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# TGC ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

For generations, churches and families have used Advent wreaths to help prepare their hearts and minds for celebrating the Lord's birth at Christmas. The evergreen wreath symbolizes eternal life and includes four candles, typically three purple and one pink. Often, there is a white candle in the middle of the wreath symbolizing the purity of Christ. Various traditions assign different topics to each individual candle, and the candles are usually given names to remind us of the good news of Christ's birth.

To celebrate this season, TGC's editorial team has put together these devotional readings that use the Advent wreath as a guide to help focus our hearts and minds on Christ during the month of December. We've chosen the following themes to accompany each of the five weeks:

- WEEK 1 (HOPE)  
Prophecy Candle (John 1:45)
- WEEK 2 (PEACE)  
Bethlehem Candle (Mic. 5:2; Isa. 9:6)
- WEEK 3 (JOY)  
Shepherd Candle (Luke 2:20; Isa. 35:10)
- WEEK 4 (LOVE)  
Angel Candle (Luke 2:13–14; John 3:16)
- WEEK 5 (FAITH)  
Christ Candle (John 1:29; Eph. 2:8–10)

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This book offers 25 devotions, with each day providing a Bible reading, devotional reflection, questions for response, and a hymn stanza for rejoicing. You can begin the devotional on December 1 and have one reading per day until Christmas. Or, if you prefer to follow the Sundays in Advent, you can use these reflections for five days a week leading up to Christmas, and then use the final week after Christmas (week 5) to continue to reflect on a life of faith in light of the good news of Christ's birth.

If you'd like to use this guide with your family, you could pick one devotion from each week to accompany the lighting of your Advent wreath in the home. In whatever ways you choose to use this devotional, we hope and pray that these readings will encourage your heart and help your mind focus on Jesus throughout this season.

We celebrate the good news proclaimed by Isaiah so long ago:

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isa. 9:6)

Rejoicing with you,  
Melissa Kruger

Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

JOHN 1:45





HOPE

*Prophecy Candle*



DAY 1

# A HOPEFUL COMPANY

*Megan Hill*

## READ

“And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.” (Luke 2:36–38)

## REFLECT

So much of the Christmas bustle seems to miss the point. Our neighbors focus on traditions or togetherness but fail

to seek the baby in the manger. Our co-workers and friends delight in “the season” but overlook the hope of all the earth. Even our own family members are often more concerned about their stocking stuffers than about the desperate need of their undying souls. To truly celebrate Christmas, we need better company.

Today’s verses introduce us to the prophetess Anna and her faithful companions; Scripture tells us they were “waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.” In contrast to many of their fellow Jews, this band of believers maintained their hope in the coming Messiah. Despite hundreds of years of prophetic silence, they committed themselves to worship and prayer in the temple, and they looked eagerly for the One who would “redeem Israel from all his iniquities” (Ps. 130:8). While the people around them were chasing the fading things of earth or superficially practicing outward religion, these friends had set their hearts on Christ.

Now, as then, God’s people often seek him in the dark. We live many years after Christ’s first appearing, and we may begin to grow weary of waiting for his return. The difficulties of life in a fallen world weigh heavily on us, and we are sometimes hard-pressed to remain hopeful. What’s more, the world, the flesh, and the Evil One continually hold out glittering objects to catch the eyes of our heart. “Forget about eternity,” they whisper. “This is now.”

Thankfully, we don’t have to persevere alone. God has surrounded us with a hopeful company: his beloved church. By their example and exhortation, the members of our local churches become a cloud of witnesses pointing to Jesus. As we read God’s Word together, we grow in our knowledge of the Redeemer. As we sing songs of praise, our hearts are lifted to the One who is worthy. As we share stories of God’s grace, we look for the Spirit’s work in the unseen places of our own hearts. Week after week, our fellow believers testify that this world is not all there is, and they remind us that the people

of God have always lived for another world entirely. In the company of the church, we focus on Christ.

Anna and her friends received the reward for their patient endurance. Having devoted themselves to being in the place of God's presence, they were there "at that very hour" (v. 38) when the Savior of the world appeared. Like those first-century believers, we also should commit ourselves to hoping in Christ and worshipping him together. And as we do, we will be in the very best place to experience his presence. "For where two or three are gathered in my name," Jesus promises, "there am I among them" (Matt. 18:20). In the company of the hopeful, Christ makes himself known.

## RESPOND

Why do you sometimes struggle to remain hopeful? How does the fellowship of other believers encourage you to hope in Christ? Where do you have opportunities to speak words of hope to those around you?

## REJOICE



To us a child of hope is born, to us a son is giv'n,  
Him shall the tribes of earth obey, him all the hosts of heaven

—John Morison, "To Us a Child of Hope is Born"





DAY 2

# HOPE FULFILLED

*Winfree Brisley*

## READ

“Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’” (John 1:45)

## REFLECT

One of our favorite family stories is about the time my husband’s cousin made a particularly ambitious Christmas list. He copied down practically every item from a thick toy catalogue. Then, he added one final request: surprises.

