



A SONG OF
HOPE

*Discovering Our Hope in Christ
Through the Story of His Birth*

A 25-Day Christmas
& Advent Devotional

YM360

A SONG OF
H O
P E



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A 10-Day Christmas and Advent Devotional

PUBLISHED BY YM360

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HOPE

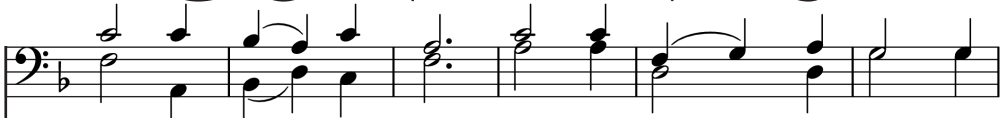
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INTRODUCTION

From the lights on the tree, to the traditions we participate in with friends and family, to the Christmas spirit that fills the air seemingly everywhere we go, this time of year truly feels magical. There's a reason people say it's the "most wonderful time of the year!" But beyond the decorations and celebrations lies a story far greater than any holiday tradition—a story of hope that has been sung through the ages, starting from a manger in Bethlehem.

At the center of Christmas is the birth of Jesus, the hope of the world. Over two thousand years ago, in a small overlooked town under a sky illuminated by a guiding star, the Savior of the world entered into the story. His birth was the fulfillment of ancient prophecies and the answer to what humans were desperately longing for—Immanuel, God with us! But Jesus' arrival was more than just a historical event. It was what changed everything. It ushered a hope into the world that will echo throughout eternity. A hope that we can still hold onto today. A hope that is the song of our soul.

In this devotional, we will explore hope's long-awaited arrival by journeying daily through the narrative of Scripture and reflecting on the events leading up to and following Jesus' birth. Along the way, you'll be met with opportunities to rediscover the lyrics of many well-known Christmas hymns—songs that have been sung for generations and are deeply rooted in the truths of the Bible. These hymns are more than just beautiful holiday songs; they are bold declarations of the hope that Jesus brings to the world.

Whether you're in sixth grade or a senior in high school, this devotional is for you. It's an invitation to discover or rediscover the wonder of Christmas, to learn about the birth of Jesus in a new way, and to live in the hope of His return. As we begin this 25-day journey together, let the truth of Scripture and the lyrics we read place A Song of Hope in your heart as you celebrate and reflect on the greatest gift ever given—the gift of hope found in the birth of a Savior.



Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

ADVENT

Words: Charles Wesley, 1745.

Music and Setting: 'Jefferson' from "Southern Harmony", 1835, alt.
copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2008 Revision.

$\text{♩} = 100$

1. Come, Thou long ex - spect - ed Je - sus, Born to set Thy peo - ple free;
2. Born Thy peo - ple to de - li - ver, Born a child and yet a King,
From our fears and sins re - lease us, Let us find our rest in Thee.
Born to reign in us for - ev - er, Now Thy grac - ious king - dom bring.
Is - rael's Strength and Con - sol - a - tion, Hope of all the earth Thou art;
By Thine own e - ter - nal Spi - rit Rule in all our hearts a - - lone;
Dear De - sire of ev - ery na - tion, Joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
By Thine all suf - fi - cient mer - it, Raise us to Thy glor - ious throne.

DAY 1: A First Promise of a Hope to Come

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” – Genesis 3:15

When was the last time you waited a long time for something you really wanted? What was it like hoping for the day or thing to arrive? Since the beginning, humanity has been waiting for something. You see, the very first humans on earth disobeyed God and felt the weight of sin and shame for the very first time. Sin breaks our relationship with God and keeps us from His freedom and joy. Basically, humans started off needing a Savior, needing hope.

Maybe you’ve felt like you’ve needed hope before, too. We can actually look to this verse to find some of that hope!

In this verse, God spoke the first promise of hope to come to us. Since Adam and Eve, the first humans created, humanity has had an enemy called Satan. But there is also a promise that an offspring, also known as a descendant of Eve, will bruise the enemy’s head. The singular word is used for offspring here, which tells us one person will come to defeat the enemy. This was fulfilled by God sending Jesus to Earth for us! In the end, Jesus will overcome Satan, even though Jesus was “bruised” by Satan on the Cross as He died for our sins.

The hymn, “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus,” speaks of this victory over our enemy, His gracious kingdom, and His glorious throne. Jesus may have been born a baby on Christmas, but He grew up to hold the final victory for all of eternity! And Jesus invites us to be part of that victory and a part of His Kingdom. What an amazing invitation that has the potential to change everything for us.

QUESTIONS

1. How does it feel to know that Jesus brings us hope when we place our faith in Him?
2. Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?
3. If you have, how has that changed your life for the better?
4. If you haven’t, what’s holding you back, and who can you talk to about it?

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

CHRISTMAS

Words: verses 1-2, 15th Century German. Translated by Theodore Baker, 1894.
verses 3,4 Friedrich Layritz (1808-1859). Translated by Harriet Reynolds Krauth, 1875.
verse 5, 15th Century German. Translated by John C. Mattes, 1914.

Music: 'Es Ist Ein Ros Entsprungen (Rhythmic)' German from Köln, 1599. Setting: Michael Praetorius, 1609.
copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2010 Revision.

♩ = 100

1. Lo, how a Rose e'er bloom - ing from ten - der stem hath sprung!
2. Is - ai - ah 'twas fore - told it, the Rose I have in mind;
3. The shep - herds heard the sto - ry pro - claimed by an - gels bright,
4. This Flow'r, whose fra - grance ten - der with sweet - ness fills the air,
5. O Sa - vior, Child of Ma - ry, who felt our hu - man woe,

Of Jes - se's lin - eage com - ing, as men of old have sung.
With Mar - y we be - hold it, the vir - gin mo - ther kind.
How Christ, the Lord of glor - y was born on earth this night.
Dis - pels with glor - ious splen - dor the dark - ness ev - ery - where;
O Sa - vior, King of glo - ry, who dost our weak - ness know;

It came, a flow'r - et bright, a - - mid the
To show God's love a - - right, she bore to
To Beth - le - hem they sped and in the
True Man, yet ve - ry God, from sin and
Bring us at length we pray, to the bright

cold of win - ter, When half spent was the night.
men a Sa - vior, When half spent was the night.
man - ger found Him, As an - gel her - - ald said.
death He saves us, And light - ens ev - - 'ry load.
courts of Hea - ven, And to the end - - less day!

Is 11:1-10, Mt 1:20-21, Heb 2:14-15, Lk 2:1-18

767666

DAY 2: A Sign of Hope Through A Miraculous Birth

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” – Isaiah 7:14

Find a plant, either outside or in your home, or find a picture online. Bonus points if it’s a rose or a flower that’s already bloomed! What do you notice about it?

Here’s the thing: There is a lot that has already happened before a flower has bloomed. It takes time. It takes energy. It takes sunlight and water. And it takes time for the roots to grow deep into the ground. All of these things we likely don’t get to see, but they are crucial in the process of the flower’s creation. The flower wouldn’t bloom without them!

Just as a flower emerges from its roots after lots of time, Jesus was born from the “root” of Jesse in their family history after lots of generations, which was promised long before it actually happened. The hymn, “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming,” helps us to remember that Jesus’ birth fulfilled the promise that God made!

It is an absolute miracle that God the Mighty Creator chose to give us hope by sending Jesus to Earth for us. What may seem like a boring genealogy, or family history, to us is actually God working throughout all of time to fulfill His word and rescue us.

Isaiah, who was a prophet, gave a prophecy about the Savior hundreds of years before the first Christmas that this Christmas hymn was written about. Isaiah wrote that the one God sent would be called “Immanuel,” meaning “God with us.” What a story that God has been writing throughout time, all leading to the hope we find in Jesus. The best part? God invites you to be part of that story, too.

QUESTIONS

1. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus came to be with you?
2. What’s one way you can choose to be part of His Kingdom today?

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

ADVENT

Words: various, combined by unknown author approx 12th Century, Translated by John Mason Neale, 1851.
Music: 'Veni Emmanuel' 15th Century French processional. Setting: "Common Service Book" (ULCA), 1917.
copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2005 Revision.

$\text{♩} = 130$

1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som cap - tive Is - ra - el,
2. O come, Thou Wis - dom from on high, Who or - derest all things might - i - ly;
3. O come, Thou Rod of Jes - se, free Thine own from Sa - tan's ty - ran - ny;
4. O come, Thou Day - spring, come and cheer Our spi - rits by Thine ad - vent here;
5. O come, Thou Key of Da - vid, come, And o - pen wide our hea - ven's only home;

That mourns in lone - ly e - - xile here Un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
To us the path of know - ledge show, And teach us in her ways to go.
From depths of hell Thy peo - ple save, And give them vic - t'ry ov'r the grave.
Dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night, And death's dark sha - dows put to flight.
Make safe the way that leads on high, And close the path to mi - - ser - y.

Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - - u - el shall come to thee, O I - - sra - el.

DAY 3: Hope in the Righteous Reign of the Branch

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.”—Isaiah 11:1-5

Have you ever watched a competition TV show with judges? Maybe it was singing, or dancing, or a talent show. The judges are there to make sure that those who are talented make it through to the next round of the competition, and sadly, they have to reject those who are not talented enough to continue on. Although it’s hard, that’s what keeps the competition fair for everyone who is participating!

Just like these judges, in these verses, the Messiah, which would be Jesus, is referred to as a judge and a King. The author of these verses, Isaiah, describes the Messiah as someone filled with God’s Spirit—full of wisdom, understanding, and strength. He wouldn’t judge based on appearances but with righteousness and fairness, especially for the poor and meek.

