



# ADVENT DEVOTIONALS

A PRAYER COMPANION





# Happy Advent!

## Merry Christmas!

The season of Advent is a special season of celebration and anticipation for the Church. The word Advent means “coming” or “arrival”. During this season we remember and celebrate the first coming of Jesus while also eagerly awaiting His second coming when He will return to make everything right again. Historically, the Church has started celebrating Advent four Sundays before Christmas. Each Sunday is punctuated with an Advent theme (hope, love, joy, and peace) culminating in the celebration of Christ on Christmas Eve.

This year our Advent sermon series is entitled *The Mothers of Jesus* and is designed to focus our attention on the subversive love of God. The word *subversive* means to seek or intend to disrupt, overthrow, or challenge existing power structures, expectations, or norms. Applied to God’s love, subversive describes a love that upsets cultural and religious expectations. And it all begins in Matthew 1 with a genealogy marked by five women (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary) who society would consider sinners, outsiders, too broken or insignificant for God’s redemptive purposes. And yet by their presence in Jesus’ family line, these five women testify to us of God’s pursuing, dignifying, and redeeming love. They show us the God who became human—humbling and emptying himself in order to forgive the sinner, welcome the outsider, and heal the broken.

We’ve created this Advent devotional as a prayer companion to our sermon series. Advent is not just a season of hope and anticipation. It is also a season marked by prayer. On Sundays, we will witness the life and testimony of a mother of Jesus, pointing us to love and helping us to hope. During the week, we will study accounts of godly women marked by prayer in order to shape us with the testimony of the Bible and invite us to pray.

As we step into this season together, we invite you to prayerfully prepare your hearts using the stories of our sisters in Christ from the pages of the Bible. Each week consists of a devotional, two meditation questions, a prayer practice, and an invitation to discipleship at home. These are meant to challenge, encourage, and grow you as a disciple in this special season of Advent.

We will also gather at the church to put these prayer practices into action together on Sunday, December 14, from 6:00–7:30 pm.

Let's do this together! And if the Lord uses this to draw you closer, please let us know at [wheatonbible.org/stories](http://wheatonbible.org/stories). We would love to hear stories of how God is working in you and in the life of this church family during Advent.

In Christ,

Your Wheaton Bible Church and Iglesia del Pueblo Pastors  
and Ministers



# TRIUMPH

## READ EXODUS 15:1-21

I wonder if Miriam's heart was pounding from walking through roaring walls of water, a path of dry ground beneath her feet. *The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him.* (Exodus 15:2)

I wonder if the smell of Red Sea water still clung to her hair. *Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy...who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?* (Exodus 15:6, 11)

I wonder how long she stood on the shore beside the rest of the Israelites staring at the churning waters now covering Pharaoh and his army; no longer slaves pursued by their enemies but God's rescued people called His own. *You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.* (Exodus 15:13)

I wonder if there were tears of gratitude that shimmered in Miriam's eyes and caught in her throat as, with tambourine in hand, she led the women in dancing and unhindered praise. *And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea."* (Exodus 15:21)

God performed a miracle, parting the Red Sea to rescue His people from 400 years of slavery and make them a people displaying His greatness and glory to the nations around them. And the prophetess Miriam, with her brother Moses, wrote this song of praise as a poem of remembrance for generations of Israelites to follow.

In the birth of Jesus, God would again perform a miracle, stepping into time and space. Holiness wrapped in human form. An empty cross and abandoned grave is the reminder of our costly redemption. Jesus came to rescue us and call us His own.

Like Miriam, may we also remember and retell to the next generation the redemptive work of God. Like Miriam, let's sing a song of praise. Isn't He glorious?

## MEDITATE

Re-read through Miriam and Moses' song of praise found in Exodus 15:1-21. What characteristics or words describe who God is and why He is worthy of praise?

What are specific ways or times in your life has God rescued you? If you were to write a song of praise to tell God He's glorious, what would you say?

## PRACTICE

### Prayer Practice: Guided Prayer

ACTS is an acronym we have used in our church to help us pray. Here is what it stands for and how you can use it to guide you:

**Adoration:** What in this text leads me to **adore** God?

**Confession:** What does this text convict me to **confess**?

**Thanksgiving:** What can I be **thankful** for from this text?

**Supplication:** What **supplications** (requests) can I bring to God?

Use the guide below to help you pray for ten minutes every day this first week of Advent:

### **Adoration** (2 minutes)

Praise God for how He has triumphed in Christ. Use the sentences below to help you adore God in prayer.

