




CHRIST
OUR
SAVIOR
Is BORN!



AZUSA PACIFIC
UNIVERSITY



The Hope and Prayers of Christmas

A Christmas Devotional

Dear Friends,

As we enter the Advent season, I'm excited to share this short devotional guide that will help prepare our hearts for the arrival of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Over the coming four weeks, we will join Christians from around the world, embracing a season of hope-filled anticipation and faith-filled prayer.

Four members of the APU community are leading us through this sacred preparation—faculty and staff who share their heart-felt reflections on the significance of the Incarnation. Drawing from Scripture references, I trust that these meditations will enhance your time with the Lord and deepen your experience of the joy we find in our Savior's birth.

From all of us at Azusa Pacific University, and from our family to yours, we wish you a Christmas season filled with blessed hope and answered prayers!

President and Mrs. Adam J. Morris

All Scriptures come from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.



Week 1: The Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7)

I can't help but start singing the beautiful arrangement from Handel's *Messiah* when I read the words, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." You, too, may instantly feel encouraged by the message of hope found in them. Or maybe you peruse them, this promise of deliverance, and doubt creeps in. Your current situation, the hurt and pain you feel and see all around, may make you wonder if there is anything more to this than just poetic words. It might help to remember that they were given to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob during a very dark time in their history. The kingdom was divided, and the south (Judah) and the north (Israel) were under threat from the Assyrian Empire. It was a time of fear and despair, yet Isaiah declared that God would rescue His people.

How? By sending the Son. The Son is first described in this passage as a great light to a people walking in deep darkness (Isaiah 9:2). The passage goes on to exclaim that the Son will reign as King: "The government will be on his shoulders" (Isaiah 9:6b). The passage then names the King. Back then, names were carefully chosen to describe one's character. Isaiah 9:6 proclaims the King to be: Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace.

The passage declares that God Almighty will be King and the reign of God will be one of peace. This is the hope that wells up in our hearts when we sing those beautiful words.

Prayer:

Lord, help us to hold on to the hope of this promise, knowing that Jesus fulfills these words and invites us into His Kingdom of peace. May our hearts and minds experience this peace even now. Amen.

Samuel Girguis, PsyD

Director, PsyD Program

Assistant Professor and Chair, Department of Clinical Psychology



Week 2: The Great Joy for All People (Luke 2:10-14)

The angel's words to the shepherds still speak to us today: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people" (Luke 2:10, NIV).

Fear can weigh heavily on us—fear of change, of the unknown, of loss. Many of us also carry the quiet burden of shame or the feeling that we are not enough. But in this season of Advent, we are reminded that into our fear and uncertainty, joy has come. The birth of Jesus breaks the silence of despair and replaces it with the Good News of lasting hope.

The angel declared, "A Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:11, NIV). This Good News was first revealed to shepherds—ordinary, overlooked people—showing us that God's love is not reserved for a select few. It is for all people. Jesus came because of His love for you and me. As Dane Ortlund writes in *Gentle and Lowly*, Jesus never tires of extending mercy and grace. He delights in comforting us when we turn to Him in our need.

This Advent, let us pause to let this truth resound in our hearts: Christ the Lord is with us. In Him, we are enough. His presence brings peace, His promises bring hope, and His love brings joy.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for the precious gift of Jesus. Help us rest in You and trust Your ways. Teach us to share Your mercy, kindness, grace, and joy with everyone around us. May our lives reflect Your love in all we say and do. Amen.

Michelle Staggs, MS, MA

Director, Inland Empire Regional Campus



Week 3: God with Us (Matthew 1:23)

Emmanuel. “God with us.” What an amazing truth, that the God of the universe would care enough to come down and dwell with humanity. What is even more astounding is the truth that He is always with us here and now—that the Holy Spirit resides in us and is accessible to all who follow Christ each and every moment.

Are you struggling to find joy this holiday season? Feeling weighed down by an ever-growing to-do list? Anxious about deadlines at work or conflict with family members? Pause and remember that the all-knowing, all-powerful God of the universe has gifted us with the indwelling of His Spirit and waits with anticipation for us to acknowledge Him and call upon His powerful name. “God with us” is not just for picturesque manger scenes, but is the absolute reality for His followers as we journey through this life and into eternity.

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for Your desire to be with Your creation. Thank you for reaching through our sin to make a way for us to be righteous in Your sight and bringing us into relationship with You. May we experience anew Your presence with us today as we reflect on the gift of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Matt Wallace '06, MBA '10

Manager, Maintenance Services



Week 4: The Word Became Flesh (John 1:14)

The story of Advent is the story of God, who so loved the world He created that He reached across the vast distance between heaven and earth to *show* that love and show us that love in the flesh. To become flesh is to know the joy and pain of being human and one day die. Yet because of love, God embraced the fragility, vulnerability, and even indignity of becoming human, that we may become the children of God (John 1:12).

In Jesus Christ, God came *all the way down* and made His home among us. Like the tabernacle in the wilderness that assured the Israelites of God's abiding presence (Exodus 25:8), Jesus *is* Emmanuel, God with us. He moved into our chaotic and fractured world, bringing healing, hope, and wholeness. Even now, God *is* with us in our darkest times and darkest places. And God's presence changes everything. Through the Word made flesh, the Kingdom of heaven breaks into our lives here on earth, with forgiveness of sins and fullness of life for all of God's creatures (Luke 11:2-4). It may come imperceptibly, as on that first Christmas morning, but we have the Good News that the light of Christ—the *life* of Christ, in a lowly Bethlehem manger—shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not, will not, overcome it (John 1:5).

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, Light of the world, open our eyes to see Your glory in Your humility. Come near to us again and dwell among us, that we may be whole. Amen.

Eunny Lee, PhD

Associate Dean, School of Theology
Professor of Biblical Studies



Christmas Day: The Greatest Gift (2 Corinthians 8:9)

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9, ESV).

Christmas morning is often defined by the act of giving and receiving gifts—yet we know that their value is temporal. Today, we remember the greatest gift ever given, and it’s eternal! The apostle Paul teaches us that Jesus, before His incarnation, was “rich” beyond comprehension, but He willingly chose to become “poor” for our sake.

- *He traded a throne for a manger.*
- *He exchanged the worship of angels for the scorn of humanity.*
- *He took on our sin and the death that we deserved, so that through His poverty, we might become spiritually rich.*

On this Christmas morning, we remember that Jesus’ birth was a prelude to the even greater sacrifice He would make on the cross, offering us the priceless gifts of forgiveness, peace, and eternal life. May this special day remind you of the extravagant, incomparable gift of Jesus Christ. His willingness to become poor made us spiritually rich beyond measure.

Prayer:

We praise you, God, for the eternal gift of Your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. May this day be one of deep gratitude, and may the year ahead be marked by an ever-closer walk with You. We love You, and we give this day to You with celebration in our hearts. Amen.

Adam J. Morris, PhD
President

Merry Christmas!

