

ADVENT: A JOURNEY OF CELEBRATION

A **JOURNAL** FOR THE JOURNEY



ADVENT: A JOURNEY OF CELEBRATION

Hi everyone,

Welcome to **ADVENT**, a beautiful time of the year when Christians around the world begin to reflect on the coming Christ. Taken from an ancient word that simply means *coming* or *appearance*, **Advent** covers the four weeks running up to Christmas. And while most of us might be rushing around thinking more of presents, cards, food, parties and travel arrangements, it's good to stop and think about the Christ of Christmas.

As part of this year's festivity we'd like to invite you to join us on a journey of celebration, a pilgrimage of praise that looks at a number of historic characters in Christ's family tree recorded in Matthew and Luke.¹ Each character not only tells us something of their own unique story, but of how their life mirrored the person and purpose of the coming Christ.

With its easy-to-read, conversational style of writing, this booklet comprises short daily Bible readings, a Thought for the Day, space to record your own thoughts and details of a suggested activity. It's hoped that these daily readings will encourage all of us to focus on the true meaning of Christmas, to press the pause button and take time out to reflect on the reason for the season.

Many of us find it difficult, if not impossible, to stop what we're doing and spend a few moments meditating on Scripture, so our hope is that this booklet will help us to do exactly that. For whether or not Christmas is for you a personal challenge or a party-going celebration, we trust that the various contributions people have made to make this booklet possible will encourage you to look to the Christ of Christmas who came to bring peace, joy and a way of escape for lost humanity.

On behalf of all who make the Mosaic family possible, Happy Christmas and warm wishes for a God-inspired New Year.

Chris Spicer
Teaching Pastor

¹ 1 Matthew 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38

Unless stated, all scripture text in the booklet is taken from the New International Version.



WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR / DAY 1

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 9:6-7

Author's note: during each Sunday of Advent we will be considering one of the names by which the prophet Isaiah described the coming Christ.

*For to us a Child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called **Wonderful Counsellor**, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*

In that they stopped to ask for directions, the Wise Men searching for baby Jesus were unique to the male species. Perhaps if more of us sought guidance for the journey we call life, we'd suffer from fewer detours, delays and distractions. Unlike the Old Testament kings, few of us have paid advisors whose words are 'music to [our] ears' [see Psalm 55:21 MSG], yet we all need a faithful friend to guide us.

In the Christ of Christmas we find a constant companion whose words of advice will amaze us. The fact that the Holy Spirit inspired the prophet to add the word 'Wonderful' to his description of Christ as a 'Counsellor' is important, for in the wake of all godly counsel a feeling of 'astonishment', 'excitement' and 'admiration' should always follow the insight and wisdom being given. Whether we find it through prayer, scripture reading, spiritual gifts or personal counsel, 'wonderment' is the hallmark of all godly counsel.

So if wise men took time out to ask advice, shouldn't we do the same?

C.S.

Notes



A present for the present

Jesus came to be our advisor, someone available to guide us daily as we face those challenging choices – some that will have far-reaching consequences. So shouldn't we make certain that we include Him in our decision-making process? From deciding on a career choice to choosing the right partner in life, we need to stop to ask for directions. It could be a life-saver!

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



DAM / DAY 2

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 2:8-9, 15-17

Now the LORD God planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'

Every journey has a beginning and ours starts in a garden and with a gardener called Adam. Although our Advent adventure will take us to a stable in Bethlehem, it begins in a garden, for it's here that the reason for Christ's coming is made clear.

Without putting a fine point on it, Adam blew it. His rebellious actions ultimately resulted in all humanity being born with an inherent ability to mess up no matter what. And when it came to excusing his self-indulgent desire to defy God, Adam couldn't blame his environment because it was perfect. He couldn't blame the economy because he had everything he needed. And although he tried to blame his partner, in reality the blame for his action was his alone.

Yet while the first Adam *failed* in a garden called Eden, *'the last Adam [Jesus]'* [see 1 Corinthians 15:45] *prevailed* or triumphed in a garden called Gethsemane. By doing this, the Christ of Christmas paved the way to freedom for all mankind.

C.S.

Notes



A present for the present

While the first Adam sowed the seeds of *failure* in all mankind, the last Adam [Jesus] gives all who believe the possibility of *success* and the means to conquer that inherent ability to mess up. What a great gift that is. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to help us live in Christ's success rather than in our failure.

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



NOCH / DAY 3

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 5:21–24; HEBREWS 11:5–6

When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God.

Becoming a parent is a shock to the system! The change in routine, the loss of sleep and the constant demands of a crying baby mean that parents need all the help they can get. It's no wonder, then, that the first change Enoch instituted after becoming a father was to seek out God, for 'after he came a father ... Enoch walked with God!'

As a dad, Enoch knew he needed help and who better to turn to for support than his Heavenly Father. Enoch's first priority as a parent was to make sure he took time out with daddy God. In this very action the life of Enoch mirrored the ministry of Jesus.