In the Christmas hymn, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” we sing of this prophecy from Isaiah. Just as Israel longed for their Savior to free them from captivity, we too long for Jesus to come into our world of brokenness. In this hymn, we recognize that Jesus came into the world at Christmas as “Emmanuel,” meaning “God with us.”

Thankfully, we have the opportunity to look back in Scripture at the birth of Jesus, His life, and all the prophecies He fulfilled, including this one in Isaiah. We get to celebrate the rescue offered to those who believe in Him and celebrate that Jesus is God with us!

QUESTIONS

1. When you think about Jesus as a judge and a King, what qualities about Him come to mind?
2. What is one thing you can do today to celebrate that Jesus is “God with us?”

O Little Town of Bethlehem

CHRISTMAS

Words: Phillips Brooks, 1867. Music: 'St. Louis' Lewis H. Redner, 1868. Setting: "The Chapel Hymnal", 1898.
copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2005 Revision.

$\text{♩} = 100$

1. O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
 2. For Christ is born of Ma - ry, and ga - thered all a - bove,
 3. How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, the won - drous Gift is giv'n;
 4. Where child - ren pure and hap - py pray to the bless - ed Child,
 5. O ho - ly Child of Beth - le - hem, des - cend to us, we pray;

A - bove thy deep and dream - less sleep the si - lent stars go by,
 While mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their won - d'ring love.
 So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of His Heav'n.
 Where mi - ser - y cries out to Thee, Son of the mo - ther mild;
 Cast out our sin, and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.

Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing Light;
 O morn - ing stars to - ge - ther, pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
 No ear may hear His com - ing, but in this world of sin,
 Where char - it - y stands watch - ing and faith holds wide the door,
 We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night,
 And prais - es sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth!
 Where meek souls will re - ceive Him still, the dear Christ en - ters in.
 The dark night wakes, the glo - ry breaks, and Christ - mas comes once more.
 O come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el!

DAY 4: A Promise of Hope From the Town of Bethlehem

“But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”

– Micah 5:2

Have you ever felt too young to do something that matters? Maybe you were told you were too little to understand something or participate in something. As humans, we tend to think that people who are older, wiser, or stronger than us are more capable of accomplishing big things.

But Christmas is proof that God often picks the young, little, or weak to be part of His plan. Jesus was born in a small town and in total humility. The King of Kings, born as a human baby. His mother, Mary, who was a teenager at the time, wrapped Him in cloths and placed him in a manger (feeding trough). While this might seem a small detail to us, the fact Jesus came to Earth as a baby in this way fulfilled the exact prophecy we read about in these verses!

The hymn “O Little Town of Bethlehem” describes the night Jesus was born. The lyrics of this hymn help us imagine Jesus powerfully entering the scene with His everlasting light on a sleepless night as a newborn baby born to accomplish a huge part of God’s plan.

When you feel small, young, or insignificant, think about what God has done through Jesus at Christmas. Remember that God is in the business of doing great things through everyone, no matter how young you are!

QUESTIONS

1. What’s one area or thing that you feel too young or insignificant to do in your life?
2. Spend two minutes in prayer, asking God to use you in those areas of your life this week.

Handel's Messiah: For Unto Us A Child Is Born

Choir and Orchestra

George Frideric Handel

1685-1759

6

Soprano

6

Alto

Tenor

Bass

For un-to us a Child is born, un-to us a Son is giv-en, un-to

8

us a Son is giv-en, for un-to us a Child is born.

11

For un-to us a Son is giv-en, un-to us a Son is giv-en.

Public Domain

DAY 5: The Light of Hope

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwell in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” – Isaiah 9:2-7

Before reading today’s devotional, grab a flashlight and go to a room that can get fairly dark with the lights out. Turn off the lights in your room and get it as dark as possible. Then, carefully walk across the room, holding your flashlight and keeping it off. Once you reach the other side, walk back, but this time, turn your flashlight on to guide you.

What difference did you notice when trying to walk in the dark with a flashlight versus without one?

Now, keep your room dark and read today’s verses again using your flashlight. As you do, notice how crucial the light is to help you see in the darkness.

This passage of verses is an ancient prophecy by Isaiah written about the promised Messiah. This prophecy is of a great light shining in the darkness, fulfilling God's promise to bring hope to those in darkness. Without Jesus, we live our lives in darkness, but His light can cut through any darkness and fill our lives with light.

Today, and as we prepare to celebrate Jesus’ arrival into the world at Christmas, we can also celebrate this gift that Jesus gives us: the promise to be with us as our “Wonderful Counselor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

The Christmas hymn, “Handel's Messiah: For Unto Us A Child Is Born,” puts these verses in Isaiah to song. Find this song wherever you listen to music. Then, listen to it today as a way to remember who Jesus is to us.

QUESTIONS

1. How is Jesus described in this prophecy we read today?
2. Have you ever experienced Jesus in the ways Isaiah described?

Gabriel's Message: The Angel Gabriel From Heaven Came

ADVENT

(also known as The Angel Gabriel From Heaven Came)

Words: Traditional Basque Carol; Paraphrased by Sabine Baring Gould, (1834–1924).
Music: 'Gabriel's Message' Traditional Basque Carol. Setting: Edgar Pettman, 1922.
copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2005 Revision.

$\text{♩} = 200$

1. The an - gel Ga - bri - el from hea - - ven came,
2. "For know a bless - ed Mo - ther thou shalt be,
3. Then gen - tle Ma - ry meek - ly bowed her head,
4. Of her, Em - man - u - el, the Christ was born

his wings as drift - ed snow, his eyes as flame;
all gen - er - a - tions laud and ho - - nor thee;
"To me be as it pleas - eth God," she said,
in Beth - le - hem, all on a Christ - - - mas morn,

"All hail," said he, "thou low - ly mai - den, Ma - - - ry,
thy Son shall be Em - ma - nu - el, by seers fore - - told,
"my soul shall laud and mag - ni - fy His ho - - ly Name."
and Christ - ian folk through - out the world will ev - - er say

most high - ly fa - vored la - dy." Glo - - - - - ri - a!

DAY 6: The Announcement of Hope

“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, ‘Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!’ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.’” And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.” – Luke 1:26-38

Think about a time in your life when you felt truly scared. Take those emotions, multiply them by 100, and you can imagine how Mary likely felt when an angel told her that she would give birth to the Savior of the world.

In these verses, the angel Gabriel appears to Mary, and understandably, she is “greatly troubled.” Seeing an angel can do that to a person! Gabriel tells Mary not to be afraid and that she has found favor with God. Since God delights in Mary, He chooses her to give birth to Jesus. Gabriel lays out a few of the details: this baby will be the Son of God, He will come from the line of David, and His Kingdom will never end.

Clearly, Mary is in shock over both seeing an angel and hearing that she will soon be a mother. She knows that this is physically impossible, yet, her faith tells her that nothing is impossible with God. She recognizes that as a servant of God, she will do whatever He asks of her.

There is an old Christmas hymn called “Gabriel’s Message” that puts music to the words of Luke 1. Near the end of the song, the author writes: “Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ was born.” Mary gave birth to Jesus, also called “Emmanuel,” meaning “God with us.” This is the great hope that Gabriel was celebrating and the same hope that we can celebrate today!

QUESTIONS

1. In what areas of your life are you not fully obedient to God?
2. What steps do you need to take to surrender those areas to the Lord?
3. Why is it important to cling to hope, especially when we feel scared?

What Child is This?

CHRISTMAS

Words: William Chatterton Dix, 1865.

Music: 'Greensleeves' 16th Century English Traditional.

Setting: traditional from "The Sunday School Hymnal and Service Book", 1871.

copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2005 Revision.

$\text{♩} = 80$

1. What Child is this who, laid to rest On Ma - ry's lap is sleep - ing?
2. Why lies He in such mean e - state, Where ox and ass are feed - ing?
3. So bring Him in - cense, gold and myrrh, Come pea - sant, king to own Him;

Whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet, While shep - herds watch are keep - ing?
Good Christ - ians, fear, for sin - ners here The si - lent Word is plead - ing,
The King of kings sal - va - tion brings, Let lov - ing hearts en - throne Him.

This, this is Christ the King, Whom shep - herds guard and an - gels sing;
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, The cross be borne for me, for you.
Raise, raise a song on high, The vir - gin sings her lul - la - by.

Haste, haste, to bring Him laud, The Babe, the Son of Ma - ry.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh, The Babe, the Son of Ma - ry.
Joy, joy for Christ is born, The Babe, the Son of Ma - ry.

Lk 2:7, Mt 2:1-11, Phil 2:5-8, Is 53:1-6

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♪ Fun fact:

This song was originally a poem that highlights the kind of hope that Joseph surely feels when the angel appears to him.

DAY 7: Joseph's Reassurance of Hope

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.” – Matthew 1:18-25

There's a common theme in the story of Jesus' birth: angels. Anytime a theme is repeated in Scripture, we should pay close attention. Angels appeared to both of Jesus' parents to tell them about His life. These angels were not sent by God to only deliver information. In their announcements of the Savior's upcoming birth, they are filling hearts with hope.

Here, we read that Joseph is engaged to be married to Mary and already knows that she is pregnant. He decides that the best decision is to quietly end his relationship with Mary. However, an angel appears to him in his sleep, tells him to marry her, and that her pregnancy is fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies about the Savior of the world. Joseph does what the angel says and continues to live with integrity toward Mary. Joseph was tasked with displaying a strong level of trust in God. Joseph was not biologically related to Jesus but was still His earthly father. Joseph's family line is also essential to the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

The angel of the Lord reaffirms to Joseph the hope that is coming with Jesus' birth. The famous Christmas song “What Child is This?” is a reflection of how wonderful it is that Christ the King was born. The words of this song display the beauty of Jesus being fully God and fully man. He is King, but He is also a baby needing to rest on His mother's lap. Today, listen to this song and remember this wonderful hope we have in Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. On a piece of paper or in a notes app on your phone, write down what hope means to you.
2. Next, write down a few places, people, or things that you place your hope in.

