promise. This truth comforted Mary as she awaited the coming of her son, the Messiah of Israel. And this truth still comforts us today as we await the glorious return of King Jesus and the advent of His eternal kingdom that will never diminish or be destroyed.

May your hope be eternally grounded in the sovereign reign of King Jesus and His eternal kingdom.

Saturday, December 4

2 Samuel 7:12-13 & Matthew 1:1

PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS: LINEAGE OF KING DAVID

Gerald Aloran

The Gospel of Matthew provides the genealogy of Jesus showing the link to Abraham, the father of Israel, and more specifically to David, from where the Messiah would come. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation for all people: Jew and Gentile, men and women, commoners and kings, adulterers, fornicators, liars, spies, idolaters, and those who sought to live for Yahweh.

God, since the beginning, had a plan of salvation that would bless the nations. It is through Christ that this plan is being fulfilled. God made promises in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the promises are now being fulfilled.

There is hope now that the Messiah King, for whom we all have been waiting, has arrived. Now the world needs to know. We are His ambassadors of this Gospel, the Good News that God is reconciling the whole world through Christ, not counting their sins against them (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Your new life in Christ is a carrier of this Good News. May the Lord keep you and remind you of your call as ambassador of good news to a world that only offers bad news.

WEEK 2: PEACE – THE NAMES OF JESUS

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was perhaps the greatest poet of his day in America, and among the greatest in Europe. He was born in Portland, Maine in 1807 and became a professor of English at Harvard College. Though he quickly achieved fame, his life was not without pain. In 1835 his first wife died after a miscarriage. He later remarried and lost his second wife in 1861, after her dress caught fire. In March of 1863, without his father's blessing or knowledge, his oldest son Charles joined the Union Army only to be severely wounded in November. Meanwhile, Longfellow endured the daily dirge of depressing news and echoes of war that poured into the Revolutionary War Headquarters of George Washington (Cambridge, MA) where he lived the remainder of his days.

It was out of this grief that on Christmas day, 1863, Longfellow penned the words to the poetic lament we now know as, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." Each verse returns to the angel's words from Luke 2:14, questioning whether peace will prevail, or the bells will be drowned out. However, on the final verse, Longfellow declares that God is not dead, wrong will fail and right prevail, and the bells of God's peace cannot be overpowered.

Though the chorus of grief and despair may be loud, may the peace of God ring out in and through you this season.

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I heard the bells on Christmas Day,
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet, The words repeat
Of peace on Earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along, The unbroken song
Of peace on Earth, good-will to men!

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Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, A chant sublime
Of peace on Earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth,
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound, The carols drowned
Of peace on Earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent,
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn, The households born
Of peace on Earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong, And mocks the song
Of peace on Earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail,
With peace on Earth, good-will to men."

Sunday, December 5, 2021

Isaiah 7:14 & Matthew 1:22-23

NAMES OF JESUS: IMMANUEL, GOD IS WITH US

Wally Marshall

Having a medical background and reading these central passages 36 years ago as a new follower of Jesus Christ was a challenge. A virgin birth is contrary to the course of nature. It is scientifically impossible unless the regular processes of nature were, in this particular case, being over-ruled or supplemented by something from beyond nature.

Nothing ever really seems extraordinary until you have discovered what is ordinary. Belief in miracles, far from depending on the natural laws, are only possible when those laws make sense to us. My faith in a trustworthy God began to be real when I noticed changes in my life and how I started to view God's touch on the world around me.

Prophecy coming to life before their eyes encouraged the early church to continue following God's promised Messiah. Believing a chosen woman like Mary to be a virgin and yet with child was, and is, supernatural, just like all creation.

Today, reflect on the miracle of the incarnation and the many ways God continues to be revealed to us today.