Jesus proclaimed, 'the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing' [see John 5:19], so it's clear why Jesus took time out of a busy schedule to walk and talk with his Heavenly Father.

With the demands of the day already crying out for our attention, how good it is to take a few minutes to chat to our Heavenly Father.

C.S

Notes



A present for the present

There is a saying, 'You can't teach an old dog new tricks!' but we're not dogs and as human beings we're never too old to learn. As an example to us all, the 65-year-old Enoch peppered his busy life with regular walks with God. In this, both Enoch and Jesus made sure of both reaching the destination and fulfilling their destiny.

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



ETHUSELAH / DAY 4

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 5:21, 25-27

When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he became the father of Lamech. And after he became the father of Lamech, Methuselah lived 782 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Methuselah lived 969 years and then he died.

At 123 years of age Carmelo Flores Laura is the oldest living person ever documented. Yet the Bible speaks of Methuselah as the oldest person to have ever lived. Having celebrated his 969th birthday, Methuselah makes Carmelo Flores Laura a mere teenager by comparison.

Longevity and the ability to sustain a godly life for the long haul is something we should all consider, no matter how young or old we are. For how many of us start something only to lose heart half way through and then struggle to complete the task. If the life of Methuselah models anything of the ministry of Jesus, it's that ability to run well to the finishing line. The Apostle Paul puts it like this, *'There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears'* [see Philippians 1:6 MSG].

This same Jesus who began a great work in you and me, is in it for the long haul. He's committed to completing that work of grace in us, no matter what.

C.S.

Notes



A present for the present

Seeing others give up, Methuselah – like Jesus – determined that he was in it for the long haul. While many join us on the starting line, it's those who finish the course that get the congratulations. Let's remember the words of Winston Churchill, *'Success is not final ... failure is not fatal ... it's the courage to continue that counts.'*

Prayer: 'God give me, today, the ability to run my race well!'

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



OA H / DAY 5

TODAY'S READING: 1 PETER 3:18–22

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits – to

those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

This incredible scripture says it all, doesn't it? Noah had favour with God and was saved from death and destruction through the safety of an ark. He must have fought against mockery and cynicism as he faithfully lined up each beautiful piece of wood, took inventory of each animal, and maybe even explained for the 100th time to his children that God *really* did tell him to do this!

Noah demonstrated faithfulness and obedience. He reminds us of the one whose obedient heart also resisted mockery in outworking the plans of God. His actions foretell of a coming Saviour who would one day save us from death and destruction.

Noah was saved through water and as he came out of the ark he started a brand new life; he had a fresh start. We, in the same way, are brought into freedom through our salvation and baptism. We get to press reset as we are washed with new life in Jesus.

L.B.

Notes



A present for the present

May God help us today to soak in the reality that we also have been saved from a place of death and destruction – and as we pass through the waters of life, let our obedience and faithfulness to Jesus flood this world with the knowledge of God's saving purpose for all mankind.

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



BRAHAM / DAY 6

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 22:9-14

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham!' 'Here I am,' he replied. 'Do not lay a hand on the boy,' he said. 'Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.' Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, 'On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.'

When you start to look under the surface, the comparisons between Abraham's walk up the mountain and Christ's journey to the cross are strikingly similar. Although separated by thousands of years, these two moments are inexplicably linked together by a loving father, an unthinkable sacrifice and a spotless lamb.

A father loves his son and there is an eternal promise to bless the world through the fruit of his life. When a sacrifice is demanded, the father must make an agonising decision to surrender his child for the sake of a bigger purpose.

Both accounts feature a son walking up a hill carrying wood on their backs. Both sons have to trust that their fathers will keep them safe as this dangerous episode plays out. At the end of one story, an innocent lamb is caught in a crown of thorns and provided as an offering just at the right moment. Yet in the other almost identical tale, Isaac is not the one set free, it is you and me.

D.B.

Notes



A present for the present

May we realise afresh today the unbelievable extent of God's love displayed on the cross of Christ and in the sacrifice of the Father. May we understand the moment that history becomes His Story and live in the good of the perfect lamb's offering all the days of our life.

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



SSAC / DAY 7

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 26:19-22

Isaac's servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. But the herdsmen of Gerar quarrelled with Isaac's herdsmen and said, 'The water is ours!' So he named the well Esek [means 'Dispute'], because they disputed with him. Then they dug another well, but they quarrelled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah [means 'Opposition']. He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarrelled over it. He named it Rehoboth [means 'Room'], saying, 'Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish in the land.'

One of the greatest challenges in life is dealing with diversions. When driving on a journey, traffic jams and road diversions often frustrate me. I just want to arrive at my destination as quickly as possible!

In life God has a way for each one of us to reach the destination he has purposed for us. Isaac was looking for water on his journey and he dug three wells. The first he called 'Dispute', the second 'Opposition', and the third, 'Room'. Isaac knew it was vital to find water for his journey and it took him three attempts to do so.