Now, spend a couple of minutes in prayer, asking God to help you place your hope in Him.

The Song of Mary: Magnificat

ADVENT

Words: Brian L. Penney, 2009. Music: 'Uffingham' Jeremiah Clarke, 1701. Setting: "The English Hymnal", 1906.
 copyright: Words: Copyright 2009, Brian L. Penney. These lyrics may be freely reproduced or published for
 Christian worship, provided they are not altered, and this notice is on each copy. All other rights reserved.
 Music and Setting: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2009 Revision.

♩ = 110

1. My soul shall mag - ni - fy the Lord, And with my
 2. Be - hold, I am for - ev - er blessed, For God has
 3. The Lord has shown His might - y arm, Those proud in
 4. The hun - gry with good things are filled, They see God's
 5. The Lord helps His be - lov - ed ones, In mer - cy

spir - it I re - joice; My Sav - ior has re - gard for
 done great things for me; His mer - cy rests on those who
 heart He shall put down; The haught - y from their thrones re -
 kind - ness ev - 'ry day; But on the rich no bless - ing
 He His cov - 'nant keeps; Just as He pro - mised long a -

me, He hears His low - ly ser - vant's voice.
 fear, Who hon - or His Name most ho - ly.
 moved, The low - ly have God's bless - ing found.
 rests, With emp - ty hands they're sent a - way.
 go, to A - bra - ham, and to his Seed.

DAY 8: Mary's Song of Hope

“And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.” – Luke 1:46-55

The best songwriters in the world write from a place of passion or heightened emotion. Relationships, experiences, and the desire to tell a story (and more!) can all drive the songwriting process. Whenever something unbelievable happens, you can't help but break out in song!

That's exactly what happened to Mary when she learned that she would be pregnant with Jesus. Can you imagine what Mary must have been feeling at the time?! These verses are often referred to as “Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat.” Mary pours out her heart to God in worship. She recognizes that she is just a normal person who God has chosen to do something extraordinary, and chooses to praise Him even more. Mary gives all glory back to God. She knows that He is the one worthy of praise, especially for sending His Son into the world.

Many famous Christmas songs draw inspiration from Scripture. One particular hymn, “The Song of Mary,” is a song that puts music to The Magnificat, the verses we read above. The Scripture and the lyrics of this song help us understand how Mary was feeling. We can't help but join in the song that gives all glory and honor back to God.

QUESTIONS

1. Mary recognizes that God has done great things for her. In what ways has God done great things for you?
2. During this Christmas season, what's one thing you can do to remember what God has done by sending Jesus to Earth?

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

CHRISTMAS

Music: 'Mendelssohn' from 'Festgesang' Felix Mendelssohn, 1840. Setting: William H. Cummings, 1857.
copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2005 Revision.

Words: Charles Wesley, 1739, alt.

$\text{♩} = 100$

1. Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King;
 2. Christ, by high - est Heav'n a - dored; Christ the ev - er - last - ing Lord;
 3. Hail the heav'n - ly Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Right - eous - ness!
 4. Come, De - sire of na - tions, come, Fix in us Thy hum - ble home;
 5. Ad - am's like - ness, Lord, ef - face, Stamp Thine im - age in its place:

Peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners re - con - ciled!"
 Late in time, be - hold Him come, Off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.
 Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with heal - ing in His wings.
 Rise, the wo - man's con - qu'ring Seed, Bruise in us the ser - pent's head.
 Se - cond Ad - am from a - bove, Re - in - state us in Thy love.

Joy - ful, all ye na - tions rise, Join the tri - umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God - head see; Hail th'in - car - nate De - i - ty.
 Mild He lays His glo - ry by, Born that man no more may die.
 Now dis - play Thy sav - ing po - wer, Ruin - ed na - ture now re - store;
 Let us Thee, though lost, re - gain, Thee, the Life, the in - ner man:

With th'an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
 Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Je - sus our Em - man - u - el.
 Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them se - cond birth,
 Now in my - stic un - ion join Thine to ours, and ours to Thine.
 O, to all Thy - self im - part, Formed in each be - liev - ing heart.

Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King!"

Lk 2:13-14, 1Cor 15:21-22

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DAY 9: The Shepherds Hear a Song of Hope

“And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.’” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!’” – Luke 2:8-14

Most people love an underdog or an outcast story. Take *The Lion King*, for example. Scar convinces Simba that his dad’s death is his fault and that he should leave forever. Simba leaves his home and teams up with two outcasts, Timon and Pumbaa. In a way, Simba becomes an outcast himself. Of course, it’s easy to cheer for Simba and his new friends. We want to see Simba back with his people and ruling over the Pride Land. We hope that the underdog is the “winner” in a story.

What we read above introduces us to a group of outcasts who are important to the story of Jesus’ birth. An angel of the Lord appears to the shepherds. As they are minding their business and taking care of their sheep, this angel announces that Jesus the Christ, the long-awaited Savior of the world, is here. These shepherds are expected to tell everyone they know about this hopeful, good news! These guys will eventually be the main people to spread the Good News about Jesus’ birth. Here’s the thing: shepherds were the outcasts in their culture at the time. So, it was a huge deal that God trusted them to spread the news about Jesus’ arrival!

The Christmas song “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” celebrates this message from the angels. “Hark” is a command to listen, and a herald is a messenger. This old English hymn is basically saying, “Listen up everyone, these angels have been sent to tell you something amazing!”

The amazing news is that God and sinners are reconciled, meaning that Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection made a way for all people to be considered “good” with God. Because of Jesus, we don’t have to live apart from God because of our sins! That is worth celebrating.

QUESTIONS

1. God chose shepherds to share the Good News with the world. What does that show you about who God is?
2. How do you feel about telling people about Jesus?
3. Who is one person you can share the Good News of Jesus with this week?

Rise Up Shepherd and Follow

Traditional Spiritual

1. There's a star in the east on Christ-mas morn, Rise up,
 2. If you take good heed to the an-gel's word, Rise up,

shepherd, and fol-low. It will lead you to the place where the
 shepherd, and fol-low. You'll for- get your flock, where the you'll for -

Sav - ior's born; Rise up, shepherd, and fol-low.
 get your herd; Rise up, shepherd, and fol-low.

Leave your ewes and leave your lambs, Rise up, shepherd, and
 follow, Leave your sheep and leave your rams,

Rise up, shepherd, and fol-low. Fol - low, fol - low,

Rise up, shepherd, and fol-low, Follow the star of

Beth - le - hem, Rise up, shepherd, and fol-low.

Chord markings: Eb, Eb, Eb, Bb, Cgdim7, Bb, Eb, Eb, Eb, G, Cmin, Cmin, Fmin, Ab, Eb, Cmin, Gmin, Bb9, Eb, Bb, C#dim7, Bb7, Cmin, Gmin, Ab, Eb, F9, Fmin, Ab, Eb, Eb, Bbaug, Bb7, Bbmin(6), Bbaug, Eb, Eb7, Abmaj7, F9, Fmin, Ab, Eb

DAY 10: The Shepherds' Response To Hope

“When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” – Luke 2:15-20

Every good moment needs a hype person. When you're playing your favorite sport and crushing the other team, how great is it to see your friends and family cheering you on from the sidelines? As you work up the nerve to talk to someone who interests you, isn't it a great feeling to have your best friend giving you an extra boost of confidence? Of course! Hype people make awesome moments even better.

After hearing the Good News from the angels, the shepherds immediately travel to see baby Jesus and His parents. Overwhelmed with excitement over this newborn King, they spread the Good News about Him to anyone who would listen.

The shepherds' willingness to follow God's command is documented in the Christmas hymn "Rise Up Shepherd and Follow." One line says, "You'll forget your flocks, you'll forget your herds; rise up, shepherd, and follow." The author of the Scripture this song was written on does not specifically say if the shepherds took their flocks with them on their search for baby Jesus. However, this song lyric provides a poetic way to think about the shepherds' dedication to the Savior. Shepherds were known for their deep care of their flocks. To either leave their flocks behind or take them on a long journey to see Jesus illustrates how important He is to them above all else.

Naturally, these shepherds are hype men. As soon as they meet Jesus face-to-face, they can't help but tell everyone they see the amazing news that we have a Savior who is always worth celebrating. The exciting part is that we can be hype people, too! After experiencing what Jesus has done for us and knowing Him personally, we can share this amazing news about our Savior.

QUESTIONS

1. What is something you are passionate about sharing with others?
2. Who are a few friends that you can share the Good News of Jesus with this week?
Write their names down in a journal or on the notes app on your phone. Then, spend a minute praying that God would give you the courage to share with them this week.

Away in a Manger

CHRISTMAS

Words: stanzas 1,2 anonymous published Philadelphia, 1885. stanza 3 John T. MacFarland (1851-1913).
Music: 'Mueller' James R. Murray, 1887. Setting: "Hymnal for American Youth", 1919.
copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2006 Revision.