Monday, December 6

Isaiah 9:6 & Colossians 1:15-16

NAMES OF JESUS: WONDERFUL COUNSELOR, MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER, PRINCE OF PEACE

Pete Sutton

Through the incarnation, the invisible God becomes visible. Every human being ever created was made "in the image of God," save one. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Therefore, Jesus can say, *"I and the Father are one,"* (John 10:30), or *"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,"* (John 14:9). There is not a human being on the planet who does not bring glory to God by reflecting His nature, but there is only one human being who does so perfectly and completely – the eternal Son of God. As the eternal and incarnate Son of God, Jesus assumes the throne of his Heavenly Father so obediently and thoroughly that he too is called *"Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."* (Isaiah 9:6)

His obedience to and glorification of the Father is so thorough that the Father grants Him full authority over all people, kingdoms, and creation (John 17:2). For this reason, Jesus is able to say, *"I Am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me,"* (John 10:4). Therefore, we have peace with God the Father because we align with Jesus the Son. May the peace of God through the eternal reign of the Son of God guard and guide you this season of Advent.

Today, reflect on Jesus the Son and his perfect obedience to the Father through his life, ministry, death, resurrection, and eternal intercession on behalf of those within his Kingdom.

Tuesday, December 7

Revelation 22:13 & John 8:58

NAMES OF JESUS: ALPHA & OMEGA

Ryan Worsley

These days, it can be very difficult to go even a short period of time, without thinking about how the world is spinning out of control. With the instant and continuous flow of information at our fingertips, life can often appear very bleak. While we certainly experience darkness all around us, I often wonder if every previous generation has had the same thought – that things have never been worse, that all hope has been lost, and that evil has won.

Friend, can I encourage you today? Nothing we have experienced, currently experience, or will experience surprises God. His Word tells us that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He has always been and will always be. No matter what we face in this life, we can have confidence in Him!

Jesus, we so often lose sight of you and focus instead on our circumstances. This Christmas, please help us remember your promises and rest in the gift of your peace. Amen.

Wednesday, December 8

2 Samuel 22:51 & John 1:41

NAMES OF JESUS: MESSIAH

Kim Huffman

When I read about the woman who found a 4-carat diamond in-the-raw at a state park in Arkansas, I wanted to go there immediately and hunt for diamonds! I wanted to search for and find valuable treasure.

The Jewish people had been searching for the Messiah for hundreds of years - a Savior who was promised to show *hesed* or merciful, loving kindness to his people. So, when John the Baptist introduced Andrew to the "Lamb of God" (John 1:35-37), the One who would take away the sins of the world, Andrew immediately went and got his brother, Simon Peter, and told him he had found the Messiah. This was the BEST news either of them would ever hear, after a lifetime of searching.

Have you been searching for the Messiah? Perhaps you've met Jesus, but you haven't surrendered your life to Him? Perhaps you know Jesus, but you've not been depending on Him and His merciful, loving kindness? Perhaps it's time to stop everything, surrender, and follow.

Today, reflect on your response to finding Jesus. Ask God how you might still respond today to the Good News of Jesus the Messiah.

Thursday, December 9

2 Samuel 22:2-4 & Luke 2:11

NAME OF JESUS: SAVIOR

Paul Giersz

Some say Jesus is a fictitious character, others say He was a good man and others say He was a good teacher. Still others say He was one of many religious leaders. Some think Jesus is like a Genie in a bottle or a get out of jail free card.

According to God, Jesus is a:

Rock, Fortress, Deliverer, Shield, Stronghold, Refuge, Savior and Lord.

According to God, Jesus alone is worthy of praise.

Who do you say Jesus is?

Does your life reflect your answer?

Friday, December 10

Psalm 2:7-9 & Mark 1:10-11

NAMES OF JESUS: SON OF GOD

Diane Beers

Visualize in your mind Jesus coming out of the water, heaven opening up, the Spirit descending on Him like a dove (Mark 1:10) and then a voice, my ears hear a powerful voice; the roar of many waters and a sound that is so soothing it brings me peace. The voice from heaven proclaimed the Father's approval of Jesus; *"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* (Mark 1:11).

God speaks to His Son; *"you are my Son, today, I have become your father." "I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession,"* (Psalm 2:7). There isn't anyone else on this earth who can promise what God has promised His Son.