God sent the Christ of Christmas to bring us refreshing life. Many times we dig around for meaning or purpose to life and we can be delayed because of *disputes* and *opposition*, but unless we give him *room* He is unable to show us 'His way'. We have to dig into His word, listen to His Holy Spirit and welcome His son, Jesus, into our lives daily.

G.S.

Notes



A present for the present

While Isaac was trying to find water [life] by digging wells, there was dispute and opposition that hindered his pursuit. But Isaac dug again and found 'room' to live the life God intended. Christ came to give us life to the full, so let's not settle for anything less. Let's give the Holy Spirit room to work through us today, so that we might become a source of refreshment to everyone we meet.

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



IGHTY GOD / DAY 8

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 9:6-7

Author's note: during the four Sundays of Advent we will be considering one of the names by which the prophet Isaiah described the coming Christ.

*For to us a Child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, **Mighty God**, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.*

What comes to mind when you hear someone being described as 'mighty'? The word itself means, 'hero', 'a doer of great things', and speaks of incredible acts done for those incapable of helping themselves.

We might think of the biblical Moses leading God's people out of Egypt, Joshua leading them into the Promised Land, or David slaying Goliath as mighty and heroic acts of salvation for those powerless to help themselves.

Yet when Isaiah describes the coming Christ-child, he promises that he will be truly 'Mighty'.

The simplest Hebrew word for God is 'El'. It's the word that is used to refer to the one true God, the creator, the supreme being and it's used in conjunction with other words to give God a variety of names such as 'El Shaddai' or 'God Almighty'. Here, it is combined with the Hebrew word for hero. And by using this phrase in reference to the coming Christ, Isaiah is describing Jesus as a super hero, someone far greater than Moses, Joshua or David – a true 'superman' who does heroic acts for helpless humanity. This is the God of salvation.

G.S.

Notes



A present for the present

Think of Christ healing the blind, the lame, the sick; think of Christ calling Lazarus from the tomb; think of Christ rising triumphantly from the grave, victorious over sin and death! Is there a greater hero than the Lord Jesus Christ? The Christ of Christmas is truly the **Mighty God**.

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



ACOB / DAY 9

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 32:24–26

So Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, 'Let me go, for it is daybreak.' But Jacob replied, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.'

The younger of twins, Jacob was born holding on to his brother Esau's heel. His name means, 'he grasps the heel' or 'he deceives.' Jacob lived up to his name. He and his mother Rebekah cheated Esau out of his birthright and blessing. However, later on, God renamed Jacob 'Israel', which means, 'he struggles with God'.

In fact, Jacob struggled with God his entire life, as many of us do. As he matured in faith, Jacob depended on God more and more. But the turning point for Jacob came after a dramatic, all-night wrestling match with God. In the end the Lord touched Jacob's hip and he was a broken man, but also a new man. From that day forward, Jacob was called Israel. And for the rest of his life he walked with a limp, demonstrating his dependence on the Lord. Jacob had finally learned to give up control to God.

Jesus was sent by His Father to take upon Himself our struggles. So stop walking alone – you weren't designed to be independent!

G.S.

Notes



A present for the present

The sooner we trust in God, the longer we'll benefit from His blessings. To fight God is a losing battle. Remember Jesus came to give us 'real life, better life than we ever dreamed of' [see John 10:10 MSG], and that 'His ways are higher than our ways' [see Isaiah 55:8–9]. So let's decide to give in to the ways of God today, rather than fight to do our own thing.

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



UDAH / DAY 10

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 49:8-10

Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness – who dares to rouse him? The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.

As part of Jesus' family tree Judah, whose name means 'Praise', is regarded as having an incredible future. But while it is referring to the Old Testament Judah, it also speaks of the coming 'lion of the tribe of Judah' [see Revelation 5:5]. That is Jesus, the one to whom every person who has ever lived will one day bow their knee in obedience.

Judah's decisions were often shaped by pressure, rather than by the conscious desire to cooperate with God's plan. But when he did recognise his mistakes, he was always willing to admit them. His experience with Tamar [see Genesis 38] and the final confrontation with Joseph [see Genesis 44] are both examples of Judah's willingness to bear his share of the blame when confronted. It was one of the qualities he passed on to his descendant David.

Whether or not we have Judah's natural qualities, we share his tendency to be blind towards our own failure. However, we often don't share his willingness to admit mistakes. From Judah we can learn that it is not wise to wait until our errors force us to admit to wrongdoing. It is far better to admit our mistakes openly, to shoulder the blame and to seek forgiveness

G.S.

Notes



A present for the present

Judah presents a challenge to not let our blind spots be a barrier to reaching out to Jesus and showing grace to others [see Matthew 7:3-5]. Remember, praise is a great release. So why not today declare His greatness in His coming to earth to bring us from failure into His success [see Isaiah 9:6].

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



AMAR / DAY 11

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 38:6-10 [NKJV]

Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD killed him.

And Judah said to Onan, 'Go into your brother's wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother. But Onan knew that the heir would not be his ... And the thing which he did displeased the LORD; therefore He killed him also.'