Many of us go to great lengths to pull off a Christmas morning surprise. Even now, you may have gifts hidden away, tucked into nooks and crannies, or delivered to a neighbor’s

house for safekeeping. Perhaps you've hunted down a gift that's nearly impossible to secure. Maybe you'll be up late on Christmas Eve doing a last-minute assembly.

Surprises can be delightful to give and receive, creating a sense of wonder and excitement around Christmas. But as we enjoy them, it's good to remember that the advent of Christ wasn't meant to be a surprise. God had been promising his people a serpent-crushing offspring from the earliest pages of the Bible (Gen. 3:15). The real story of Christmas is not a story of surprise but of fulfillment.

Through the Old Testament prophets, God revealed quite a bit of information about the coming Messiah. Jeremiah said he would be a king from the line of David (Jer. 23:5–6). Micah foretold he would come from the town of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). Isaiah said he would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14). Years ahead of time, God promised his people a Savior and gave specific details about his coming.

So, when Philip went to share the news that Christ had come, notice what he said: "We have found him of whom Moses . . . and also the prophets wrote" (John 1:45). He didn't say, "Surprise! God sent a Savior." He said, "We have *found* him." They knew the Messiah was coming. They were expecting him. Finding Jesus, for them, was confirmation of God's faithfulness.

And that's the story of Christmas for us, too. The advent of Christ is a vivid reminder that God does what he says he will do, down to the last detail. Don't skip over the details the Gospel writers record about the birth of Christ. It's not extra fluff to fill out the story. In Matthew's account of Christ's birth, five times he writes something like, "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet" (see Matt. 1:22; 2:5, 15, 17, 23). Why does Matthew repeatedly point out the fulfillment of prophecy? Because it shows us God's faithfulness.

God's faithfulness in the Christmas story gives us hope in our own stories. Just as God promised to send Jesus, he



promises to be with us now through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus came the first time, he promises to come again. We can look forward in hope, confidently anticipating Christ's second coming and the fulfillment of his promises to dwell with us forever (Rev. 21:3).

God may not give us everything on our wish list, but we can be sure he will fulfill all of the promises he has made. Great is his faithfulness!

## RESPOND

How have you seen God's faithfulness to you in the past? In what areas of your life are you struggling to believe God's promises? What might it look like for you to find hope in God's faithfulness today?

## REJOICE



Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!  
Great is Thy faithfulness!

-Thomas Chisholm, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"





DAY 3

# HOPE IN SCORCHED PLACES

*Melissa Kruger*

## READ

“And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.” (Isa. 58:11)

## REFLECT

We often assume the Lord only leads us to green pastures, settling us beside still waters. While a peaceful place of rest is certainly his ultimate destination, at times we travel through scorched places, where fiery trials and destructive storms

threaten to overwhelm and consume (Isa. 43:2). These times of testing and trials are uniquely painful and can feel all the more difficult during the Christmas season. Only the Lord can continually walk with us, strengthen us, and meet us with his unfailing compassion.

Thankfully, he meets our powerlessness with the promise of his presence: “I will be with you” (Isa. 43:2). At the incarnation, the fulfillment of this promise was on display for the world to see: God became man and dwelt among us. Though the path may be unclear and the way precarious, we have the One who can lead us. We cannot know the way or the why, but we know the One we follow.

We tend to believe contentment blooms once we’ve reached those much-longed-for green pastures. However, this passage directs us to a different promise of blessing: God satisfies our desire *within* the scorched places, reminding us that perfect circumstances cannot fulfill our desires—only he can. Jesus awakens joy—enough to make scorched places brim with satisfaction (Ps. 16:11). He meets our deepest longings by removing outward comforts so we may drink more deeply of our ultimate comfort.

God strengthens us within the suffering, not by removing the trial but by being an ever-present help within it. Perhaps sleepless nights, difficult conversations, and unexpected waves of grief have left you weary and worn. You may feel like you have nothing to offer. At times, he leads us through scorched places just so we have nothing else to rely on but himself. When the landscape is barren, we must cry to him for bread. And, mercy of mercies, he does not leave us hungry. His Word is a feast that imbues strength in the struggle so we may bear all things, hope all things, and endure all things. We sing with the psalmist, “This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life” (Ps. 119:50).

Perhaps the most significant surprise comes at the end of this passage: “You shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail” (Isa. 58:11). In

our scorched places, we don't just survive—God makes us a spring that overflows. Not only are we refreshed, but he allows us opportunities to refresh others. During this season of Advent, we have opportunity to share the hope that's with us. In the midst of our scorched places, he alone satisfies, strengthens, and refreshes us.

## RESPOND

What places in your life seem scorched and barren? In what ways does the promise of God's presence and power amid these trials give you hope today?

## REJOICE



A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices  
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn'  
Fall on your knees, oh, hear the Angels' voices  
Oh, night divine, oh, night when Christ was born  
Oh, night divine, oh, night, oh night divine

—Placide Cappeau, "O Holy Night"