$\text{♩} = 100$

1. A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed, The lit - tle Lord
2. The cat - tle are low - ing, the Ba - by a - wakes, But lit - tle Lord
3. Be near me, Lord Je - sus, I ask Thee to stay Close by me for -

Je - sus laid down His sweet head. The stars in the sky looked
Je - sus, no cry - ing He makes; I love Thee, Lord Je - sus, look
ev - er, and love me, I pray; Bless all the dear child - ren in

down where He lay, The lit - tle Lord Je - sus, a - sleep on the hay.
down from the sky And stay by my cra - dle til morn - ing is
Thy ten - der care, And fit us for Hea - ven to live with Thee there.

Lk 2:7, Lk 18:15-17

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DAY 11: The Manger of Hope

“In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.” – Luke 2:1-7

Could you imagine this happening? Think back to a time when you traveled a far distance, perhaps on the way to vacation or moving to a new city. When you got to your destination, was everything how it should have been, or did things not go according to plan?

Joseph and Mary didn't have time to plan for the worst because they entered Bethlehem by decree, hoping for a place to rest once they arrived. After all, Mary was not far from giving birth to Jesus, and traveling can wear you out! Their hope faded as they found no rooms available that night, but what came from this event was hope for the world as Jesus was born in a humble manger away from the crowds.

The Christmas hymn, “Away in a Manger,” details their experience like this:

*“Away in a manger
No crib for a bed
The little Lord Jesus
Lay down His sweet head
The stars in the sky
Look down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay”*

It was a simple and peaceful nativity scene, emphasizing the humble beginning of Jesus' life in a manger because there was no room at the inn. Through this, we can be reminded of the hope that God offers in both the planned and the unknown!

QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think God chose for Jesus to be born in a place like a manger instead of a grand palace?
2. What lessons can we learn from Mary and Joseph's faith and trust in God's plan despite their challenges?

O Come, Divine Messiah

CHRISTMAS

Words: John F. Wade, circa 1743, v.1-3, 6 Translated by Frederick Oakeley, 1841;
v. 4, 5 Translated by William T. Brooke (1848-1917).
Music: 'Adeste Fideles' or 'Portuguese Hymn' John F. Wade, 1743. Setting: "A Hymnal" (Episcopal), 1916.
copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2007 Revision.

$\text{♩} = 120$

1. O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O
2. True God of true God, Light from Light E - ter - nal;
3. Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion; O
4. See how the shep - herds, sum - moned to His cra - dle;
5. Lo! star led chief - tains, Ma - gi, Christ a - dor - ing.

come ye, O come ye, to Beth - le - hem. Come and be -
He Lo, He shuns not the Vir - gin's womb; Son of the
sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heav'n a - bove! Glo - ry to
Leav - ing their flocks, draw nigh to gaze; We too will
Of - fer Him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; We to the

hold Him, born the King of an - gels; O come, let us a -
Fa - ther, be - got - ten, not cre - a - ted;
God, glo - ry in the high - est;
thi - ther bend our joy - ful foot - steps;
Christ Child bring our hearts' ob - la - tions.

dore Him, O come, let us a - dore Him, O come, let us a - dore Him, Christ the Lord.

6. Child, for us sinners poor and in the manger,
We would embrace Thee, with love and awe;
Who would not love Thee, loving us so dearly?

7. Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.

8. Adeste, fideles, laeti triumphantes;
Venite, venite in Bethlehem.
Natum videte Regem angelorum.
Venite adoremus, venite adoremus,
Venite adoremus, Dominum.

Lk 2:15-16

Irregular

DAY 12: Hope in the Humble Birth of a King

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” – Philippians 2:5-8

Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus was fully God and fully human at the same time? This means He felt all the emotions—both positive and negative—that we experience, too: sadness, joy, anger, happiness, pain, confusion, excitement, you name it! Jesus understands what we feel because He experienced it Himself while on this Earth. He understands that life is hard and that sadness and disappointment are part of our human experience. Jesus is more than a rescuer; He is Emmanuel, God WITH us. He is the One who created us. He is the One who knows us. He is the only One who can provide us with true life, joy, and forgiveness. He is the One who we are invited to come and behold.

The Christmas hymn, “O Come, Divine Messiah,” serves as a reminder to all people that the invitation to come and behold this promised Savior is still as wide open now as it was on the night when Jesus was born. In His full humanity, Jesus has firsthand knowledge of our human experiences, frailties, temptations, and feelings. But as the King, Son of the Father, Word of God now in the flesh, He is also the only one who has the power and the authority to bring us hope for when we experience these things and to make whole again what has been broken.

So, the invitation is open—come and behold Him. Come and behold the light and the hope of the world! Come and behold the One who came once before and lived like us, but who will return in His full glory as our Redeemer King! Come one, come all. Come, let us adore Him!

QUESTIONS

1. How does it make you feel to know Jesus experienced the feelings we experience?
2. Are the words of this hymn encouraging to you? Why or why not?
3. This Advent season, how can you choose to come and behold (experience) the joy, salvation, and hope that Jesus brings?

O Holy Night

John S. Dwight

Adolphe Adam

1. O ho-ly night, the stars are bright-ly shin-ing; It is the
 2. Led by the light of faith se-re-ne-ly beaming, With glowing
 3. Tru-ly He taught us to love one an-oth-er; His law is

night of the dear Savior's birth! Long lay the world in sin and er-ror
 hearts by His cra-dle we stand. So led by light of a star sweet-ly
 love and His gos-pel is peace. Chains shall He break, for the slave is our

pin-ing, Till He ap-peared and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope, the wear-y soul re-joic-es, For
 gleam-ing, Here came the wise men from O-ri-ent land. The King of kings lay thus in low-ly manger, In
 bro-ther, And in His name all op-pression shall cease. Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we, Let

yon-der breaks a new and glorious morn. Fall on your knees, O hear the an-gel voic-es! O
 all our tri-als born to be our Friend! He knows our need-- To our weakness is no stranger. Be-
 all with-in us praise His ho-ly name! Christ is the Lord! O praise His name for-ev-er! His

night di-vine, O night when Christ was born! O night, O ho-ly night, O night di-vine!
 hold your King; be-fore Him low-ly bend! Be-hold your King; be-fore Him low-ly bend!
 pow'r and glo-ry ev-er-more pro-claim! His pow'r and glo-ry ev-er-more pro-claim!

Public Domain

DAY 13: Jesus is the Shining Light of Hope

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, — John 1:1-5

Have you ever heard Jesus referred to as the “Light of the World?” The author of these verses writes that in Jesus was “life, and the life was the light of men,” meaning that Jesus brought “light” or “hope” to the world. This hope changed everything!

Light is a common theme when we’re talking about Jesus, especially about His birth. One of the most popular Christmas hymns, “O Holy Night,” describes the night that Jesus was born like this:

*“O holy night, the stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of our dear Savior’s birth.”*

This hymn invites us to reflect on the night Jesus was born, picturing the night sky lit up by the stars. Think about a time when you’ve stood outside under the stars at night. Now imagine that scene being the moment that Jesus entered the world. He was bringing light, or hope, to the world for us, just like the stars bring light to a dark night sky!

This Christmas season, we can celebrate the light of Jesus, allowing Him to light up the places in our lives that feel dark. We can celebrate His birth knowing that true light has come into the world!

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to you that Jesus is the “true light” that “gives light to everyone?”
2. What’s one area of your life where you need the light of Jesus to shine?
3. What’s one way you can shine the light of Jesus to those around you?

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!

CHRISTMAS

Music: 'Mendelssohn' from 'Festgesang' Felix Mendelssohn, 1840. Setting: William H. Cummings, 1857.
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Words: Charles Wesley, 1739, alt.

$\text{♩} = 100$

1. Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King;
 2. Christ, by high - est Heav'n a - dored; Christ the ev - er - last - ing Lord;
 3. Hail the heav'n - ly Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Right - eous - ness!
 4. Come, De - sire of na - tions, come, Fix in us Thy hum - ble home;
 5. Ad - am's like - ness, Lord, ef - face, Stamp Thine im - age in its place:

Peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners re - con - ciled!"
 Late in time, be - hold Him come, Off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.
 Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with heal - ing in His wings.
 Rise, the wo - man's con - qu'ring Seed, Bruise in us the ser - pent's head.
 Se - cond Ad - am from a - bove, Re - in - state us in Thy love.

Joy - ful, all ye na - tions rise, Join the tri - umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God - head see; Hail th'in - car - nate De - i - ty.
 Mild He lays His glo - ry by, Born that man no more may die.
 Now dis - play Thy sav - ing po - wer, Ruin - ed na - ture now re - store;
 Let us Thee, though lost, re - gain, Thee, the Life, the in - ner man:

With th'an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
 Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Je - sus our Em - man - u - el.
 Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them se - cond birth,
 Now in my - stic un - ion join Thine to ours, and ours to Thine.
 O, to all Thy - self im - part, Formed in each be - liev - ing heart.

Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King!"

Lk 2:13-14, 1Cor 15:21-22

7777777777

DAY 14: Hope in the Word Became Flesh

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” — John 1:14

What is the best news you’ve received this year? Think about how you felt when you received that news. Now multiply that feeling by a million! That is how those who had been waiting for Jesus, the Messiah, to arrive must have felt when they learned He was finally here.

John, the author of this verse, was summarizing this Good News. The Word, which was Jesus, became flesh and lived on Earth, which was predicted for many, many years before it actually happened. This promise from God being kept was worth a huge celebration!

Jesus, who was fully God, became fully human, too, when He came to Earth. The hymn “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” helps us understand this idea a little more. Let’s take a look.