Tamar was a woman who needed rescuing. Having suffered abuse by two husbands and been let down by her father-in-law, she now found herself widowed, unmarried and pregnant. Facing the wrath of the community and in danger of being stoned, she needed divine intervention.

Although others abandoned her, Tamar knew what was rightfully hers and risked everything to claim her inheritance. Later, God so orchestrated her life that those who had wronged her acknowledged their mistreatment of her and they reinstated her into the family tree that would eventually include the coming Christ. Tamar did a difficult thing in order to exchange man's wrong for God's right. In so doing, she found herself in the storyline of a greater Saviour who would come some 24 generations later to rescue us from our past and bring us into our divine destiny.

T.S.

Notes



A present for the present

Tamar risked everything to secure someone who could rescue her. Jesus came to rescue us from ourselves, from the 'stuff' that might leave us on the sidelines of life forever. Like Tamar, we need to lay our lives on the line in order to pursue our rightful inheritance found only in and through Jesus Christ.

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



ALMON / DAY 12

TODAY'S READING: RUTH 4:18–22 [MSG]

This is the family tree of Perez: Perez had Hezron, Hezron had Ram, Ram had Aminadab, Aminadab had Nahshon, Nahshon had Salmon, Salmon had Boaz, Boaz had Obed, Obed had Jesse, And Jesse had David.

Salmon was a 'linkman' in a royal line, although this was something that was not revealed until David became king four generations later, and when the King of Kings – Jesus – was born 14 generations after David.

We don't know much about Salmon. He could have been one of the two spies who went into Jericho and met Rahab. But for some reason or another Joshua decided to keep the true identity of those two secret service agents hidden from the story of intrigue found in Joshua Chapter 6.

But what we *do* know is that Salmon was a risk-taker who married Rahab, a former prostitute. When he walked into her present life of newfound belief in his God, he didn't let her past life get in the way of future generations that would come through their marriage. Ultimately it led to the birth of a Saviour who would change legalism into grace and bring us all into a kingly heritage that becomes inclusive as we claim the promises of Advent for ourselves.

T.S.

Notes



A present for the present

Like Salmon, Jesus not only sees the real us, he sees the possibility of our lives being transformed when rolled into His story of grace. It's a story where our past is no longer a weight that hinders our present but through His redemptive power it becomes a stepping-stone into the great heritage we have in Jesus Christ.

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?

ACTIVITY CALENDAR

SUNDAY 1 DECEMBER

WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR

Isaiah 9:1-7 While thinking about the true meaning of Advent, why not make a Christmas decoration that lists some of the wonderful words God has spoken to you this year?

MONDAY 2 DECEMBER

ADAM

Known as 'Cyber Monday', today is the day when many celebrate the positive side of online communication. Without email Adam communicated with God. Why not open a line of communication with God through prayer and Bible reading during the whole of this Advent season?

TUESDAY
3 DECEMBER

ENOCH

Enoch walked with God and never died. Why not go on a prayer walk around your neighbourhood and allow God to prompt you to pray silently for those living in the homes you pass by?

WEDNESDAY
4 DECEMBER

METHUSELAH

Commemorating the oldest man in the Bible, find ways to demonstrate God's love in a practical way to an elderly friend or neighbour.

THURSDAY
5 DECEMBER

NOAH

Noah was willing to look foolish by building a boat to save others. Why not take a risk today and look for an opportunity to share your Christian story with someone?

FRIDAY
6 DECEMBER

ABRAHAM

Known as St Nicholas Day, today acknowledges a man known for his good deeds. Why not look for an opportunity to show an act of kindness to someone?

SATURDAY 7 DECEMBER

ISAAC

Today America remembers the horrors of Pearl Harbour. Although Isaac's name means laughter, many Christians throughout the world are suffering the horrors of war. Let's spend a few minutes today praying for peace on earth.

SUNDAY 8 DECEMBER

MIGHTY GOD

Isaiah 9:1-7 Make a list of seemingly impossible things that only God can resolve and carry it around with you today. When time allows, read the list and invite God to do the impossible.

MONDAY 9 DECEMBER

JACOB

Remember 'Jacob's Ladder' and how he dreamed of heaven touching earth? Well today you can do the same. Bring a little bit of heaven to earth by thinking of some positive words you can say to the most negative person you know.

TUESDAY 10 DECEMBER

JUDAH

Judah was a man who finally made a good decision that changed his whole life. Why not decide to give your postie a *Thank you* card, telling him or her how much you appreciate their efforts?

WEDNESDAY
11 DECEMBER

TAMAR

Tamar was known for taking risks, so why not take a risk and give a cake or meal to a busy neighbour and tell them all about this Advent challenge?

THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER

SALMON

Salmon was a faithful linkman who made a great choice. If you have children why not get them to make a paper chain on which they list some of great choices God has helped them make this year – then hang it on your Christmas tree.

FRIDAY 13 DECEMBER

RAHAB

Rahab brought other people into God's rescue plan. Talk to your Net Group leader about ways you can help a family going through difficult times to experience the goodness of God in a practical way.