God I worship you because you are\_\_\_\_\_

Father, I praise you for\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus, I praise you for\_\_\_\_\_

Spirit, I praise you for\_\_\_\_\_

**Confession** (2 minutes)

Confess to God any worries, anxieties, or prideful thoughts that have led you to doubt His strength and depend on your own this past week.

**Thanksgiving** (3 minutes)

Thank God for His forgiveness in Christ. Thank God for coming to save us and for His promise to return and make everything right again.

**Supplication** (3 minutes)

Ask God to focus your heart and mind on His hope, peace, love, and joy this season. Ask Him to give you opportunities to share with friends, family, and neighbors how He is at work in your life this Advent.

**Discipleship at Home: As You Go**

Making disciples who make disciples, whether it's in your own home, your neighborhood, or at work, involves using what's around you to generate conversations about life, God, and the Gospel. This principle shows up in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 when Moses tells God's people to not only let God's Word live in their hearts but teach them to their children wherever they are. Fast forward to the New Testament in Matthew 10:7 when Jesus teaches his disciples to go and *as they go* to proclaim the message of the kingdom.

With your family or roommates, reflect back on your week and your conversations at home. Talk about ways you might have connected the topics of conversation or what was happening around you to prayer or the themes of Advent (hope, love, joy, and peace).

Think ahead together and consider opportunities you will have to do the same. Commit to having conversations *as you go* about your week that connect life to God and His Gospel. Pray about opportunities you will have with each other.

Examples: On a walk together admire the snow and talk about the peace of a quiet snowfall and how God's peace in Christ is similar. In a conversation about worry ask each other questions about the worry and how true hope in Christ can keep you steady in the midst of worry.



# SALVATION

## READ ACTS 16:11-18

One thing that is clear about God's love is that it is deliberate. He intentionally seeks us out, meeting us where we are in order to lead us to Him and His overwhelming, perfect love. This is clearly exemplified in this week's text: Acts 16:11-18. Take a few minutes to read the passage. Pay attention to the circumstances that brought the two women described to Jesus. Who were they? What were they seeking?

The two women in our text could not have been any more different. On the one hand, we have Lydia, a wealthy, influential businesswoman who was on a quest for God. And on the other hand, we have a poor, enslaved girl who not only suffered the abuses of her owners but was also tormented by an evil spirit. Both of them had a profound need, one that only Jesus could satisfy.

Our text states that Lydia was *a worshiper of God*. The fact that Luke referred to her that way indicates that she was not yet a born-again Christian. Then, verse 14 offers a beautiful glimpse of God's loving grace, as Luke explains that *the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul*. Consequently, she and her entire household got baptized. God's purposeful and gracious love pursued her and led her to believe and become a disciple of Jesus. This simple, unassuming act led to a movement that was beyond Lydia's salvation. Tradition holds that Lydia's house became a house of prayer—a place where others gathered, worshiped, and heard the transforming message of the Gospel, just as she had.

What about the slave girl? How do these two stories connect? The thread that stitches these women together is the one that connects us all who have professed Christ



as Lord, the power of the Holy Spirit that irrevocably opens our hearts to see Jesus as the Word who became flesh and died on a cross to set us free from the bondage of sin.

## MEDITATE

God pursues us purposefully and deliberately. How have you seen God do that in your life?

The slave girl was so subdued by the evil spirit that she could not even see her spiritual need, yet in His relentless love, God unchained her from her bondage and gave her a new life. Is there something in your life that is keeping you from experiencing the spiritual freedom Christ offers? Ask God to reveal it to you.

## PRACTICE

### Prayer Practice: The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer has been a model prayer for disciples of Jesus through the centuries. Some have described it as *The Disciple's Prayer* because it is meant for disciples to pray. In Matthew 6:7-15 it is part of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount. In Luke 11:1-4 it comes out in a conversation Jesus had with his disciples after they asked Him to teach them to pray. The most complete version we have shows up in Matthew 6:9b-13:

- <sup>9</sup> **Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.**  
<sup>10</sup> **Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**  
<sup>11</sup> **Give us this day our daily bread,**  
<sup>12</sup> **and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.**  
<sup>13</sup> **And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

This week, practice praying that prayer daily. The Lord's Prayer is not a magical incantation that you repeat to get what you want. It is a beautiful prayer that expresses who God is, who we are, and how He works in our lives. You can also use the movements of the prayer to lead you to pray. For example: pray the first line and then praise God for all the ways He is a father to you. Then

pray the second line and pray for God to hallow (make holy) His name in your life as you represent Him before others. Go line by line and let each phrase guide you on what and how to pray.