There is another reminder for us; *"You will break them with a rod of iron, you will dash them to pieces like pottery."* (Psalm 2:9) Similarly, there isn't anyone on this earth who can destroy the things of this world with a command like God can. This statement reveals that the anointed King, the Messiah, will smash the rebellious nations with an iron rod. This same Son of God will be called King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Who or what do you put your trust in? Government? Money? Relationships? Possessions? Don't let the constant chaos or unrest of this world, Satan and his demonic attacks infringe on your peace, your shalom, this Christmas. Instead, remember the King of the universe is on the throne and His is the victory!

Saturday, December 11

Ezekiel 37:11-14 & John 11:25

NAMES OF JESUS: THE RESURRECTION & THE LIFE

Gerald Aloran

The aftermath of war is death and destruction. Israel's history is similar to her neighboring nations since it has also been plagued by war and strife. The devastating loss of life is unbearable. Yet God promised His people Israel that He will restore them. The image Ezekiel uses is powerful. The dry bones on the battlefield of men who died fighting will begin to regenerate. Tendons will attach to bone, then muscle will cover the bones, then skin, then finally breath! This is the restoration of Israel.

The war-torn exiles had no hope, but God made a promise. He promised to restore them through the Messiah. The earthly kingdoms brought death, but God's kingdom brings life. This kingdom, which now includes those from outside the DNA of Israel, will have citizens that will never die! All citizens of this life-giving kingdom follow its King - King Jesus.

Advent is a preparation for the coming of our King. The first step to prepare for the King is to believe in the King. Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who came into the world, was crucified, was buried, and raised from the dead? Second, will you follow this King, the giver of new life?

WEEK :3

LOVE – THE ADVENT OF JESUS

Christina Georgina Rossetti was born in England in 1830 to a family steeped in the arts. Her father, Gabriele Rossetti, a religious exile from Italy and professor of Italian at King's College, London, developed several debilitating illnesses as well as dementia when Gabriele was only a child. Faced with financial troubles, Christina's mother became the primary breadwinner, leaving Christina often home alone where the isolation gave way to deep depression and a nervous breakdown that pulled her out of school. She suffered poor health from her teens on but found a deep sustaining faith in the church and Scripture, and an abiding joy through writing. In her late teens and twenties, she was courted by three serious suiters but declined each one for religious reasons. Rather than romance, she devoted her days to teaching and maintaining a school started by her mother. Her later life would be plagued with health struggles and depression until she died in 1894. However, throughout her life she wrote prolifically with profound religious themes in fiction, non-fiction, and much poetry. Her poem, "Love Came Down at Christmas," published at Christmas, 1885, is based on 1 John 4:7-11 and reflects the simplicity of God's love and the story of the Gospel.

Only one word in the short three-verse work is more than two syllables, "incarnate." May the simple, incarnate love of God in Jesus Christ be yours this Christmas.

Love Came Down at Christmas

By Christina Georgina Rossetti

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love divine;
Love was born at Christmas;
Star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love incarnate, Love divine;
Worship we our Jesus,
But wherewith for sacred sign?

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Love shall be our token;
Love be yours and love be mine;
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.

Sunday, December 12

John 1:14-18

THE ADVENT OF JESUS: THE WORD BECOMES FLESH

Kim Huffman

I have three biological children, and when they were born, they came out as separate, wholly other persons. Though knit together by God using the DNA strands of my husband and me, never once as a mom did I feel like they came into this world to make me or my husband known. But that's exactly what God did when Jesus was born.

John says the Word, the Logos or "divine utterance" of God, became flesh. John gives deeper insight into the mystery of a triune God by explaining that this Word made flesh came not only as human, but in the fullness of God. John goes on to say that the God who had never been seen, was made known through Jesus Christ. God did this so that He could dwell or "tabernacle" among us in close and intimate communion.

Take a moment and sit with Jesus. Reflect on who He is – the Word made flesh, the very fullness of God. Then, reflect on why He came – to have an intimate relationship with you.

Monday, December 13

Luke 1:5-25

THE ADVENT OF JESUS: THE ANGEL VISITS ZECHARIAH

Dan Huffman

Like many, I do most of my Christmas shopping online. With Christmas now only 12 days away, we must pay special attention to shipping times. Thankfully, websites send a tracking number once your items have shipped. You can then check this number to see when your package will arrive. That should be enough assurance that your gifts will arrive in time.