SATURDAY
14 DECEMBER

BOAZ

Boaz was a rescuer. You could become a rescuer today by giving some food for the needy through Coventry Foodbank.

SUNDAY
15 DECEMBER

EVERLASTING FATHER

Isaiah 9:1-7 Consider giving an online gift of £3 to needy children through www.samaritans-purse.org. uk. Call your earthly father and say *Thank you* for being your dad.

MONDAY
16 DECEMBER

RUTH

Ruth picked up some much-needed grain left on purpose by someone else. What about sending an anonymous gift to someone you know who is in real need?

TUESDAY 17 DECEMBER

JESSE

Jesse had a great heritage, which he passed on through David. Looking back on your family tree, what is the good you can learn from others? Write down how you plan to pass that on to future generations.

WEDNESDAY 18
DECEMBER

DAVID

David wrote many songs. Why not write the verse of a favourite song onto a Christmas card and post it to someone you've not seen for a long time? [This is the last day for Second Class post.]

THURSDAY
19 DECEMBER

SOLOMON

Solomon's request for wisdom pleased God. Ask God for wisdom and do something today that will put a smile on his face!

FRIDAY
20 DECEMBER

ZERUBBABEL

Zerubbabel had a ring of authority. Why not make a make and wear a wristband that reminds you of the power and authority we have through the indwelling Holy Spirit?

SATURDAY 21 DECEMBER

LEVI

Levi was a priest who got to go into the Holy of Holies and experienced the presence of God. Why not invite someone who needs to experience the peace and joy of a Christian home into your home over the Christmas period?

SUNDAY
22 DECEMBER

PRINCE OF PEACE

Isaiah 9:1-7 Invite someone who's experiencing a troubled season in their life to our combined Christmas Service so they can hear all about the Prince of Peace.

MONDAY 23 DECEMBER

JOSEPH

Joseph was a man known for his love, kindness and integrity. As we gather with our family and friends over the Christmas period, let's make sure we maintain a godly character in all we say and do.

TUESDAY 24 DECEMBER

MARY

Mary, along with her family and some invited guests, enjoyed listening to the stories and songs that made that first Christmas special. Why not invite family and friends to our Carols by Candlelight Service at the Hope Centre this evening?

WEDNESDAY
25 DECEMBER

JESUS

Why not sing happy birthday to Jesus and promise yourself that amidst a very busy day, Christ will remain central to all your Christmas Celebrations?





AHAB / DAY 13

TODAY'S READING: JOSHUA 2: 1 AND JOSHUA 6:17-25 [NKJV]

Joshua sent out two men to spy secretly ... So they went and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab and lodged there.

Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab and ... all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father's household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

There's not many women listed in the genealogies of Jesus, but Tamar, Rahab and Ruth are there all together in Matthew Chapter 1 verses 3 and 5 and only Sarah and Rahab are named in that lovely Faith Chapter of Hebrews 11.

I love this intrepid woman of faith – who risks everything, and whose life speaks today through the generations to a world where we still judge people by what we see rather than appreciating the often difficult journeys that have brought people to their present day circumstances. Rahab was a woman of faith [see James 2: 25] who gladly gave up her dubious life for a new way of living that brought freedom and endless possibilities with the one true God.

Salmon's willingness to marry her and bring her into his family changed her life forever and she ran gladly into all that this new life promised. It changed her hopeless story to one of endless possibilities.

T.S.

Notes



A present for the present

Jesus came that we might have Rahab's kind of abundant life that sets us free from our past and gives us a different tomorrow. It's the kind of redemptive life that uses the 'stuff' of the past to catapult us into our destiny of tomorrows and enables us to live a life that speaks of God's amazing grace.

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



OAZ / DAY 14

TODAY'S READING: RUTH 3:7-9 [NKJV]

Author's note: The love story of Ruth from the book of her name is a story that starts with a famine and three funerals and ends with a wedding.

And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet and lay down. Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. And he said, 'Who are you?' So she answered, 'I am Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative.'

Boaz knew what it was like to be an outsider – his own mother was a prostitute! And Ruth was an outsider, widowed and a Moabitess... so not a good marriage prospect! But Boaz was a man of integrity and he protected Ruth from his workers and made sure her reputation did not come into question – all because of her visit to the threshing floor that night.

Although strange to us, this act of lying at Boaz's feet was a tradition that spoke of restoration and ownership. Once Boaz understood what Ruth had done, he boldly stepped up to the mark and went through the process of guaranteeing for her a future with her people that would ensure the production of an heir and an inheritance that would not end with her husband's death.

Boaz took hold of the sandal that was offered as a sign of a relinquished right of ownership and he claims Ruth, as well as her land, as part of the kinsman redeemer package.

T.S.

Notes



A present for the present

Boaz was a prototype of Jesus who, one day, would explode into our lives and take up 'our sandal' and claim us for his own. The story of Advent is part of that process that nullifies the ownership of another and brings us into our identity and inheritance with the kinsman redeemer born in a stable.

