



JOY TO THE WORLD

AN ADVENT DEVOTIONAL TO PREPARE YOUR HEART
FOR CHRISTMAS

by: Morgan A. Ellis

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Introduction WHAT IS ADVENT?



The word advent, meaning “arrival” or “coming”. It is a season of anticipation and longing towards the coming of our Messiah, Jesus. Each week we will celebrate and unpack the topics of HOPE, PEACE, JOY, AND LOVE. All of which lead us ultimately to the most amazing and special Christmas gift of all, Christ Himself.

I pray these devotions guide you through this Christmas season with purpose and meaning. That your heart will feel more prepared for the coming of our Savior and the true reason for the season.

“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:14

And so it begins, the holiday season. It is with joy and thanksgiving that this little devotional would enter the world. I am so honored and humbled to be on this Advent journey alongside you. May we each grow in our love and adoration for the baby in a manger who grew up and saved the world.

HOPE

JESUS IS COMING

“In His name the nations will put their hope.”

Matthew 12:21

The first week of Advent we light the candle of HOPE. The Hebrew word used for Hope is Yakhal, which translates “to wait” or “await”. The Israelite people knew a lot about waiting. They waited centuries to be freed from captivity in Egypt. They waited 40 years in the desert for God to lead them to the Promised Land. And they also waited for the coming of their Messiah, who came in the person of Jesus Christ.

As we look towards Christmas and begin celebrating this beautiful season, let us posture our hearts to look forward to, to await, the birth of our Savior. Jesus is the true reason for this season, and it is with hope in our hearts that we wait joyfully knowing that He has come and that He has freed us from the chains of our sin.

We all come into the holiday season with some sort of expectations of how we want them to play out. Expectations of the decorations, gifts (given and received), parties, gatherings, family traditions, the list goes on and on. But do you and I have expectations for God to meet us? Do we await and joyously anticipate the presence of God throughout the season?

The truth is, God is with you always my friend. He is waiting to meet you right in the middle of the hustle and bustle. Jesus, Immanuel, literally means, “God with us” and so it is with great joy that we can look ahead, knowing God is faithfully with us in it all. Jesus will meet and exceed your every expectation. Maybe not in every way that you want, but ultimately in every way that you need.

As a mom of three, I tell my kids often, I don’t give you everything that you want, but I try my very best to give you everything that you need. God is so much more faithful than I am and perfectly gives you and me exactly everything that we need. And it is with this knowledge that we find true HOPE. A hope that anticipates and that waits knowing the Messiah has come.

1. What are your expectations for this holiday season?

2. What is something you are anticipating as you look ahead to Christmas?

3. Find some time this week to reflect on God's faithfulness and the true Hope that can be found only in God. Here are some verses to get you started:

Hebrews 11:6

Psalm 62:5

Hebrews 11:6

Romans 5:5

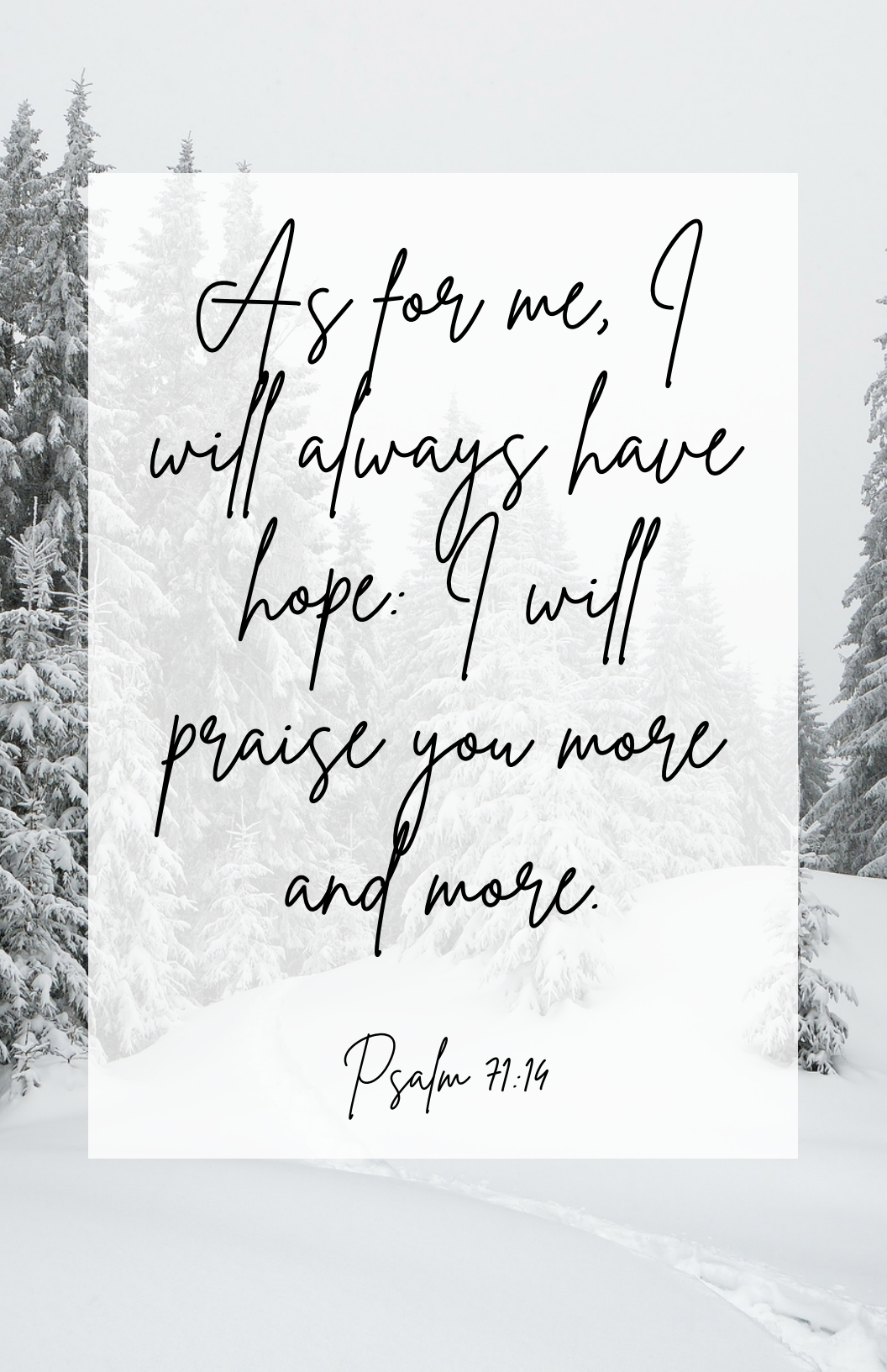
Psalm 31:24

Psalm 62:5

Psalm 42:5

Romans 12:12

4. Pray this week for God to meet you right where you are this holiday season.



As for me, I
will always have
hope: I will
praise you more
and more.

Psalm 71:14

PEACE

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 Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Isaiah 9:6

The second week of Advent we light the candle of PEACE. The Hebrew word used for peace is shalom. Shalom is an all-encompassing peace, a completeness. When we see shalom in the Bible, it refers to more than just peaceful or calm circumstances. In contrast, the peace that comes from God is something we can have no matter our circumstances. Whether we have plenty or nothing, good health or sickness, suffering or joy; peace from God transcends beyond our earthly conditions.

Shalom also denotes a right relationship with God, with others, and with God's creation. We see in Isaiah 9:6 (above), the author, Isaiah, prophesying of a Messiah that would be called the Prince of Peace. Isaiah writes of the kingdom of peace, God's Kingdom. Jesus later fulfilled this prophecy in Luke 1:31-33. Let's read that together:

“You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him 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 Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” (Luke 1:31-33)

Jesus left His throne in heaven to come to earth as a baby. He lived His life and His ministry not as a king or war hero, but as a humble servant preaching peace, love, and God's truth to all who would listen. Jesus is our Prince of Peace and in Him is the only way we can truly find the peace, the wholeness, the completeness we so desire. Despite whatever it is you are facing today, the peace that comes from and through Jesus is accessible to all who believe.