In our Bible reading today, Zechariah gets a highly-personalized tracking number when the angel, Gabriel, appears and tells him that a precious package is on the way – his only son, John. But this was not enough for Zechariah. He asked Gabriel, “How can I be sure of this?” Zechariah asked for more evidence and Gabriel granted that request by declaring that Zechariah would not be able to speak until the day his son arrived. Oh snap!

I can relate to Zechariah. I am wired to ask, “How can I be sure?” I believe this is a trust issue. Maybe people have let you down. Maybe your Christmas gifts did not arrive when promised. Whatever has caused your lack of trust, it is not fair to project human failures onto God. When God makes promises, He always keeps them! His timing may not always line up with our timing, but God’s timing is best.

As we focus on the arrival of Jesus; the greatest Christmas gift, remember mankind waited a long time for Him to arrive. But Jesus did arrive, and He demonstrated God’s love by taking the punishment for our failings on the cross. All of this was done in God’s glorious timing.

That track record should give us enough assurance that God will continue to keep His promises.

Take time today to reflect on the great gift of Jesus and God’s perfect timing in your life.

Tuesday, December 14

Luke 1:26-28

THE ADVENT OF JESUS: THE ANGEL VISITS MARY

Wally Marshall

The Lord is with you! These are not just words, but the actions of the Creator of all, including all life. Mary, being greeted by an angel (which might sound a bit scary to you and me) was greatly troubled. But the angel said to her, “do not be afraid.”

Mary wondered, how can it be that I am a virgin and the angel said that I will carry in my womb the hope of the world and name him Jesus? But that is exactly what the angel proclaimed.

Have you ever been in the presence of an angel? What would your response be to the presence of God that was both visible and touchable?

I have had two occasions that I vividly remember as times when my pure faith was met with God’s presence, an angel-like experience. Two individuals that I believe were right there when I needed a boost of faith to keep me going. I can’t explain how deeply these tangible expressions of God’s amazing love for me would affect my ministry life.

Today, reflect on times in your life when God showed up and reinforced your faith. If you need reinforcing today, ask Him to show up and strengthen your faith this season.

Wednesday, December 15

Luke 1:39-45

THE ADVENT OF JESUS: MARY AND ELIZABETH

Pete Sutton

What love we see in Elizabeth for her young relative, Mary. Elizabeth opened much more than her home to care for Mary in the final months of her pregnancy. She has opened her heart to share in the joy of Jesus, the blessed child she would bear. She opened her mind to believe in the promise of God to be fulfilled through the mother of her Lord. She was floored at the favor she received that God would grant her such a privileged proximity to the Messiah and the vessel who carried him. Elizabeth is the exemplar of what it looks like to receive Jesus with affection and surrender. In fact, her reception is so thorough that she becomes a fount of God's blessing – reciprocating the blessing that Mary brings into her home.

This Christmas, may we be found with such openness, love, affection, and surrender.

Today, reflect on the day Jesus first entered your life. Take time to reflect on the many ways you've opened your life to Him and the many ways you might still surrender that God may make you a fount of His blessing to all you meet.

Thursday, December 16

Luke 1:57-66

THE ADVENT OF JESUS: THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Ryan Worsley

John the Baptist would certainly be regarded as one of the best-known characters in all the Bible. A relative of Jesus, John preached, taught, and baptized many (ultimately, even Jesus). Yet, the Bible tells us that John was sent to prepare the way for Jesus. John had a following, and some wondered if he might be the promised Messiah. He might have been tempted to really make a name for himself. However, John went to great lengths to deflect any personal attention and clearly point people to Jesus. Out of love, John embraced his calling.

Could the same be said of you today? Do you live your life in such a way as to point people to Jesus?

God, in the busyness of this season, please help us show the love of Christ. Give us the grace to speak with kindness, to treat others with dignity and respect and, ultimately, to point people to You. God, may we always remember to love because You have first loved us. Amen.

Friday, December 17

Matthew 1:18-25

THE ADVENT OF JESUS: THE ANGEL VISITS JOSEPH

Kim Huffman

I have a couple of friends who were once incarcerated, and both say it was the best thing that ever happened to them because it was in prison where they met Jesus. In the most unlikely of places and in the most unlikely of ways, behind bars, shut off from the world, they met their personal Savior.