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,— Jesus is eternally revered in Heaven and is the Lord who existed before the beginning. It reminds us that the baby born in Bethlehem is God forever! *Late in time behold him come, offspring of the Virgin’s womb*— The phrase “late in time” refers to the long-awaited coming of the Messiah (meaning anointed one or chosen one). “Offspring of the virgin’s womb” refers to the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14. *Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th’incarnate Deity,*— “Veiled in flesh” means that Jesus, while fully God, took on human form, so if you were to see Him, you wouldn’t immediately know that He was also God. “The Godhead see” invites us to recognize and worship that Jesus is God. “Hail th’incarnate Deity” is a call to acknowledge Jesus as God who chose to be with us! *Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel.*— Jesus, fully God and fully man, was pleased to live among humanity, experiencing life as we do. “Immanuel” means “God with us,” reminding us that through Jesus, God is with us through everything.

This hymn is a song of celebration and praise of the Good News that we celebrate at Christmas. We celebrate that God kept His promise of sending Jesus to Earth, and because of that, we can be close to God forever!

QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever thought about the lyrics to “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!” before?
2. What’s one lyric that stood out to you?
3. Does knowing the meaning of these lyrics change how you relate to the song? How?

Joy to the World

CHRISTMAS

Musical: 'Antioch' pieced together from "Messiah" George F. Handel, 1741. Setting: Lowell Mason, 1836.
copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2005 Revision.

$\text{♩} = 80$

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive her King;
2. Joy to the earth, the Sa - vior reigns! Let men their songs em - ploy;
3. No more let sins, and sor - rows grow, Nor thorns in - fest the ground;
4. He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the na - tions prove

Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare Him room, And Heav'n and na - ture sing,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains Re - peat the sound - ing joy,
He comes to make His bless - ings flow Far as the curse is found,
The glo - ries of His right - eous - ness, And won - ders of His love,

And Heav'n and na - ture sing, And Heav'n, and Heav'n, and na - ture sing.
Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re - peat, re - peat, the sound - ing joy.
Far as the curse is found, Far as, far as, the curse is found.
And won - ders of His love, And won - ders, won - ders, of His love.

DAY 15: A Long-Awaited Hope Recognized

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”— Luke 2:25-32

When was the last time you felt joy? Maybe it was laughing with your closest friends, winning the game you played your hardest in, or being in a place that was so beautiful not even a camera could capture it accurately. Those moments of joy are some of the best, aren’t they?

In Luke 2:25-32, we meet Simeon, a righteous and devout man who had been waiting for the “consolation of Israel,” meaning the Messiah (Jesus) who would bring salvation and peace. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Simeon comes to the temple and, upon seeing the infant Jesus, he recognizes the fulfillment of God’s promise! His heart overflows with joy as he proclaims that he has seen God’s salvation. This brings the purest form of joy we could imagine!

A popular song at Christmas time is called “Joy to the World,” and it’s about the joy that surrounded Jesus’ arrival on Earth. Although often associated with Christmas, its message is timeless—celebrating the coming of Christ and the joy that His presence brings to all creation.

The Good News is that this joy is available to us now! It’s all around us if we choose to look for the ways Jesus is at work in us, through us, and in the world around us. When we actively look for joy in the world, we’ll find it because He is everywhere!

QUESTIONS

1. What is something in your life that brings you joy?
2. Who or what is one person, place, and activity that brings you joy?

The First Noel

CHRISTMAS

Words: Traditional English carol, possibly dating from as early as the 13th Century.
 Music: "The First Noel" Traditional English carol, possibly dating from as early as the 13th Century.
 Setting: "The Methodist Sunday School Hymnal", 1911.
 copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2006 Revision.

$\text{♩} = 100$

1. The first No - el the an - gel did say Was to cer - tain poor shep - herds
 2. They look - ed up and saw a star Shin - ing in the east,
 3. And by the light of that same star Three Wise Men came
 4. This star drew nigh to the north - west, Ov - er Beth - le - hem
 5. Then did they know as - sur - ed - ly With - in that house

in fields as they lay; In fields where they lay tend - ing their sheep,
 be - yond them far; And to the earth it gave great light,
 from coun - try far; To seek for a King was their in - tent,
 it took its rest; And there it did both stop and stay,
 the King did lie; One en - tered it them for to see,

On a cold win - ter's night that was so deep,
 And so it con - tin - ued both day and night,
 And to fol - low the star where - ev - er it went.
 Right ov - er the place where Je - sus lay,
 And found the Babe in pov - er - ty.

No - el, No - el, No - el, No - el, Born is the King of Is - ra - el.

DAY 16: The Wise Men Seek Hope

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." — Matthew 2:1-2

What are some activities you're looking forward to? You might have a big Christmas party coming up with your friends, a family gathering at Christmas, or something in the new year you can't wait for. These things give us hope. Many times, when you lack something to look forward to, you might even feel a little hopeless!

In Matthew 2, we're introduced to the wise men. We don't know very much about them. But, we do know they were from the East, probably near Persia, and studied stars. Upon discovering the star over Bethlehem, the wise men were instantly filled with hope and left everything to follow that star. They knew the significance of it—that it represented the birth of the Messiah (meaning the anointed one or chosen one)! After centuries of waiting for this King to come, He had finally arrived! Matthew tells us their response to this Good News was to go worship this King. They left behind everything to follow this star because of their hope in this Savior.

Their hope in the Messiah outweighed their hope in anything they'd find in the world. So many times, we try to find hope in relationships, possessions, hobbies, or money. The wise men left all of these behind because they knew that their ultimate hope was in Christ.

This Christmas, we can have that same hope. The Messiah has come to us. He has lived a life we couldn't. He has died the death we deserve, and He has risen for us! This Christmas, we can celebrate no matter what we find ourselves facing in this season with this same hope!

Today, read the lyrics to the Christmas hymn "Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel!" "Noel" is a joyous declaration to the world, saying, "A Child is Born, and now all is well!" Indeed, it is. Just like the wise men did, let's celebrate that this Christmas season!

QUESTIONS

1. What's something you're hoping for or looking forward to right now?
2. Why might it be hard to place your hope in Jesus?
3. Why do you think placing your hope in Jesus instead of worldly things matters?

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

CHRISTMAS

Words: Traditional English.

Music: 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen' Traditional English. Setting: "Carols Old And Carols New", 1918.
copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2006 Revision.

♩ = 160

1. God rest ye mer - ry, gen - tle - men, let no - thing you dis - may,
2. In Beth - le - hem, in Is - ra - el, this bless - ed Babe was born,
3. From God our heav'n - ly Fa - - ther a bless - ed an - gel came;
4. "Fear not, then," said the an - - gel, "Let no - thing you a - fright
5. The shep - herds at those ti - - dings re - jo - iced much in mind,

Re - mem - ber Christ our Sa - - vior was born on Christ - mas Day;
And laid with - in a man - - ger up - on this bless - ed morn;
And un - to cer - tain shep - - herds brought ti - dings of the same;
This day is born a Sa - - vior of a pure Vir - gin bright,
And left their flocks a - feed - - ing in tem - pest, storm and wind,

To save us all from Sa - tan's pow'r when we were gone a - - stray.
The which His mo - ther Ma - - ry did no - thing take in scorn.
How that in Beth - le - - hem was born the Son of God by name.
To free all those who trust in Him from Sa - tan's pow'r and might."
And went to Beth - l'em straight - aw - ay this bless - ed Babe to find.

O ti - dings of com - fort and joy, com - fort and joy; O ti - dings of com - fort and joy.

6. But when to Bethlehem they came where our dear Savior lay,
They found Him in a manger where oxen feed on hay;
His mother Mary kneeling unto the Lord did pray.

7. Now to the Lord sing praises all you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas all others doth deface.

8. God bless the ruler of this house, and send him long to reign,
And many a merry Christmas may live to see again;
Among your friends and kindred that live both far and near
That God send you a happy new year, happy new year,
And God send you a happy new year.

DAY 17: Hope Amidst Fear

“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”” Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” – Matthew 2:3-8

We all have fears or things we are worried about. What are some of your fears right now?

In this passage, we read about King Herod. Herod was known for his desire for authority and control. He didn't want anyone or anything to threaten that. He even executed his own family members whom he thought were disloyal. So, when he hears the Messiah is born, he's scared of what may happen to his power. We read that not only was Herod fearful, but all of Jerusalem was fearful as well. They may have been scared of what Herod would do, or they may have been anxious about the uncertainty of the future.

Herod investigates more and asks the historians where the Messiah was born. They tell him Bethlehem. Herod then asks the wise men to find the Messiah and report back what they discover. Even though Herod tells the wise men he just wants to worship Jesus, he really wants to put an end to any threat. His fear will cause him to act irrationally.

Sometimes, our fears and anxieties do the same. They often cause us to think irrationally and even act illogically. While a little fear or anxiety can be helpful or even healthy at times, they can also quickly become unhelpful and very unhealthy for us as well. When we face these fears and anxieties, reminding ourselves of God's truth can help us. Remembering the promises of God can help combat those unhelpful thoughts!

In the hymn “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen,” we sing about the birth of Jesus bringing “tidings of comfort and joy.” Because of the birth of Jesus, and knowing that Jesus is WITH us, we too can have comfort and joy. We can rest knowing He will comfort us in our fears and give us joy in the midst of our anxiety.

QUESTIONS

1. What are some of your biggest fears or anxieties right now?
2. Does knowing Jesus is with you bring you comfort and joy? How?