### **Discipleship at Home: Prayer Craft**

God opens hearts and sets captives free through His power and grace. With your family or roommates, use this craft to represent this truth.

**Supplies:** Paper, scissors, pens, markers, tape, glue, string

#### **Step 1: Create a Heart.**

Cut a large heart shape out of paper (1 per person). On the front, write *“Lord, open my heart to You.”*

#### **Step 2: Make Paper Chains.**

Cut 5–7 strips of paper (1–2 inches wide). On each strip, write things that may feel like chains—fears, lies, distractions, or struggles. Make a paper chain by linking the strips together and taping or gluing the ends.

#### **Step 3: Break the Chains.**

After everyone has finished making their chain, take a moment of prayer. Invite everyone to ask Jesus to bring freedom in these areas. As a symbol of that prayer, tear or cut the chain apart.

#### **Step 4: Connect the Heart and Chains.**

Tape or glue the torn chain pieces around the heart as a border or hang the heart using string with broken chains hanging from it to represent a heart opened by Jesus, no longer bound.

**Pray Together:** *Lord Jesus, open my heart like You did for Lydia and the slave girl. Give me discernment, like Paul, to recognize what is truly from You. Set me free from anything that hinders my walk with You and teach me to live in prayerful dependence every day. Amen.*



# REDEMPTION

**READ LUKE 2:36-38**

Have you ever waited for something for a long time? Waiting is hard, especially when what we desire seems distant or out of reach.

Today we find a woman named Anna in God's temple. She has been waiting most of her life for the coming Messiah. Waiting, worshipping, fasting and praying for the redemption of God's people (Luke 2:37-38).

Anna is a prophetess, someone appointed by God in the Old Testament to serve as His ambassador. Prophets and prophetess' shared God's words, called people to repentance, and interceded in prayer on behalf of God's people (Deuteronomy 18:15-22). Anna's close relationship with God meant she was yearning and waiting for God's promised redemption of His people.

How many of her years felt long? Did she ever feel discouraged? How often did she question, "How long, O Lord?" We will never know that part of Anna's story. But the part of her story on full display is her faithfulness to God.

Anna is an example of a life fully devoted to God. Anna's heart posture and actions serve as a model for us of a faithful saint who waited well.

While we wait, are we like Anna? Do we pursue the presence of God? When He seems silent, do we still worship and pray? In our waiting can our hearts rest because we believe God's promises never fail?

Can you imagine Anna's joy when she saw baby Jesus in the temple? In Jesus all her prayers were answered, all her longings realized, all her worship and waiting fulfilled. *She began to give thanks to God...* (Luke 2:38).

Anna was an Old Testament prophetess who saw in her lifetime the New Testament fulfillment of God's salvation. And she didn't just worship in her waiting, she also became an ambassador of God's Good News, the Gospel, right away. *She began to...speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem* (Luke 2:38).

We too are waiting for Jesus and His second coming. And when He comes all our waiting will be worth it. And He will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

## MEDITATE

Which examples of Anna's life fully devoted to God challenge you the most: worship, prayer, fasting, trust? What is one step you can take this week to faithfully enter God's presence and wait on Him?

Read Luke 2:22-38. List the words and actions that describe the response to seeing Jesus. How should this challenge our own response to Jesus in our daily life?

## PRACTICE

### Prayer Practice: Praying the Bible

Praying the Bible is a simple, accessible way to bring the truth and power of God's Word into our prayer lives. Using a Psalm or a section from one of Paul's letters in the New Testament, we pray through the passage line by line, talking to God about what He brings to mind as we thoughtfully reflect on the text. As we move from verse to verse, our minds remain grounded in the truth, giving our prayers more clarity and depth. As we set our minds on what is true from God's Word, we can be assured that He hears us and will often speak directly into situations we are currently facing.

This week pray through Psalm 98 every day and let the Spirit use the words of the Bible to guide your time in prayer. An example using the first few verses of Psalm 98 is below.

**<sup>1</sup> 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.**

**<sup>2</sup> The Lord has made known his salvation;  
he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the  
nations.**

*Lord, I thank you for all the marvelous things I have seen you do during this year. They fill my heart with joy. **List some and thank Him for each one.***

*I see your hand at work in the lives of my neighbors and coworkers, drawing them toward the truth. Use me as your light in their lives and give me boldness. **Name people you want to see come to faith.***

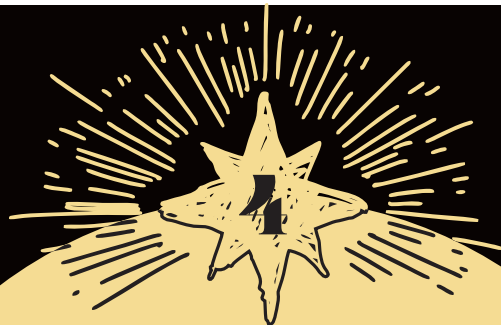
*As I think of the nations, my heart turns toward: **Name a WBC missionary, a country you are praying for, or an international ministry. For ideas check out: [wheatonbible.org/missions](http://wheatonbible.org/missions) and [operationworld.org](http://operationworld.org).***

### **Discipleship at Home: Psalm 98**

With your family or roommates, read Psalm 98 and discuss it using the questions below.