God works in mysterious ways. His ways are not our ways. Jesus' birth story was no exception. By the power of the Holy Spirit, a young virgin named Mary, who had never had sexual contact with a man, became pregnant with the Savior of the world. Her betrothed, Joseph, made plans to break off the engagement quietly, but an angel of the Lord appeared to him in the most unexpected of places – a dream – to tell him not to be afraid to marry, because Mary was made pregnant by God's Spirit. Joseph obeyed.

The Holy Spirit has been at work all throughout time – in prisons, in the conception of our Savior, and in our lives today. Pause and invite God's Spirit to show you where God is at work in the world around you. Might He be calling you to serve Him in the most unlikely of ways, perhaps with the poor, incarcerated, homeless, and marginalized in our community?

Saturday, December 18

Luke 2:1-7

THE ADVENT OF JESUS: THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Paul Giersz

Over 2000 years ago the birth of a child changed everything!

The birth and life of Jesus Christ is the most profound and planet transforming legacy of anyone or anything. Human history literally divides time at His birth into BC – Before Christ – and AD – Anno Domini, Latin for “in the year of our Lord.”

More songs and books have been written and more artwork commissioned about Jesus Christ than anyone who has ever lived. Literally today, billions of Christ followers around the world gather weekly celebrating, worshiping, adoring, and studying the life and words of this man, Jesus Christ, who forever changed this world.

H. G. Well said, “I am a historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian, that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.”

Is He the most dominant figure in your life?

WEEK 4: JOY – THE JOY OF JESUS

“Joy to the World” was not written as a Christmas carol. In fact, the original poem hardly had Christmas in mind, and it was not even written to be a song. Rather, Isaac Watts, one of the greatest hymn writers in church history, published a 1719 book of poems in which each poem was based on a Psalm adjusted to reference more explicitly the work of Jesus as revealed in the New Testament. Among the poems was Psalm 98. (The poem was later set to music by Lowell Mason in 1848.) Watts interpreted this Psalm as a celebration of Jesus’s role as King of both His church and the whole world. Over one century later, particular lines of the poem were modified and set to a common tune to produce one of the most famous Christmas carols of all time and the most published Christmas hymn in the history of North America.

Joy to the World

poem by Isaac Watts (1719)

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive its king;
Let ev’ry heart prepare him room,
And heav’n and nature sing,
And heav’n and nature sing,
And heav’n, and heav’n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ
While fields and floods,
Rocks, hills, and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

ADVENT READING PLAN 2021

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

Sunday, December 19

Luke 1:46-56

THE JOY OF JESUS: MARY'S SONG

Diane Beers

Ahh...the nostalgia of songs can stir an array of emotions within us. For instance, you may have had a favorite fight song in high school or college and even now you can feel the corners of your mouth turn up into a smile as you reminisce. There are other songs that may bring a tear to your eye in memory of someone you love, or a song may bring back a painful experience that you once endured.

Christmas songs are definitely a favorite of mine. They lift my spirits and are so fun to listen to while decorating the tree, driving in the car, working at church, or entering stores. Christmas songs and carolers bring a smile to my face.

Then there's a caliber of a song that usurps others, Mary's Song, "The Magnificat" a song of pure joy! Mary begins by glorifying and rejoicing in God her Savior, (Luke 1:47) she knows she will be called blessed, the Mighty One has done great things for her, He extends mercy to those who fear Him, He lifts up the humble. She continues singing of God's sovereignty and strength, and how He has kept His promises. While Jesus isn't born yet, she is thanking God in advance. I envision Mary with a smile on her face, busily shaking out rugs, fetching water, preparing meals, humming along as she bustles around completing her tasks for the day. Mary is visiting her cousin and perhaps Elizabeth asks sheepishly, "what are you humming?" Mary replies, "Oh, just a song I made up to show love, honor, and respect to my Lord."

This Christmas season, take time to hum a tune, or sing a song remembering who you belong to, praising Him in advance with thanksgiving and let your spirit be filled with joy for Emmanuel.