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



VERLASTING FATHER / DAY 15

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 9:6

Author's note: during the four Sundays of Advent we will be considering one of the names by which the prophet Isaiah described the coming Christ.

*For to us a Child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, **Everlasting Father**, Prince of Peace.*

The fact that the prophet Isaiah described the coming Christ as the *Everlasting Father* is amazing. As the saying goes, 'Like father, like son!', Jesus so perfectly represented His Heavenly Father that he could say, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' [see John 14:9].

Although our experience of a father-figure might be somewhat different, we see in Jesus the compassionate side of fatherhood. With a deep heartfelt love He willingly laid down His life for His rebellious kids. As a generous Everlasting Father, Jesus lived to give rather than get. And even though Jesus is not some kind of benevolent Father Christmas who gives us everything on our list, He's given us life in all its fullness, peace beyond human understanding and unspeakable joy.

Not that any of these qualities have a sell-by date, because He is an everlasting Father. Unlike some earthly dads, Jesus is both constant and consistent in His love for us. He will never become a distant father who deserts us in our time of need – but He will forever be a loving Father who always has our best interests at heart.

H.S.

Notes



A present for the present

Just as a father's love gives a secure foundation for each of his children to build their own lives on, we can be totally secure in the love of our Father God, demonstrated to us through the life, death and resurrection of His son, Jesus. He is the rock on which we can build our lives.

Why not check out today's activity on page 16?



RUTH / DAY 16

TODAY'S READING: RUTH 3:3-9 [MSG]

One day her mother-in-law Naomi said to Ruth, 'My dear daughter, isn't it about time I arranged a good home for you so you can have a happy life? And isn't Boaz a close relative, the one with those young women you've been working? Maybe it's time to make our move. Tonight is the night of Boaz's barley harvest at the threshing floor. Take a bath. Put on some perfume. Get all dressed up and go to the threshing floor. But don't let him know you're there until the party is well under way and he's had plenty of food and drink. When you see him slipping off to sleep, watch where he lies down and then go there. Lie at his feet to let him know that you are available to him for marriage. Then wait and see what he says. He'll tell you what to do.'

Ruth said, 'If you say so, I'll do it, just as you've told me.'

She went down to the threshing floor and put her mother-in-law's plan into action.

Ruth and Naomi were both poverty-stricken widows without a future. One day Naomi came up with an incredible plan in which Ruth would become a willing participant while taking an enormous risk. By this simple act of radical obedience, Ruth made herself completely vulnerable as she entrusted herself and her whole future to a man called Boaz.

In the middle of the night Boaz awoke and was startled to find a beautiful young woman lying at his feet. When Ruth boldly asked him to spread the corner of his garment over her, she was basically proposing marriage. Elsewhere in the Book of Ruth the same word for 'garment' is translated as 'wings' – 'May the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge, reward you fully' [see Ruth 2:12].

In Jesus Christ we see our ultimate redeemer. He died in our place to release us from the curse of sin and death and He longs for us to completely abandon our self to Him, and take refuge beneath the shadow of His wings. He will not disappoint us.

H.S.

Notes



A present for the present

We all need a redeemer. Jesus is waiting to redeem us right now and has already paid the price for us on the cross. He longs to have a relationship with us. He is romancing us today and drawing us into His presence, a safe place where we can experience His security and protection over our lives.

Why not check out today's activity on page 17?



ESSE / DAY 17

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 11:1–3, 10

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD – and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.

Jesse has an illustrious family tree – he is the son of Obed, the grandson of Ruth and Boaz and the great-grandson of Rahab – and he has an even greater legacy. For it was from Jesse – the ‘Root’ – that the Messiah would come.

A wealthy man (due to his ownership of a flock of sheep and goats!), Jesse hailed from Bethlehem and was renowned as a man of influence and social standing. But he was also a man who was attuned to the will of God and who could see in David – the youngest of his eight sons – a special spiritual endowment with a destiny that would find ultimate expression many centuries later in the life of Jesus.

As Jesse's legacy led directly to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus' legacy leads directly to us, for through His birth, death and resurrection we have been grafted onto the tree [see Romans 11:11–24] and have become ‘heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ’ [see Romans 8:16–18].

A.K.

Notes



A present for the present

Who do you think you are? Because of Christ and His work of salvation you are now part of the spiritual family tree that not only goes back to Jesus, but to Jesse and ultimately to Adam, the son of God [see Luke 3:38]. Now that's worth shouting about – or even a cue for a television series!

Why not check out today's activity on page 17?



AVID / DAY 18

TODAY'S READING: PSALM 25:8–11

Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant. For the sake of your name, LORD forgive my iniquity, though it is great.

When you think of David, what comes to mind? A shepherd-boy chosen to be a great warrior king? The founder of the city of Jerusalem? The small boy who avenged – with a simple weapon – a man three times his strength and stature? A guy who fell from grace big time? He was all of these things – yet throughout his entire life he humbly yielded to God whom he revered and implicitly trusted.