Psalm 98:1 says that we should praise God for all of the wonderful things He has done. What are some of the amazing things you remember God doing in the Bible? How about from your own life? How can remembering God's past goodness help us when we face present troubles?

**Pray together:** *Almighty God, You have done wonderful things! You are worthy of worship and praise, not just because of those things, but because of who You are—perfect and holy. Help us to never forget your faithfulness in the past as we face struggles in the present or future. We love You and praise You. In Jesus' name, amen.*



# JUSTICE

## READ 1 SAMUEL 1:1-2:11

This week, we are reading about Hannah, Samuel's mother. Her story is saturated with God's faithful love, mercy, and providential sovereignty. Read 1 Samuel 1:1-2:11 and pay attention to Hannah's cry. What does it reveal about her source of hope? What caused her hopelessness to transform into praise?

Hannah was barren. In the social and cultural context of her time, motherhood symbolized honor, security, and even survival. A barren woman was practically worthless. To make matters worse, Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, made it her life's purpose to torment Hannah by constantly reminding her she was childless. Her nagging was so persistent that the Hebrew expression used in the original text literally means "to thunder" or "to roar," as in a storm. That imagery reveals Hannah's distressed heart.

At the beginning of the story, Hannah's hope rested in motherhood. But something changed. The phrase "Hannah rose" (1 Samuel 1:9) marks her turning point. That decisive action revealed a resolute conviction, as evidenced by her vow. If the Lord opened her womb and granted her a son, she would consecrate him to God. By promising to give her son to the service of the temple, she was literally renouncing all the benefits that came with being a mother. The one thing she once wanted more than anything, Hannah was now willing to give away!

In her plea, Hannah recognized God's care and kingship over her life. God cares for the broken, for the lowly, and even for the powerless and the unfavored. That truth filled Hannah's heart with joy (1 Samuel 1:18). Hannah had no assurance that God would remember her and honor her request, yet she rejoiced. God had freed her from the yoke of her affliction.

In God's redemptive story, the most extraordinary thing happened: His Son, Jesus Christ, made Himself broken, lowly, powerless, and unfavored. He did that so we could live a joyful life, one in which hopelessness is transformed into praise.

## MEDITATE

When Hannah brought Samuel to the temple, she also brought an atoning sacrifice. In her worship and prayer, she exalted God for saving her (1 Samuel 2:1). What was Hannah's sin?

Hannah made an idol of motherhood. That idol kept her captive, preventing her from enjoying God's gracious care in her life. Is there something in your life keeping you from rejoicing in the Lord of your salvation? Ask God to transform it into praise.

## PRACTICE

### Prayer Practice: Prayer of Examen

The Bible teaches us in Psalm 90:12 to ask God: "Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." The Prayer of Examen is a prayer practice attributed to St. Ignatius and intended to help us do that. Let the prompts below help you pray this week by examining your day and your heart.

**PREPARE:** Find a quiet place to pray at the end of the day and settle yourself before the Lord. *Pray the following: Lord, I acknowledge this day as a gift from You. Thank You for life, breath, and every opportunity to glorify You.* (Psalm 118:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

**REVIEW:** Pray the following: *Holy Spirit, bring to mind the events, conversations, and moments of this day.* Then take a few minutes to think back through your day prayerfully. (Lamentations 3:22-23; Psalm 63:6). Consider the following reflection questions with the Lord in prayer:

Where did I sense God's presence today?

What blessings or joys did I experience?

Where did I feel distant from God?

**CONFESS AND REPENT:** After prayerfully reflecting on your day, pray the following: *Lord, I confess where I have fallen*

*short in thought, word, or action.* (1 John 1:9; Psalm 32:5). Consider the following reflection questions prayerfully and confess and repent of specific sins before the Lord:

Did I speak or act in a way that dishonored God?

Were there missed opportunities to serve or love others?

Did my attitudes reflect Christ to others?