Maybe the holidays for you don't feel joyous or peaceful. Maybe they are stressful and overwhelming; crazy and chaotic. I challenge you to seek Jesus, search for the Prince of Peace and put Him at the center of your Christmas this year. When you do watch how in His presence you find true peace. A lasting peace no matter how crazy the holidays still will be.

1. What are some things that tend to rob you of your peace? Especially during the holiday season.

2. Where is a place you like to go that makes you feel at peace? Why?

3. How could you shift your focus from your current circumstances to seeing them through the lens of Jesus? Will you allow Jesus into your messy, hustle and bustle and allow Him to lead your holidays as your Prince of Peace?

3. Find some time this week to reflect on who Jesus is and what it means to have peace that transcends all understanding. Read these verses. Which one speaks most to you in this season?

Philippians 4:6-7

Isaiah 9:6

Colossians 3:15

John 16:33

Romans 15:13

Matthew 5:9

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Isaiah 26:3

John 14:27

4. Pray this week for God to give you Shalom peace. To fill your heart and soul with a fullness and completeness.

JOY

JOY TO THE WORLD

“But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”

Luke 2:10-11

The third week of Advent we light the candle of JOY.

Joy to the world the Lord is come! Let Earth receive her king! Let every heart, prepare Him room. And heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the World is one of my absolute favorite Christmas carols. And when you stop to really take in the lyrics, they may just hit you a little differently. Imagine the night the wisemen came to Bethlehem, after being told by an angel that the Messiah was born. Imagine the excitement and anticipation. The Israelite people had spent centuries waiting for their Messiah and now He was finally here! The greatest Christmas present came wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Our King of Kings humbled himself to not only become man, but to be born in a stable, because no one else in the town had any room for Mary.

Is your holiday season bursting at the seams? Have you jam packed every moment of every day and weekend leaving little room for the coming Messiah? What a joyous day this should be, if we make room for Jesus in our lives and in our hearts. Don't allow the glitter and shiny new objects, parties, and stuff clutter your heart and your home this season. This week as we joyfully anticipate our coming Messiah, intentionally make room for Him in your days. Spend a little extra time this week reading the Christmas story or other passages of scripture. One way you can make room for Jesus is by spending time with Him.

Blast the Christmas carols a little louder and truly soak in the joy that Jesus' birth has brought to all mankind. It's the greatest gift of all time and we should sing it from the rooftops. True joy can only be found in Jesus.

1. What is your favorite Christmas carol and why?

2. What is something that brings you joy? Is it spending time with family? Giving gifts? Decorating? Baking? Spend some extra time reflecting on the things that bring you joy and then make space in your week for the things that truly matter.

3. Spend intentional time in God's word this week with Jesus. Let your heart prepare room for Him this holiday season and let His joy overflow. Here are some verses to get you started:

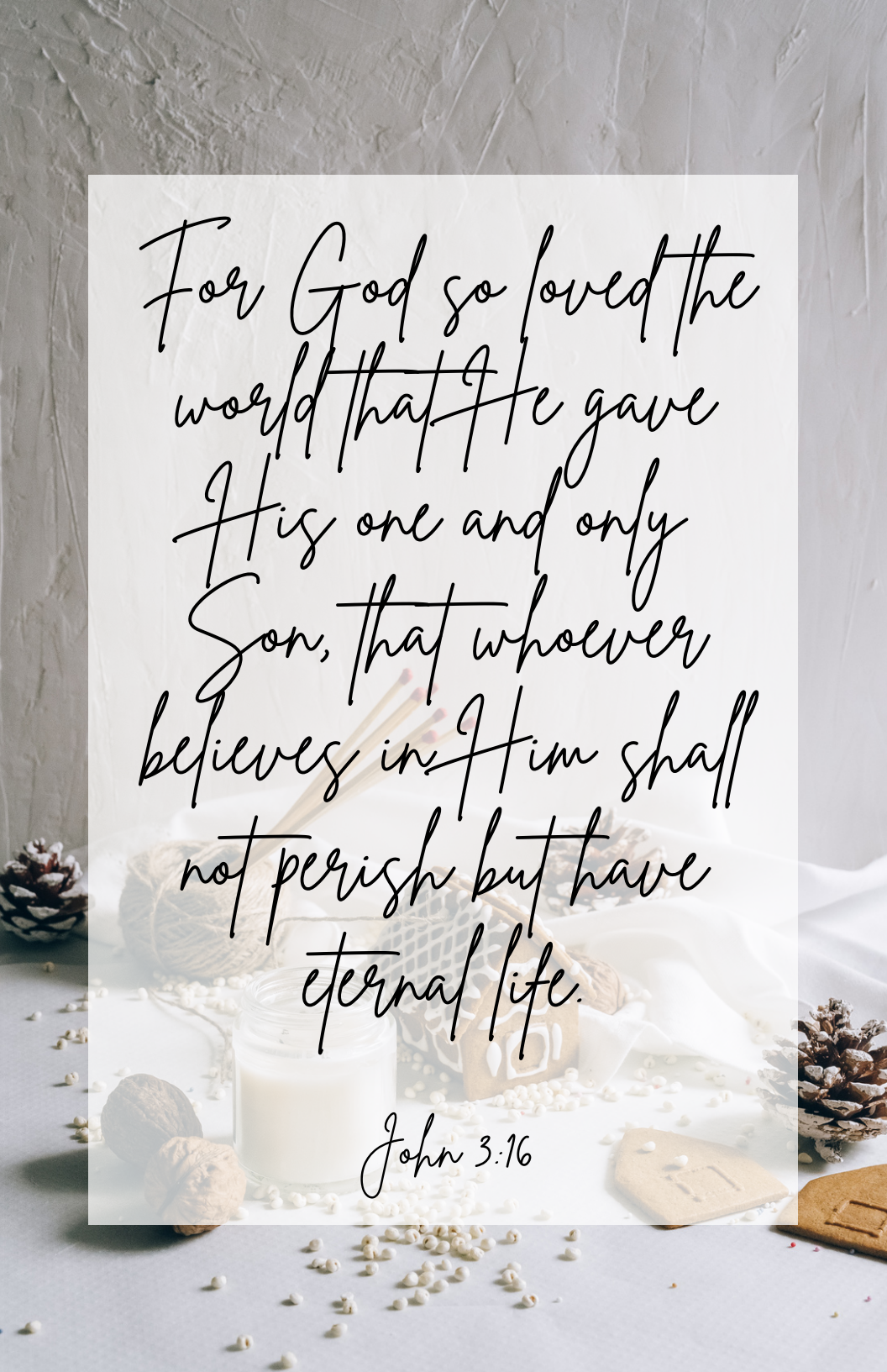
John 15:11
Hebrews 12:2
Romans 12:12

James 1:2-4
Psalm 4:7-8

Psalm 126:5

4. Comparison is the thief of joy. Have you ever compared your Christmas to someone else's? How did that make you feel? Challenge yourself this season to be content with how God has chosen to bless you and your family.

5. Pray this week for your heart to prepare for the true meaning of Christmas and that God would allow His joy to fill your heart in place of any commercial or material thing.



For God so loved the
world that He gave
His one and only
Son, that whoever
believes in Him shall
not perish but have
eternal life.

John 3:16

LOVE

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:16

The fourth candle that is lit for Advent is the candle of LOVE.

Love as the world sees it is self-serving and conditional. It is considered a feeling that you can fall in and out of. But true love, **agape** love, as used in the Scriptures and used to describe God’s love for us, His creation, is eternal. Agape love is the highest form of love. It is unconditional and sacrificial. Agape love is a choice not based on emotions or attraction, but rather a self-sacrificial, intentional love. Agape is used 115 times in the New Testament to describe God’s love and the love that God is.

