

Advent Week One - Begins Nov 30, 2014

Day One

"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden" (Genesis 2:15a).

Adam and Eve lived in a perfect environment. Sometimes our environment is negative and drags us down, and we may need to change it. But beware of saying, "If I only had a better environment." A perfect place did not keep Adam and Eve from making disastrous choices.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to live for You right where I am.

Day Two

". . . you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17a).

Life is made up of choices. Some things we can do and some we should not do. God gave Adam and Eve only one choice to make. What could be simpler? But when they began to question God, they began to get into trouble. Be sure to make good choices.

Prayer: Dear God of the universe, help me to make the right decisions every day.

Day Three

"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18).

God understands the problem of loneliness. He did not want Adam to be lonely. Adam also needed a helper, someone on his level, yet uniquely different. So God created woman. His intent is that we work together to be better than either would be alone.

Prayer: Lord, help me to gain a new appreciation of the wonderful relationship between husband and wife

Day Four

"In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee" (Luke 1:26).

God sent his angel Gabriel to a specific place, a town called Nazareth. He knew where Mary was, and He knows where you are. No matter where you go, He will find you. And if you are open to Him, He will speak to you in your innermost being.

Prayer: O God, speak to me at the point of my need. I am listening with my whole heart.

Day Five

". . . to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph" (Luke 1:27a)

In only a dozen words, Luke introduces us to the two main characters in the Christmas story. Mary, a virgin, and Joseph, a carpenter, were about to have their world turned upside down. Because they were willing to cooperate with God's plan, our world can turn right side up.

Prayer: Father, like Mary and Joseph, help me to cooperate with Your plan.

Day Six

"Joseph, a descendant of David" (Luke 1:27b).

Luke was careful to record Joseph's ancestry. After all, the promise had been given to David and his ancestors – people like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – that One would come and bless the whole world. That One was Jesus. God always keeps His promises. You can count on it.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to remember, when tempted to doubt, that You are always faithful.

Day Seven

"Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28b).

Considering everything that Mary was facing, it was important for her to be assured that the Lord was with her. She would not have to face the future alone. Neither do you. God loves you more than you know. He highly favors you, and is with you.

Prayer: O God, thank You for your favor. Thank you for being with me.

Advent Week Two - Begins Dec 7, 2014

Day One

"Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting" (Exodus 40:34a).

The cloud symbolized the presence of God with the people of Israel. When God first spoke to Moses, He appeared as the fire in a burning bush. When Jesus came as Immanuel – God with us – it was a matter of great significance. He was not a symbol. He was really God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that You are still with us today – in our hearts.

Day Two

". . . the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:35b).

God's presence was so real, so palpable, that He filled the tabernacle. Even Moses could not enter until the cloud lifted. It is all the more remarkable that Paul says our bodies are a temple and God's Spirit lives in us (1 Corinthians 3:16). That is awesome!

Prayer: Dear God of the universe, come and fill my life anew with Your presence.

Day Three

". . . whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out" (Exodus 40:36b).

The people never had to wonder if it was time to move or stay. When the cloud lifted, it was time to go. When it stayed over the tabernacle, they remained. We don't have a cloud, but God promised if we acknowledge Him, He will direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Prayer: Lord, lead me in the way You want me to go

Day Four

". . . the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night" (Exodus 40:38a).

God gave them a cloud by day to provide shelter from the hot sun. He gave them fire by night to illuminate the darkness long before flashlights or electric lamps. God thinks of everything. He still promises to supply our needs according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19).

Prayer: O God, thank You for Your gracious provision

Day Five

"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid" (Luke 2:10a).

I can understand why the angel told them not to be afraid. The sudden appearance of an angel, shimmering in the darkness, would be enough to make the strongest shepherd shiver in his sandals. However, God's intention was not to frighten but to enlighten. It still is.

Prayer: Father, thank You for the calm assurance You give when we are frightened.

Day Six

"I bring you good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10b).

What could be better news than to know the long-awaited Messiah had come. "Great joy" almost seems like an understatement. People who knew the Scriptures and had been hoping for the Messiah must have been ecstatic to know He had come. The Promised One came in their lifetime.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have promised Jesus would come back again. Help us be ready.

Day Seven

". . . great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10c).

Although Jesus was born of Jewish parents in a Jewish town in a Jewish culture, He came for all people. Across the centuries, all who have received Him, regardless of their nationality or background, have become the children of God (John 1:12).

Prayer: God, I praise You that you have brought salvation to all who put their trust in You.

Advent Week Three - Begins Dec 14, 2014

Day One

“He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths” (Isaiah 2:3b).