**THANK:** Name three moments from today for which you are thankful. Pray the following: *Father, I thank You for specific ways You sustained and blessed me today.* (Colossians 3:17; Psalm 103:1-5)

**LEARN AND GROW:** Pray the following: *Lord, help me learn from today and grow in wisdom.* (Proverbs 3:5-6; Philippians 1:6) Consider the following reflection questions prayerfully:

What is one lesson I learned about God or myself?

How can I walk more faithfully with God tomorrow?

**TRUST:** End by entrusting tomorrow to God. Pray the following: *I commit tomorrow to You.* (Matthew 6:34; Proverbs 16:3)

### **Discipleship at Home: Reflect Together**

The story of Hannah shows us what it looks like to bring both our hopes and our hurts to God. Hannah didn't have to hide how she was feeling; rather, she prayed honestly and earnestly, believing that God could meet her right where she was. And when God answered her prayer in a miraculous way, her response was thanksgiving and praise! This Advent season, remember the example of Hannah. Together with your family or roommates, talk to God about your deepest hopes and hurts, trusting that He is good and that His timing and plan are perfect. Take time to thank Him together for hearing your prayers. Share with each other something you've been praying about that you're still waiting for His answer.





## CHRISTMAS MERCY

### READ LUKE 1:46-55

This Advent season is coming to an end. What better way to conclude this series than by reflecting on Mary's prayer, the "Magnificat"? Read Luke 1:46-55. Compare Mary's prayer with Hannah's in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. How do these women's stories parallel?

Last week, we reflected on Hannah's story, a suitable preamble to this week's devotional, as many scholars believe that Hannah's prayer inspired Mary's. Given that their stories share significant similarities, Mary could have deeply related to Hannah's words. Both of them witnessed God's miraculous intervention firsthand. Hannah was barren; Mary had never been intimate with a man. Medically, their pregnancies were impossible. Yet God chose to bless them both with a child. Both also recognized God's unmerited favor as a reflection of His relentless care for the lowly and the voiceless, and both rejoiced amid uncertainty.

Mary was about to face the radical cultural shame of carrying a child out of wedlock, yet she magnified the Lord and rejoiced in knowing that the Holy One of Israel had remembered her. And how could she not? God had looked upon an insignificant young woman to use her in such a crucial act in His overall redemptive scheme. Mary knew God's plan; she knew the promises. The Scripture in her prayer reveals that. That is why she was in awe of God's favor. That is why her praise highlighted God's sovereign might over the earthly powerful and His insatiable mercy toward the often forgotten. She understood that the Lord is God. He does as He wills, and He does it according to His perfect love.

This is a beautiful and powerful reminder for all of us who have confessed Christ as our Lord. Mary's prayer alludes to His extravagant love. A love so subversive that it was conceived before creation. God always intended to pursue us, to offer us a means to reconcile with Him by making Himself human and taking our place on a cross to unite us with the Father.

## MEDITATE

What a marvelous love! Take some time to reflect on how you see this incomprehensible love demonstrated in your own life. Spend some time thanking God for it.

There is a recurring idea in Mary's prayer: God is perpetually at work through generations. What is our role in that?

## PRACTICE

### **Prayer Practice: Breath Prayer**

Thomas Watson wrote, "Prayer is the soul's breathing itself into the bosom of its heavenly Father." And Martin Luther said, "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." Prayer is essential to the life of the believer. As essential as breathing. One way to remind ourselves of this and practice it is through the use of brief "breath prayers." A breath prayer is a simple prayer to God offered on the inhale and exhale. Any phrases will do, but the best come from the Bible. Try these breath prayers out as you celebrate Christ's first coming and anticipate His second coming:

*The LORD is my shepherd...I shall not want. (Psalm 23:1).*

*When I am afraid...I put my trust in you. (Psalm 56:3).*

*My help comes...from the LORD. (Psalm 121:2).*

*LORD...have mercy. (Psalm 123:3).*

*Let it be to me...according to Your Word. (Luke 1:38).*

*Not my will...but yours. (Luke 22:42).*

*Come...Lord Jesus. (Revelation 22:20).*

## Discipleship at Home: Sing Together

We sing because we love Jesus. During Advent, we sing songs of hope and anticipation remembering His first coming, and longing for His second coming. Take some time this week to sing together. Consider singing beautiful songs from the history of the church such as *Joy to the World* or *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing*. You can find the lyrics on [hymnary.org](http://hymnary.org) to sing on your own or stream our Christmas Carol Sing and sing along with your church family. Scan the QR code or search "Christmas Carol Sing | Choir & Orchestra" on Wheaton Bible Church's YouTube page.





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