True love is not contingent on anything that we do, but rather completely dependent on who God is. As the Creator of the Universe, God also is the Creator of Love. It says in **1 John 4:16** **“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”**

As Christmas nears let us not forget that Jesus came into the world not to condemn it, but to save it. It is because of His great love for us that He came, lived, died, and rose again. Defeating death and sin with the sacrifice of His life is the greatest act of love.

We cannot celebrate Christmas without Christ. He is the glue that holds humanity together, whether we want to believe it or not is our choice, but whatever we choose does not change God’s love for us. God’s love is not conditional on anything that you do, good works that you perform, or that you live a “good” life. Rather, God chooses to love you every minute of every day simply because you are His precious creation. May you feel His everlasting love wrapped up in your Christmas this year. And may you love others in this same way.

1. How would you define love? Does that definition align with who God is? With agape love?

2. As you prepare your heart for Christmas, how can you bring Jesus into the center? Will you accept the greatest gift of love ever given?

3. Let us reflect this week on who God is and His great love for us. How will you respond to God's eternal, unfailing love for you?

Romans 5:8

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Luke 6:35

Deuteronomy 6:5

1 John 4:9-11

1 John 4:19

2 Timothy 1:7

2 John 1:6

Romans 12:9

Lamentations 3:22

4. Pray this week that your heart will truly feel God's love for you this season. May you see Christmas through the eyes of your Creator. Through a God who loves you so much that He sent His son to die for you.

CHRISTMAS

REJOICE! REJOICE!

“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 Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Isaiah 9:6

The last candle we light on Christmas Eve is the Christ candle. This candle is lit in honor of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. For to us this day, God's Son was given. Jesus is the reason for the season! Merry Christmas!

Emmanuel, “God with us”. Jesus is quite literally the manifestation of God in human form and His love for you means that you are never alone. His presence is always with you, even in the darkest and most overwhelming times. Jesus is with you. He is a wonderful counselor, guiding you. He is our mighty God, One with the Father. He is our Prince of Peace. The giver of true peace. And He is the light that has come into our dark world, offering us hope.

As we light this final candle, we are reminded of Jesus being the light of the world. “The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.” (John 1:9) Jesus is our light. His life and His words should guide our lives. When we remember to keep Jesus at the center of our Christmas the light that comes from Him will fill our hearts with an overwhelming abundance of hope, peace, joy, and love. It is through Christ that Christmas has any meaning at all.

May you take a moment right now to pause the noise and quiet your heart. Focus in on Jesus, the light of the world, Emmanuel, the Prince of Peace. Let His light shine into your Christmas and like a lamp put on a stand gives light to the whole house, “in the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16).

Let all that you do this Christmas be an expression and an extension of the light of Christ that has filled your heart, overflowing to those around you.

Merry Christmas!

1. What is one thing you can do for someone else this Christmas to spread the light of Christ?

2. In times of darkness, what does Jesus as the Light of the World mean to you?


3. Find some time this week to reflect on Jesus being the light of the world. Here are some verses to get you started. How does this encourage you?

2 Samuel 22:29
Matthew 5:14-16
John 1:5

Psalm 119:105
1 John 1:5
Psalm 27:1

Ephesians 5:8-9
2 Corinthians 4:6

4. Thank God today for sending His son, the Light of the World. Pray that He will meet you right where you are in your Christmas and allow the light of Christ to be where your hope, peace, joy, and love originate.

A vertical image of a night sky filled with stars. A prominent bright star with a four-pointed starburst is located in the upper left quadrant. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a darker blue at the bottom. At the very bottom, the dark silhouette of a forest of evergreen trees is visible against the horizon.

When they saw
the star, they
were overjoyed.

Matthew 2:10

THANK YOU


Thank you so much for downloading this devotional. It truly means the world to me to be able to create content to share with others that points them back to Jesus. I pray that you have a beautiful Christmas season filled with Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Morgan A. Ellis is a mom of three, wife, hair stylist, and author. She loves cheering on moms and her greatest joy is being a mom.

CONNECT

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