We Three Kings of Orient Are

1. We three kings of O - ri - ent are, Bear - ing gifts we trav - erse a - far,
(Gaspar) 2. Born a King on Beth - le - hem plain, Gold I bring to crown Him a - gain,
(Melchior) 3. Frank - in - cense to of - fer have I, In - cense owns a De - i - ty night,
(Balthasar) 4. Myrrh is mine; its bit - ter per - fume Breathes a life of gath - er - ing gloom;
 5. Glo - rious now be - hold Him a - rise, King, and God, and sac - ri - fice;

Field and foun - tain, Moor and moun - tain, Fol - low - ing yon - der star.
 King for - ev - er, Ceas - ing nev - er O - ver us all to reign.
 Prayer and prais - ing All men rais - ing, Wor - ship Him, God on high.
 Sor - row - ing, sigh - ing, Bleed - ing, dy - ing, Sealed in the stone - cold tomb.
 Heav - en sings Al - le - lu - ia: Al - le - lu - ia the earth re - plies.

Chorus

O star of won - der, star of night, Star with roy - al beau - ty bright,

West - ward lead - ing, still pro - ceed - ing, Guide us to thy per - fect light. A - men.

Words and Music by Jjohn Henry Hopkins, Jr. (1820-1891)

PDHymns.com

DAY 18: The Gifts of Hope

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.” – Matthew 2:10-11

Gifts are always nice, but it’s the meaningful gifts that we remember the most, right? When someone takes the time to think about what we like or what is special to us, it means more.

Shortly after Jesus was born, the wise men brought Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. While these might seem random, each gift had significance. The meanings of the gifts foreshadowed the identity of Jesus and His life!

The gift of gold pointed to Jesus’ royalty. Obviously, gold is an appropriate gift for Him because gold is the “metal of kings.” This gift from the wise men acknowledged that Jesus was the King of kings.

The gift of frankincense showed that Jesus was the great High Priest. In fact, it showed that Jesus was God in human form! Incense was used in the temple for worshiping God. Incense mixed with oil was used to anoint the Israelite priests. It was also part of the meal offerings of thanksgiving and praise to God. Through this gift, the wise men acknowledged that Jesus was fully God and fully man!

The gift of myrrh represented Jesus’ death. In that time, myrrh was used for embalming the deceased. This might seem like an odd gift to give to a newborn baby, but in this case, it was not. The wise men acknowledged that Jesus would die a brutal death to save humanity. He would live a life as an acceptable and worthy sacrifice for the sins of all humans.

The wise men preached the Gospel with the gifts they gave. Their gift-giving told the story of how God Himself came down from Heaven as Lord and King to fulfill God’s plan and die for us. They brought their best and gave gifts appropriate for the Savior of the World who was bringing hope to the world. The same hope that we celebrate at Christmas time!

QUESTIONS

1. What’s the most meaningful gift you’ve ever been given?
2. What made that gift meaningful?
3. Listen to or read the lyrics of “We Three Kings.” Spend some time learning more about each of the meaningful gifts the wise men gave to Jesus.

Go Tell It on the Mountain

Chorus

Go, tell it on the moun - tain, o - ver the hills and ev - 'ry - where;

go, tell it on the moun - tain, that Je - sus Christ is born.

1. The shep - herds all were watch - ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,
 2. The shep - herds feared and trem - bled when, lo! a - bove the earth
 3. Down in a low - ly man - ger the hum - ble Christ was born,

be - hold, thru - out the hea - vens there shone a ho - ly light.
 rang out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
 and God sent us sal - va - tion that bles - sed Christ - mas morn.

Words: Spiritual, Vss. John W. Work, Jr (1907)
 Music: Spiritual

PDFHymns.com

DAY 19: The Shepherds Share Hope

“And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” – Luke 2:16-20

Imagine you are one of the shepherds on the night of Jesus’ birth. Reread these verses from that perspective now!

Can you even imagine discovering that Jesus had been born? And the shepherds didn’t keep quiet about what they saw! After meeting Jesus, they praised God and spread the word that the long-awaited Messiah was finally here!

These shepherds weren’t people of power or great influence; they were just regular people who were going about their regular, non-glamorous lives. In fact, shepherds were considered lowly in society and in the culture of the time. But God chose them to be some of the first to see His Son, experience the birth of hope firsthand, and share the Good News! From this, we learn that anyone, no matter who they are, can be used by God to tell others about Jesus.

The song “Go Tell It on the Mountain” is often sung during the Christmas season. The lyrics talk about the role of the shepherds in spreading the Good News of Jesus’ birth! It also encourages us to go and share the Gospel everywhere, just like the shepherds did.

We live in a world of people who need to experience the hope that Jesus offers but don’t yet know about it! And we don’t need to wait to tell them about it. Just like the shepherds, we can be the people to share the Good News: that God sent Jesus to Earth to save us from our sins so that we could be with God forever.

Now, “go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and everywhere that Jesus Christ is born!”

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the hope of Jesus good news to you?
2. Who is someone you know that needs to hear the Good News of Jesus right now?
3. How can you tell or show that person the Good News today?

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!

CHRISTMAS

Music: 'Mendelssohn' from 'Festgesang' Felix Mendelssohn, 1840. Setting: William H. Cummings, 1857.
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Words: Charles Wesley, 1739, alt.

$\text{♩} = 100$

1. Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King;
 2. Christ, by high - est Heav'n a - dored; Christ the ev - er - last - ing Lord;
 3. Hail the heav'n - ly Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Right - eous - ness!
 4. Come, De - sire of na - tions, come, Fix in us Thy hum - ble home;
 5. Ad - am's like - ness, Lord, ef - face, Stamp Thine im - age in its place:

Peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners re - con - ciled!"
 Late in time, be - hold Him come, Off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.
 Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with heal - ing in His wings.
 Rise, the wo - man's con - qu'ring Seed, Bruise in us the ser - pent's head.
 Se - cond Ad - am from a - bove, Re - in - state us in Thy love.

Joy - ful, all ye na - tions rise, Join the tri - umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God - head see; Hail th'in - car - nate De - i - ty.
 Mild He lays His glo - ry by, Born that man no more may die.
 Now dis - play Thy sav - ing po - wer, Ruin - ed na - ture now re - store;
 Let us Thee, though lost, re - gain, Thee, the Life, the in - ner man:

With th'an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
 Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Je - sus our Em - man - u - el.
 Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them se - cond birth,
 Now in my - stic un - ion join Thine to ours, and ours to Thine.
 O, to all Thy - self im - part, Formed in each be - liev - ing heart.

Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King!"

Lk 2:13-14, 1Cor 15:21-22

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DAY 20: The Hope in the Temple

“And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”—Luke 2:22-24

When Mary and Joseph brought baby Jesus to the temple, they were fulfilling the Jewish law given by God long before. But this wasn't just about following the rules. It was part of a bigger plan. In these verses, we see a glimpse of God's incredible faithfulness. God had made promises throughout the Old Testament about a coming Savior, and here, Jesus is presented as the fulfillment of those promises. This small, quiet moment in the temple of offering turtledoves as a sacrifice was part of something much bigger: God keeping His word to rescue the world.

When Jesus was brought to the temple as a baby, it was a moment pointing to the future, where He would offer Himself as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. His mission was clear, even if no one else fully understood it yet.

Jesus was born not just to live a normal life but to save humanity from their sins. From His birth, He was set apart for a purpose: to bring light and life to a world in darkness. The Christmas hymn “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” celebrates this exact thing:

*“Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings.”*

These lyrics celebrate the promises God kept and the hope we have because of Him: that Jesus came to bring healing, peace, and life to the world. We can choose to experience that same healing, peace, and life in Jesus today, too!

QUESTIONS

1. How does knowing that Jesus' birth was part of God's plan to save the world make you feel?
2. What promises of God have you seen fulfilled in your life, or what promises are you still waiting for?

Little Lamb Who Made Thee

AMÁDEUS 7, 7, 7, 7

1. Lit - tle lamb, who made thee, Dost thou know
 2. Gave thee cloth - ing of de - light, Soft - est cloth -
 3. Dost thou know, lit - tle lamb, Dost thou know
 4. He is called by thy name, For He calls
 5. I a child, and thou a lamb, We are call -

who made thee? Gave thee life, and bade thee
 ing woo - ly white, Gave thee such a ten - der
 who made thee? Lit - tle lamb, I'll tell
 Him - self a lamb; He is meek and He is
 ed by His name, Lit - tle lamb, lit - tle

feed, By the streams and o'er the mead.
 voice, Mak - ing all the vales re - joice.
 thee, Lit - tle lamb, I'll tell thee.
 mild, He be - came a lit - tle child.
 lamb, Lit - tle lamb, God bless thee! A - men.

Words: William Blake
 Music: Arr. from Mozart (1756-1791)

PDHymns.com

DAY 21: Our Hope is Jesus, the Lamb of God

“The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’” – John 1:29

You may have heard of John the Baptist. He was Jesus’ cousin, and some people found him a bit odd. He lived out in the wilderness. He wore clothes made out of camel hair. He ate locusts and wild honey. He definitely stood out from the crowd but wasn’t looking for fame. Instead, he was trying to point people to Jesus. He was baptizing people and preaching to all who would listen about the need for all to turn away from their sins and follow God. Then, one day, while John was preaching and baptizing, he saw Jesus approaching and called Him “the Lamb of God.” Have you ever wondered why?

The Old Testament is filled with references of God instructing His people to sacrifice a lamb as an offering to Him for their protection, provision, or forgiveness of sin. We see it in the story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22), in the Passover (Exodus 12), and as part of the sacrificial system God implemented for His people to be forgiven of their sin (Leviticus.) Some who were listening to John that day may not have fully understood what it meant when he called Jesus the Lamb of God, but God was using John’s words to reveal Jesus’ mission of sacrificing His life as the final and ultimate sacrifice for our sin. When the Israelites offered sacrifices in Old Testament times, it granted them forgiveness, peace with God, and hope for their future. Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross offers us these things once and for all.