The prophet says God will teach us His ways, which implies we do not already know them. That is true. But what a willing Teacher He is. When we open our hearts to Him, He does not disappoint us. The question is, will we learn and “walk in his paths”?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I open my mind and heart to You. Please teach me

Day Two

“They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks” (Isaiah 2:4b).

From a military mindset to an agricultural mindset. From an attitude bent on destruction to an attitude that produces and shares. This is what God can do for us. But it only happens when we let Him sit at the head of the peace conference table.

Prayer: Dear God of the universe, bring your peace into our hearts.

Day Three

“Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD” (Isaiah 2:5).

By the “house of Jacob,” he means the people of Israel, the children of Abraham. Yet, since Abraham was the father of the faithful, all of us who live by faith are his children too. So to all believers he appeals, “Let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

Prayer: Lord, in this Advent season, a season of lights, shine Your light on our paths.

Day Four

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?” (Matthew 2:2a).

From the east – possibly Persia – the Magi, or Wise Men, came seeking the newborn king. Guided only by a star and their understanding of the heavens, they knew this birth was a momentous occasion. What are you seeking at this season? Or rather, Whom are you seeking?

Prayer: O God, we know that in You we find all the things our hearts are seeking.

Day Five

“But you, Bethlehem . . . out of you will come a ruler . . . of my people Israel” (Matthew 2:6).

Herod’s counselors found the verses in the book of Micah, predicting the birth of the Promised One. The prophecy even indicated the town where He would be born – Bethlehem, the city of David. God knows where you were born . . . and where you live. Welcome Him there.

Prayer: Father, You are welcome in my life, during Advent and always.

Day Six

“When they saw the star, they were overjoyed” (Matthew 2:10).

Apparently, the star disappeared for a time. We don’t know if the nights were cloudy or it disappeared for some other reason. But its reappearance brought them joy. They knew their search was almost over. You and I can find Him too when we seek with all our hearts.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for making it possible to find Your Son Jesus, our Savior

Day Seven

“. . . they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him” (Matthew 2:11a).

The Wise Men bowed before the wisest One who ever lived. The three kings, as they are sometimes called, worshiped the infant King. They presented Him with gifts as a part of their worship. What will you give this Christmas? Why not give Him yourself?

Prayer: O God, this is my gift this Christmas: I give myself to You.

Advent Week 4 - Begins Dec 21, 2014

Day One

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son" (Isaiah 7:14b).

Virgins do not give birth to babies. If they do, you know they are no longer virgins. Yet this was the miracle God performed in order to bring Jesus into the world, unstained by human sin. He inherited no sin from His father, because His Father was God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, such miracles are too wonderful for us to comprehend, but we thank You.

Day Two

"The virgin . . . will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14b-c).

Centuries later, Matthew would quote this verse (1:23), and remind his readers that "Immanuel" means "God with us." God could have come down to us as a full-grown man, but incredibly He came as a helpless baby, dependent on human parents. Then He grew up to change the world.

Prayer: Dear God of the universe, Thank you that you are still Immanuel, God with us today.

Day Three – Christmas Day

"So they . . . found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger" (Luke 2:16).

Surely all the shepherds had seen babies before. So why leave their sheep to find this particular baby? Because the angel had told them, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." So they found Him. Have you?

Prayer: Lord, thank You that You are available to all who will seek You.

Day Four

"When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning . . . this child" (Luke 2:17).

What is the best gift you received for Christmas? Have you told anyone about it? If it was truly special, you probably have? Have you told anyone about Jesus? He is far better than any gift we find under a tree. He is God's "indescribable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Prayer: O God, thank You for giving us Christ, who is worth talking about!

Day Five

". . . all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them" (Luke 2:18).

If we had heard what the shepherds had to say, we probably would have been amazed too. Shepherds were not very high on the social register. Why would God send His angel to them, of all people? They paid attention, and obeyed, two very good qualities.

Prayer: Father, I bow in amazement at the wonder of Jesus' birth

Day Six

"Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19).

Mary took it all in and pondered it, from the angel's appearance in Nazareth until the shepherds came and bowed before the Baby. Have you pondered the wonder of the virgin birth, God with us, and all it means? I hope you have had a "Mary" Christmas, a pondering, wonder-filled Christmas.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, when we think of Your majestic plan, it fills us with wonder!

Day Seven

"The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:20).

What an appropriate response to the good news of Christmas! As Longfellow wrote: "Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: 'God is not dead, nor doth He sleep; The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, With peace on earth, good will to men.'" Let's join the shepherds in praising Him.

Prayer: O God, we praise you for the glorious truth of Christmas!