It is this same humility, this perpetual submission to His Heavenly Father that shines through the life of Jesus – in Bethlehem we see His birth in dirty, smelly surroundings; in Galilee we see Him – the servant-God – constantly giving of Himself; in Jerusalem we see Him wash the feet of His disciples on the eve of His death; and at Golgotha we see Him make the ultimate sacrifice in service to the whole of humanity. *'He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness'* [see Philipians 2:7].

A.K.

Notes



A present for the present

David's humility was fashioned in the crucible of his flawed humanity. Jesus' humility was the expression of His perfect humanity. Two thousand years on, the same Lord of heaven and earth continues to be our humble and faithful servant. What an amazing thought!

Why not check out today's activity on page 17?



SOLOMON / DAY 19

TODAY'S READING: DEUTERONOMY 17:16–20 [NKJV]

But he [the king] shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.' Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. Also, it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests and Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

When the Gift and the Word are held in tension something has to give!

The Queen of Sheba visited Solomon to see what his wisdom had achieved – and she was amazed. But the reality was that after the initial rush of faith and applied wisdom, self-seeking brings Solomon to a low point where everything became an endless chasing after the wind. How sad!

In Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Songs of Solomon and Lamentations, Solomon faithfully records the highs and lows of his incredible kingdom where knowledge and understanding mugged the essence of the gift and overshadowed the Giver.

But it's not all bad news! Solomon writes the greatest love song ever and speaks prophetically of a coming King who is 'wisdom personified' and who gives everything away to make us His treasure.

Solomon had too many wives and horses and forgot about 'the book'. He's a brilliant example of how to start well and what happens when you take your eyes off the 'prize', preferring to run after things that won't truly satisfy us in the long term.

T.S.

Notes



A present for the present

Scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign. He responded with a startling truth about Himself – '*One greater than Solomon is here*'. Solomon's wisdom was a gift, whereas Jesus actually came to be 'our' wisdom [see 1 Corinthians 1:24 and 30]. We are related to the immortal, invisible, only wise God. His wisdom calls out to us – we only have to ask!

Why not check out today's activity on page 17?



ERUBBABEL / DAY 20

TODAY'S READING: HAGGAI 2:23

'On that day,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,' declares the LORD, 'and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you,' declares the LORD Almighty.

It was a time of great discomfort for Judea. Life was not as it could be or should be. Hopes and dreams were as fruitless as the crops of their land. A generation was close to ruin again because of their stubborn disobedience. Only a powerful king could turn this nation around and now their heavenly ruler was ready to respond.

Every king has a ring. And that ring is a symbol of royal authority, royal authenticity and royal action. Zerubbabel understood the symbolic significance of being compared to a signet ring. This man knew what it was like to act on behalf of a higher authority.

Today our *King of Kings* empowers every royal subject with His *seal of approval*, equipping them to start transforming nations by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And now even when nations seem in disarray, the extension of heaven's rule will shake the earth until all that remains is that which is written on the orders from the King.

D.B.

Notes



A present for the present – as we join together in this journey of celebration, let's unpack these thoughts about **Zerubbabel** and enjoy the gift God has given us in the Christ of Christmas.

Lord may we truly understand the extent of the authority God has given to us through the gift of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus. Let us realise the significance of our words, our actions and our influence when we are acting on behalf of a King.

Why not check out today's activity on page 17?



EVI / DAY 21

TODAY'S READING: GENESIS 29:31–34

When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless. Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, 'It is because the LORD has seen my misery.

Surely my husband will love me now.' She conceived again and when she gave birth to a son she said, 'Because the LORD heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too.' So she named him Simeon. Again she conceived and when she gave birth to a son she said, 'Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.' So he was named Levi.

Levi was born into a totally dysfunctional family. His name translates as joined in harmony, and many believe this was the secret prayer of his mother longing for love in her challenging home life.

No one would have thought that Levi would become part of an emerging priesthood – those who were authorised to mediate between man and God. Yet he belonged to an exclusive priesthood. Only men belonging to the tribe of Levi could serve in the Temple, regardless of how qualified others may have been.

With so many restrictions in place, it would be easy for most to feel disqualified from service to God. Mankind was destined for disharmony, like a woman trying to woo a husband who was never quite satisfied with what she had to offer. It wouldn't be like that forever.

God sent us a *Great High Priest* who has *joined in harmony* the ultimate dysfunctional family, not because the family members – us – are qualified to serve, but because he has made us ALL priests by His grace.

D.B.

Notes



A present for the present

Levi reminds us that it doesn't matter *how* you start, it's what God *has finished* that matters. May we thank God that all qualifications, boundaries, restrictions and disconnections have been finished in Christ. Because of God's present to us, we are free to be present with Him.

Why not check out today's activity on page 17?



PRINCE OF PEACE / DAY 22

TODAY'S READING: ISAIAH 9:6

Author's note: during the four Sundays of Advent we will be considering one of the names by which the prophet Isaiah described the coming Christ. Today we're looking at the name: **Prince of Peace**.