Monday, December 20

Luke 1:67-80

THE JOY OF JESUS: ZECHARIAH'S SONG

Gerald Aloran

Zechariah was John the Baptist's father. Before Zechariah prophesied in the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:68-79), the hill country of Judea was in astonishment at the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:65). They asked, "*What is this child going to be?*" (Luke 1:66) There was something special about John the Baptist that the neighborhood could sense based just on how this newborn infant was to be named (Luke 1:57-63).

Zechariah's prophesy proclaimed that part of the salvation promise God made to David and Abraham was finally fulfilled. It also makes clear that John is a prophet of the Most High preparing a way for the Lord.

This was a big deal! The herald preparing the way for the King is now born. It was only a matter of time before the King will make His appearance. But this herald was to grow in the Holy Spirit as a prophet of God, proclaiming a message to Israel which enable many to return to God.

Jesus will be back again. We as followers of Jesus are now His witnesses. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have a message to declare that is unlike any message the world has to offer. There is a way back to God and it is only through King Jesus. Will you follow Him? Have you shared this good news with others? As we prepare for Christmas, are you willing and committed to proclaim a spirit-empowered message to the world which will enable many to return to God?

Tuesday, December 21

Luke 2:22-35

THE JOY OF JESUS: SIMEON'S JOY

Diane Beers

What are the momentous events in your life that you recall? Did you experience pure joy to witness and literally be a part of a special occasion? Perhaps it was a child's birth, a baptism, a historic event, a milestone birthday, a wedding, or the day you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Regardless of the occasion, what would you have said or done if you were able to witness arrival of the Messiah? I envision myself squealing with delight!

Simeon is a favorite Biblical character of mine and one worthy of admiration and respect. He was righteous and devout, and the Holy Spirit was on him (Luke 2:25). Simeon was older but would not die before he had witnessed the Messiah. Simeon got to hold Jesus in his arms! He said Jesus was a gift from God, and he recognized that Jesus, as the Messiah, would be the "light of the world!" Simeon also prophesied that Jesus would have a paradoxical effect on Israel. Some would fall because of Him, and others would rise. There was no neutral ground. People would joyfully accept Him, or tragically reject Him. Finally, the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed, and a sword would pierce Mary's own soul too. These would not be easy things to understand or accept.

Our own hearts may ache from the painful experiences of regret. However, one can also experience the pure joy that comes from knowing our loving Father accepts us exactly where we are in life. This season, let us focus our attention (like Simeon) on the great gift of God's love for us. And, if you haven't yet accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, do so and share your pure joy with others.

Wednesday, December 22

Luke 2:36-40

THE JOY OF JESUS: ANNA'S JOY

Dan Huffman

I was an impatient kid. My mom would often tell me, "Good things come to those who wait." I grew up thinking that must be in the Bible. Nope. Turns out it is just an old English proverb. As an adult I am still impatient. I like Abraham Lincoln's quote much better. He once said, "Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left behind by those who hustle."

Christmas is just days away, so I am sure there is a lot of hustle going on in your life. In today's reading, we learn of a remarkable woman named Anna. Her husband tragically died just seven years into their marriage. She spent the rest of her life as a widow in the temple. Then, at age 84, she got to meet Baby Jesus. Good things come to those who wait – right?

Nope. I don't believe this popular saying works for Anna. Scripture tells us, "She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying." She is also called a prophet, which is a spokesperson for God. Anna was not sitting around waiting in the temple for decades – she was joyfully serving God!

What joy is there in sitting around waiting? Anna's life was full of service and devotion to the God she loved. This gave Anna an overflowing joy and purpose. When she met Jesus, she could not contain her joy. She spoke to everyone around about God's goodness.

I pray that Anna's life will inspire you today. May we all follow her example by joyfully serving God, then speaking to everyone around about God's goodness. Maybe even invite a few of them to church!

Thursday, December 23

Matthew 2:1-12

THE JOY OF JESUS: THE MAGI'S JOY

Wally Marshall

The Magi (wisemen & astrologers) were looking to the stars for meaning. They believed the stars were signs from God leading them to Jesus and they traveled to Bethlehem to worship the promised King of the Jews.