At Christmas, we are reminded that we have eternal hope because Christ’s birth led to His death, which covers our sin and gives us the ability to live and thrive with God on Earth and in Heaven!

Read the words of the Christmas hymn “Little Lamb Who Made Thee.”

Through this verse and these lyrics, we can remember the truth, that as humans, we need a Savior. We need someone to save us from our sins. That Savior is Jesus, and He is with us!

QUESTIONS

1. How does knowing the meaning behind Jesus as the Lamb of God change your understanding of His sacrifice for you?
2. How do the words of this hymn help you better understand the love God has for you?

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

CHRISTMAS

Music: 'Mendelssohn' from 'Festgesang' Felix Mendelssohn, 1840. Setting: William H. Cummings, 1857.
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Words: Charles Wesley, 1739, alt.

$\text{♩} = 100$

1. Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King;
 2. Christ, by high - est Heav'n a - dored; Christ the ev - er - last - ing Lord;
 3. Hail the heav'n - ly Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Right - eous - ness!
 4. Come, De - sire of na - tions, come, Fix in us Thy hum - ble home;
 5. Ad - am's like - ness, Lord, ef - face, Stamp Thine im - age in its place:

Peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners re - con - ciled!"
 Late in time, be - hold Him come, Off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.
 Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with heal - ing in His wings.
 Rise, the wo - man's con - qu'ring Seed, Bruise in us the ser - pent's head.
 Se - cond Ad - am from a - bove, Re - in - state us in Thy love.

Joy - ful, all ye na - tions rise, Join the tri - umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God - head see; Hail th'in - car - nate De - i - ty.
 Mild He lays His glo - ry by, Born that man no more may die.
 Now dis - play Thy sav - ing po - wer, Ruin - ed na - ture now re - store;
 Let us Thee, though lost, re - gain, Thee, the Life, the in - ner man:

With th'an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
 Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Je - sus our Em - man - u - el.
 Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them se - cond birth,
 Now in my - stic un - ion join Thine to ours, and ours to Thine.
 O, to all Thy - self im - part, Formed in each be - liev - ing heart.

Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King!"

Lk 2:13-14, 1Cor 15:21-22

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DAY 22: Our Hope is Jesus, Prince of Peace

“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.”—Ephesians 2:14-18

We live in a world where it’s easy to become anxious. Maybe you or someone close to you struggles with anxiety. It’s not surprising considering the world that we all live in today.

You have experienced a pandemic that likely interrupted your normal life. There’s a constant pressure to perform and succeed. Social media is constantly tempting you to compare yourself to others.

It’s becoming increasingly difficult to live at peace with the world around us. You might be feeling that tension on social media or with friends or at home. At times, you might even feel it with God. It’s all evidence that we all live in a broken world.

Christmas is a great time to be reminded that, through Jesus, we can still experience peace despite our circumstances. He brings hope for reconciliation with both Him and others.

Before Jesus came, Jews and Gentiles (anyone who was not a Jew) were often considered enemies. The Jews were God’s chosen people. The Gentiles were considered pagan and unclean. But Jesus “has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility...making peace.” Jesus also broke down the dividing wall between man and God. Because of this, we have hope for both peace and reconciliation with God the Father.

Jesus, as the Source of our peace, was the inspiration for the third verse of the Christmas hymn “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” Because of Jesus, we no longer have to live without peace. This Christmas (and always), we can choose to experience the peace that Jesus offers, inside ourselves and in our relationships with others.

QUESTIONS

1. Who is someone you are not at peace with right now? With the peace that Jesus offers you, what can you do to take a step toward reconciliation?
2. What are ways you can choose peace in your school, in your friend group, or in your family?
3. What is something you need to confess to God or hear from Him to help you experience His peace?

Joy to the World

CHRISTMAS

Musical: 'Antioch' pieced together from "Messiah" George F. Handel, 1741. Setting: Lowell Mason, 1836.
copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2005 Revision.

$\text{♩} = 80$

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re - ceive her King;
2. Joy to the earth, the Sa - vior reigns! Let men their songs em - ploy;
3. No more let sins, and sor - rows grow, Nor thorns in - fest the ground;
4. He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the na - tions prove

Let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare Him room, And Heav'n and na - ture sing,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains Re - peat the sound - ing joy,
He comes to make His bless - ings flow Far as the curse is found,
The glo - ries of His right - eous - ness, And won - ders of His love,

And Heav'n and na - ture sing, And Heav'n, and Heav'n, and na - ture sing.
Re - peat the sound - ing joy, Re - peat, re - peat, the sound - ing joy.
Far as the curse is found, Far as, far as, the curse is found.
And won - ders of His love, And won - ders, won - ders, of His love.

DAY 23: Our Hope Is Jesus, Our Salvation

Have you ever been so excited about something you just couldn't wait to share the news with someone else? Maybe you made the team or got the part. Maybe your crush finally talked to you. Maybe you went to an awesome concert. You experienced something that brought you joy, and you just had to tell someone! That is exactly how the writer of Psalm 98 must have felt. Take a minute to read it:

“Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord! Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.” – Psalm 98:1-9

The author of this verse was VERY excited about salvation. You might be wondering what that means. Most people, when they think of the gift of salvation, think of eternal life in Heaven. While this is accurate, it is also incomplete. Salvation means deliverance. We are delivered from the power of sin over our lives. Yes, this gives us eternal life in Heaven with God, but it also promises us a life of freedom, abundance, and joy here on earth. That is something to get excited about!

The author also speaks about joy. Sometimes, we can confuse joy with happiness. But, this kind of joy is not just happiness—it's like a feeling of inner peace and contentment despite our circumstances because we can trust that God is good and God is for us. We can experience joy because of the all-encompassing salvation Jesus brought us.

This psalm was what inspired the Christmas hymn “Joy to the World.” We can celebrate Christmas (and every day) by remembering the truth of this song because sin no longer rules over us! Instead, we can experience God's truth, grace, and wonders of His love.

QUESTIONS

1. What is something you experienced that you couldn't wait to tell someone else about?
2. Have you ever experienced joy despite difficult circumstances? Why do you think you were able to still experience joy at that time?

Spend two minutes asking God to help you choose joy today, no matter what you may be facing right now.

Crown Him With Many Crowns

REDEEMER

Words: Verses 1, 4, 5, 6 & 9: Matthew Bridges, *The Passion of Jesus*, 1852.
 verses 2 & 3: Godfrey Thring, *Hymns and Sacred Lyrics*, 1874.
 Music: 'Diademata' George J. Elvey, 1868. Setting: "Appendix to Hymns Ancient and Modern", 1869.
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♩ = 110

1. Crown Him with man - y crowns, the Lamb up - on His throne.
 2. Crown Him the vir - gin's Son, the God in - car - nate born,
 3. Crown Him the Son of God, be - fore the worlds be - gan,
 4. Crown Him the Lord of life, who tri - umphed o'er the grave,
 5. Crown Him the Lord of peace, Whose pow'r a scep - ter sways

Hark! How the heav'n - ly an - them drowns all mu - sic but its own.
 Whose arm those crim - son tro - phies won which now His brow a - dorn;
 And ye who tread where He hath trod, crown Him the Son of Man;
 And rose vic - tor - ious in the strife for those He came to save.
 From pole to pole, that wars may cease, and all be prayer and praise.

A - - wake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee,
 Fruit of the mys - tic rose, as of that rose the stem;
 Who ev - ery grief hath known that wrings the hu - man breast,
 His glo - ries now we sing, Who died, and rose on high,
 His reign shall know no end, and round His pierc - ed feet

And hail Him as thy match - less King through all e - ter - ni - ty.
 The root whence mer - cy ev - er flows, the Babe of Beth - le - hem.
 And takes and bears them for His own, that all in Him may rest.
 Who died e - ter - nal life to bring, and lives that death may die.
 Fair flow'rs of pa - ra - dise ex - tend their fra - grance ev - er sweet.

6. Crown Him the Lord of love, behold His hands and side,
 Those wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified.
 No angel in the sky can fully bear that sight,
 But downward bends his burning eye at mysteries so bright.
7. Crown Him the Lord of Heaven, enthroned in worlds above,
 Crown Him the King to Whom is given the wondrous name of Love.
 Crown Him with many crowns, as thrones before Him fall;
 Crown Him, ye kings, with many crowns, for He is King of all.
8. Crown Him the Lord of lords, who over all doth reign,
 Who once on earth, the incarnate Word, for ransomed sinners slain,
 Now lives in realms of light, where saints with angels sing
 Their songs before Him day and night, their God, Redeemer, King.
9. Crown Him the Lord of years, the Potentate of time,
 Creator of the rolling spheres, ineffably sublime.
 All hail, Redeemer, hail! For Thou has died for me;
 Thy praise and glory shall not fail throughout eternity.

DAY 24: Our Hope is Jesus' Return

“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.” – Revelation 19:11-16

Think of the worst argument you've ever seen on TV, in a movie, or been a part of yourself. It probably included some heated words or maybe some raised voices. Those individuals who were part of the argument maybe even said things they wish they could take back.

Arguments like these can sometimes feel like a battle—a conflict between two or more people or groups. We see this a lot in our broken world today. There are lots of arguments, wars, and injustices where we see this brokenness on display all around us.

In Scripture, we read about a “spiritual battle” that is going on around us, and in this particular verse, God inspired John to describe this battle using the imagery of war. The book of Revelation can be very difficult to fully grasp because of imagery like this. Biblical scholars often have different ways of interpreting it. However, one thing that all scholars do agree upon is that Jesus is returning. In fact, about one out of every 30 verses in the Bible reference the return of Jesus.