*For to us a Child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**.*

Nothing else was talked or tweeted about for days. The nation came to a complete standstill while waiting for news of the royal baby's arrival. Television crews camped outside the maternity ward desperate for William and Kate to emerge with their new prince.

Yet when he finally came, we quickly moved our attention on to something else, wondering what would be the next big thing to keep us entertained.

People are always waiting for the next big thing. Consumerism keeps us in an endless cycle of always wanting more. We want more experiences to try, new gadgets to enjoy and the next big celebrity to adore. Our strivings with ourselves and with others lead us to lose our peace in a storm of dissatisfaction.

The truth is, we don't need a celebrity to make our lives complete, but we do need a Prince. It is the *Prince of Peace* who leads us into wholeness in the midst of a broken world. And this Prince really is worthy of all our attention.

D.B.

Notes



A present for the present

When others are distracted by dissatisfaction, may you be captivated by Christ, the real Prince who brings true peace. Let the Peace of God guide you as Christ releases you from the wars you have with yourself and the battles you have in this world.

Why not check out today's activity on page 17?



JOSEPH / DAY 23

TODAY'S READING: MATTHEW 1:20–25

But after he had considered this, an angel of the LORD appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.'

All this took place to fulfill what the LORD had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' which means "God with us".'

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the LORD had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

We don't know too much about Joseph, but in the few times he's mentioned in scripture, we see his inner character. His kindness and love for Mary is shown when he plans to divorce her quietly rather than placing her in a situation where she was likely to be stoned to death because of the pregnancy. His trust in the Lord is revealed after the angel spoke to him and tells him of another way. God's heart of protection is revealed through the guarding of Mary and Jesus on their journey to Bethlehem.

Joseph stands out as a man of quiet strength and integrity who had a deep love for his family – just what God was looking for when He chose a man who would become the earthly father to Jesus. God knew Joseph had a father's heart.

And he held the Father's heart, in his arms, that night so long ago – in the same way we can know Jesus as our Father, one who protects us, shows us unconditional love and holds us close when we need it the most.

L.B.

Notes



A present for the present

Let the Father hold you tightly as He forms your character in His loving arms of protection. May you grow strong on your journey as all that you are reflects all that the Father wants you to be.

Why not check out today's activity on page 17?



MARY / DAY 24

TODAY'S READING: LUKE 1:30-33

But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The LORD

God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.'

What an amazing decision of trust this young woman had to make when confronted with great news. I can't begin to imagine the emotions she must have felt to be chosen, to be favoured, to be pregnant, to be vulnerable, and to be a carrier of such wealth and treasure in Jesus.

Mary said 'Yes' to God before she even knew that the dreams of her heart could be birthed from heaven's womb.

Little did she know that saying 'Yes' meant that she would bear the Christ-child who would grow to carry the burden of all of our lives. How could she have known that this unseen life would die a death that would rescue our souls and change the world forever?

Our 'Yes' to God is what creates the opportunity for new life to be carried in our midst. And as those who carry Christ today, we, like Mary, are called by His purpose to push His destiny into the world.

L.B.

Notes



A present for the present

When God speaks to you about what he needs you to do, may you respond like Mary and say 'Yes' to the pregnant potency of His promise and may your 'Yes' to God bring new life for you.

Why not check out today's activity on page 17?



ESUS / DAY 25

TODAY'S READING: LUKE 2:13–16

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.' When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the LORD has told us about.' So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in a manger.

And on that night they heard the air fill with sounds of the angels singing, 'Glory, Glory, Glory to God in the Highest.' And by His Holy Spirit we can still hear the echoes of this glorious song. A baby birthed in simplicity now reigns with sovereignty. Emmanuel, God at last is with us.

He is the Prince of Peace and Lord of Lords. Our Wonderful Counsellor. Our Everlasting Father. Our Mighty God. Emmanuel, God at last is with us [see Isaiah 11:1–10].

From the root of Jesse came this treasured fruit. He came from the roots of history and now he binds the branches of humanity together. Emmanuel, God at last is with us.

From Genesis to Revelation we hear the whispers of this coming babe. We have seen His life through the eyes of those who have gone before us. Every story has been revealing the Saviour beneath every sacred page of scripture. Emmanuel, God at last is with us.

God knew what he was doing from beginning to end. Emmanuel, God at last is with us.

L.B.

Notes



A present for the present

May you find Emmanuel in every Bible character who shows you a glimpse of the good news of Christmas. Let every story in their life and yours point to the wonders of our incredible Saviour.

Why not check out today's activity on page 17?



Happy Christmas

FROM AND TO EVERYONE IN THE

MOSAIC FAMILY

ADVENT: A JOURNEY OF CELEBRATION

A BIG THANK YOU...

... to all who gave up their time to create each Thought for the Day – Dave & Leah Boden; Amanda Kay; Gary & Helen Spicer and Chris & Tina Spicer. A special thank you to Amanda Kay for her proofreading expertise and Hannah Reid for the layout and graphics.

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