As they entered the place where Jesus was born and laid, the Magi were transformed and responded to Jesus in love. They fell down at His feet and worshiped Him. They offered Him symbolic gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh as tangible expressions of their love for Jesus. Gold was offered to Him as the King. Incense was used in the Temple, as He was the high priest. Myrrh was an oil used for burial, symbolic of His death. Each gift forecasted what was to come through this child.

When we encounter the presence of Jesus and joy fills our lives, we have the opportunity to offer Him acts of worship like the Magi did. Let everything you do today, December 23, be an expression of love towards Jesus, your King.

Friday, December 24

Luke 2:8-20

THE JOY OF JESUS: THE SHEPHERD'S JOY

Pete Sutton

These outsiders made their home in the shadows of Herod's near-Bethlehem palace, literally. From there they tended sheep and supplied the Jerusalem Temple, just 5 miles north, with goats and lambs for sacrifice. All around them, the region was bustling with official business and travelers complying with Caesar's census, but these shepherds were unphased and uninterested. They knew their place and were content to remain in the shadows – until their night was pierced with a shadow-chasing blaze and a terrifying, gut-rattling proclamation. Under the nose of Herod, behind the backs of the privileged, beyond the reach of Caesar's census, the most official business of the day was going down and only these humble shepherds were extended a front row seat. Today... not yesterday, or the day before... today, in the town of David, the city of sheep and shepherds, the Savior Messiah is born, and you have the all-access, exclusive pass.

After catching their breath and picking themselves off the ground, they hurried to find Mary, Joseph and the baby – to take their place in nativity sets and stories for all future time. But the story doesn't end with the nativity. These shepherds don't go back in the box after Christmas has passed. Like hyped up sports fans bounding out of the stadium after watching their team pull off a crazy upset to win the first championship in a millennium, these shepherds burst out of Bethlehem telling everyone of the miracle they just witnessed. They couldn't contain themselves and it didn't quite matter if Herod or Caesar himself heard them herald this newborn King. This is not the kind of joy one can contain.

How about you? Do the wonder and miracle of Christmas still spark joy in you? Do you find it difficult to contain your joy or has the exclusive encounter somehow lost its luster? Are you still awestruck that you've been invited to encounter this Jesus and chosen to share it with others? If this Christmas your joy seems to wane, perhaps it is time to return to the manger and reflect on the great gift of Jesus? Today, take time to sit still and ponder in your heart the amazing thing God has done, that God might multiply your joy and extend your witness and His glory.

Saturday, December 25

Hebrews 1:1-9

THE JOY OF JESUS: HEAVEN'S JOY

Ryan Worsley

Joy to the world! The Lord is come! Merry Christmas! After a season of waiting and anticipation, we celebrate the birth of Christ with the entire world. And we can do so joyfully, no matter what circumstances we might face. Unlike the emotion of happiness, joy is dependent on the truths of Jesus rather than what is happening around us. If today brings feelings of sadness because of a loss you've experienced, may the joy of Christmas fill your heart. If you find yourself lonely and disheartened, may you still find joy in the promises of Jesus. We know the Lord will one day Himself wipe away every tear and take away every heartache. Until then, may we take comfort in the joy of our salvation.

Joy to the world! The Lord is come!

Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing

Joy to the world! The Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ!
While fields and floods,
Rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy

ADVENT READING PLAN 2021

He rules the world with truth and grace!
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders of His love

Thank you for joining us on this journey through Advent. We pray the Christmas season has been joyous and life-giving for you. Now, as we turn our sights to the coming new year, we want to highlight our four Priorities here at The Compass Church. We encourage people to focus on the following: Pursue Him Daily; Connect in Groups; Serve in Teams; and Reach Your Neighbor. Starting in January, we will spend several weeks on the second Priority, Connect in Groups. Jeff Griffin, our Senior Pastor, will begin a new series on the importance of group life, and we will offer several unique ways to connect if you haven't already taken this step in your faith journey. Please be in prayer now that the Lord will help all of us take steps of faith in 2022 that will bring us closer to Him!

With anticipation of His fullness,

Ryan Worsley
Naperville Campus Pastor