At Christmas, we remember and celebrate that God chose to enter our world as a baby to proclaim the Good News of His love for us. It is also a time to look forward in hope of Jesus' return and the establishment of his reign as King of kings and Lord of Lords, when everything in our broken world will be made right!

The hymn “Crown Him With Many Crowns” gives us words to praise God for this promise of hope in Jesus as King. As a matter of fact, Matthew Bridges wrote this hymn after reading Revelation 19:12! As you read these lyrics, praise God for this hope that we have today!

QUESTIONS

1. Where do you notice brokenness in the world around you?
2. How might looking forward to Jesus' return give you hope?
3. Today, pray this sentence: “Jesus, I put my hope in you.”

Silent Night

CHRISTMAS

Words: Josef Mohr, 1818, stanzas 1,3 Translated by John Freeman Young, 1863, stanzas 2,4 translator anonymous.

Music: "Stille Nacht" Franz Xaver Gruber, 1818. Setting: "Concordia Kinderchöre", 1908. copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2005 Revision.

$\text{♩} = 60$

1. Si - - lent night, ho - - ly night, All is calm, all is bright
 2. Si - - lent night, ho - - ly night, Shep - herds quake at the sight;
 3. Si - - lent night, ho - - ly night, Son of God, love's pure light;
 4. Si - - lent night, ho - - ly night, Won - drous star, lend thy light;

Round yon vir - gin mo - ther and Child, Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and
 Glo - ries stream from hea - ven a - far, Heaven - ly hosts sing Al - le - lu -
 Ra - dant beams from Thy ho - ly face With the dawn of re - deem - ing
 With the an - gels let us sing, Al - le - lu - - ia to our

mild, Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace, Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace.
 ia! Christ the Sa - vior is born, Christ the Sa - vior is born!
 grace, Je - sus, Lord, at Thy birth, Je - sus, Lord, at Thy birth.
 King, Christ the Sa - vior is born, Christ the Sa - vior is born!

DAY 25: Jesus is Our Greatest Gift of Hope

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” – John 3:16

The day we’ve been waiting for is finally here! Christmas is a reminder of God’s great love for us. Not only did Jesus enter into a broken world to experience all the pain and suffering we live through, He carried out the ultimate act of love by dying on the Cross for our sins. While Jesus knew all along He would make this sacrifice, He was born as a human baby. He was wrapped in cloths and placed in a manger (feeding trough). This is what we are celebrating today! Jesus is our greatest gift. He is our gift of hope!

As you celebrate that miracle today, think about the words of “Silent Night,” which describe the birth of hope into the world. This Holy infant so tender and mild is our Savior, Jesus, our greatest gift of hope.

*“Silent night, holy night
Shepherds quake at the sight
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia
Christ the Savior is born
Christ the Savior is born*

*Silent night, holy night
Son of God, love’s pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth”*

Today is the perfect day to reflect on God’s love and the gift of Jesus as the greatest hope for the world. Because of this gift, we get to be close to God forever when we choose to follow Him. That is the greatest gift, and it’s worth celebrating!

QUESTIONS

1. Personalize today’s verse by writing your name in the blank: “For God so loved _____, that he gave his only Son, that _____ should not perish but have eternal life.”
2. Spend two minutes in prayer. Thank God for the gift of Jesus that we celebrate today, the gift of hope He gives us, and the gift of being with God forever.



MERRY CHRISTMAS & A SPECIAL THANK YOU

TO THOSE WHO HAD A HAND IN CREATING THIS DEVOTIONAL

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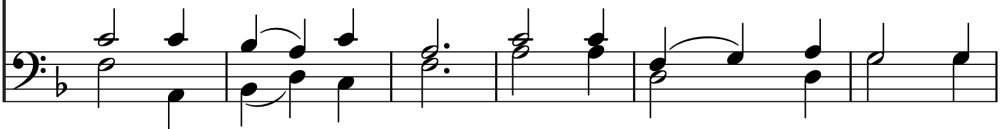
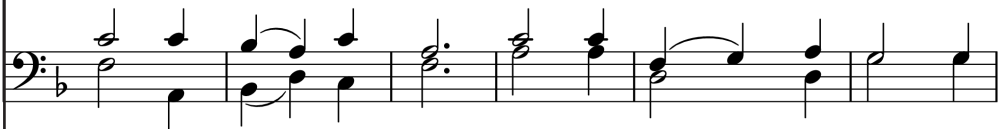
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HOW TO KNOW *JESUS*

Maybe you've turned to this page, having never entered into a saving relationship with Jesus. Maybe you already have a saving relationship with Jesus and need to be more committed to making Him known. No matter where you find yourself, this page is for you. If you need to know Jesus, this page is an excellent place to start. If you need to make Jesus known, this page can help you think about how to go about sharing His story with others.

TO ENTER INTO A SAVING RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, YOU FIRST HAVE TO UNDERSTAND WHO GOD IS.

First, God is the Creator (Gen 1:1). He created everything, even you. Second, God is perfect in all His ways (Ps. 18:30). So, combined, that makes God the perfect creator of all things. He rules over everything, and His rule is 100% right.

NEXT, YOU HAVE TO ACCEPT THAT YOUR SIN IS A PROBLEM (ONE THAT YOU CAN'T SOLVE ON YOUR OWN).

Because God is the perfect King, when we do something that goes against His ways, it's called sin. And because God is who He is, all sin is rebellion against Him (Ps. 51:3-4). The only right penalty for our rebellion? It's death (Rom. 6:23). Both spiritual and physical. The worst part is that we're completely unable to save ourselves.

THEN, YOU HAVE TO GRASP THE TRUTH THAT JESUS IS THE ONLY ANSWER TO YOUR SIN PROBLEM.

Jesus was God's Son, sent to earth to live a perfect life that He might serve as the once-and-for-all perfect sacrifice in our place (Matt. 1:18-21). Jesus died on the cross to satisfy God's sense of justice and save from their sins all who will believe in Him (Jn 3:16). Only Jesus could do this.

FINALLY, YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART THAT JESUS IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS AND THAT HIS DEATH ACCOMPLISHED WHAT HE SAID IT ACCOMPLISHED.

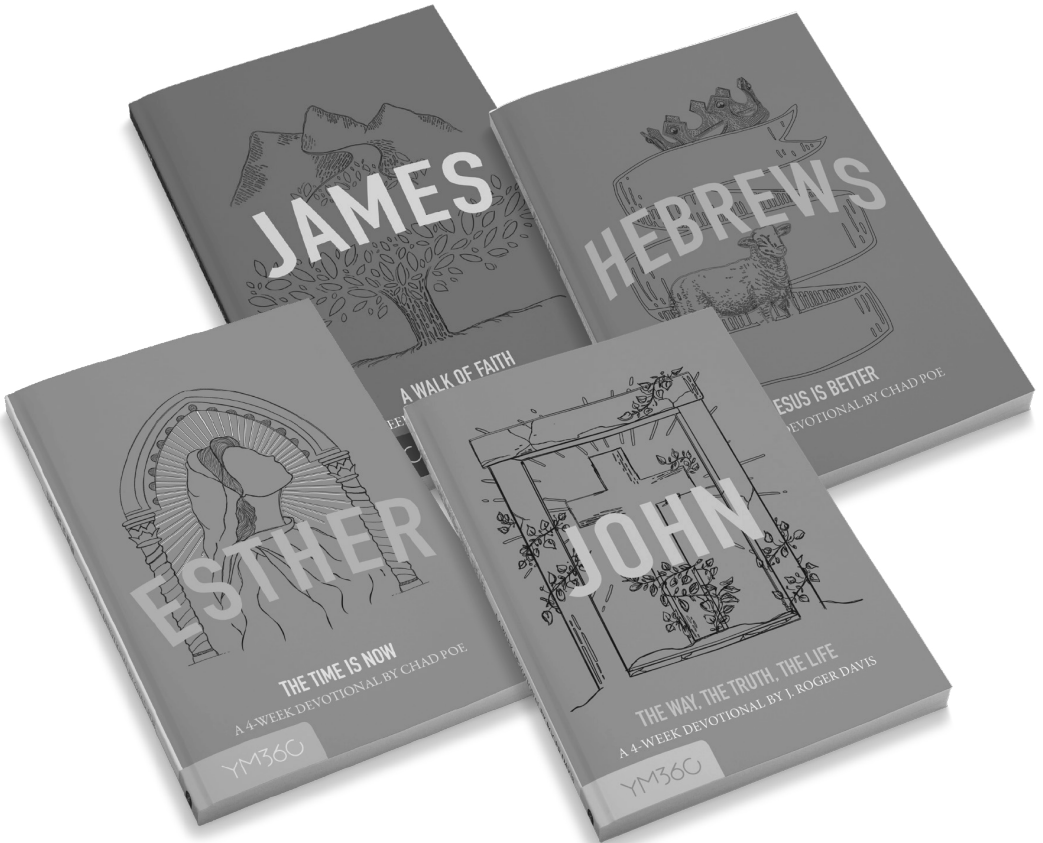
The only way that we can be saved from our sin problem is to believe that Jesus is who He says He is. When we put our faith in Jesus as our Savior, we're saved from the penalty of our sin. We're saved from death. This is only possible by God's grace through faith in Jesus. We can't do anything to earn our salvation.

Here's the coolest part: When you come to salvation in Christ, your life is completely renewed, freed from the effects of sin (2 Cor. 5:17). You are a new creation!

IF YOU NEED TO COME TO FAITH IN JESUS, LET THESE WORDS GUIDE YOU. AND IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE THAT NEEDS CHRIST, USE THIS TO HELP YOU SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH THEM.

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TO GROW CLOSER TO GOD*

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