

2026 Advent DEVOTIONAL

WRITERS

Written by college students within The Alliance–from Crown College, University of Toccoa Falls, and Simpson University–this year's devotional highlights young voices across our campuses. May we lean in to experience all that the Lord has for us as we embrace the hope of Jesus this Christmas season.



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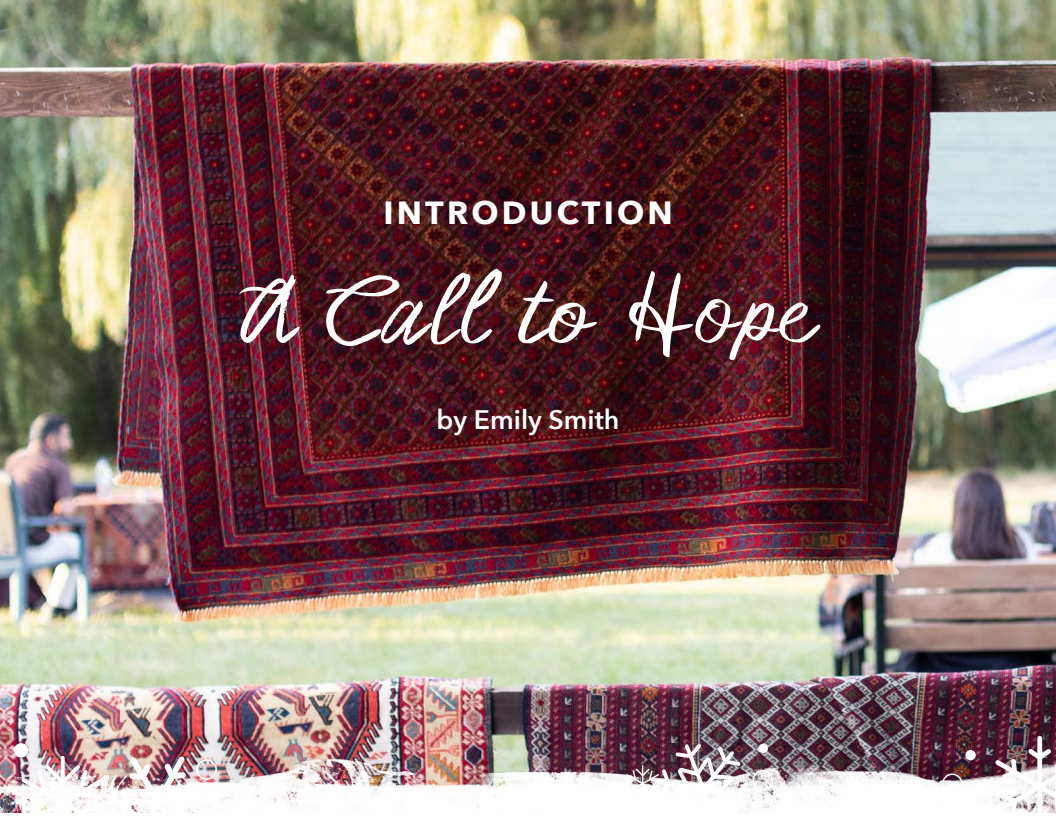
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"And his name will be the hope of all the world."

–MATTHEW 12:21, NLT



INTRODUCTION

A Call to Hope

by Emily Smith

Hope is a unique kind of thing. By definition, it means "to desire with expectation of obtainment or fulfillment." And what a word that is–"expectation."

Sometimes hope feels like a thoughtless wish. Something akin to an acknowledgement of our desire, or an admission of our ideal–often absent of any true expectation of its realization. Thinking of hope as something to be realized feels somewhat frightening. Those dark, familiar storm clouds rush to fill our minds, carrying the weight of *What if?* and *I doubt* and *I'd better prepare for the worst, or I'll be disappointed.*

When did we begin believing that God is unaware of hope's potential to leave us disappointed?

Somewhere along the way, as our lives began to fill with circumstances calling for hope with no guarantee, we lost sight of our *One Glorious Hope* that comes with an outcome promised by God Himself.



Hebrews 11:1 (ESV) tells us, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for." To have faith—to believe in Jesus and place personal trust in Him for salvation—is assurance of the highest hope we hold in our hearts, which is to be with our Creator.

Though many of our hopes hold the potential for disappointment because they are without a promised outcome, the hope that God's Word calls us to carry is very different. What the world might call a thoughtless wish, God calls assured.

The *One Glorious Hope* of Jesus is a promise—a hope unmoving, undashed, and eternally secure. This Advent season, let us gather in unity under the banner of Jesus' name, celebrating our *One Glorious Hope* that arrived to us wrapped in the flesh of a tender newborn, under a black canopy full of stars in humble Bethlehem.



HOW TO USE THIS *Guide*

The Christian tradition of Advent is a season of remembrance, looking ahead, and joyful preparation. Advent spans the four weeks leading up to Christmas, and the passing of each week is represented by lighting a candle with a specific meaning each Sunday–candles of hope, peace, joy, and love.



A fifth and final candle–the Christ candle–is lit on Christmas Eve. The light of these candles is symbolic of the light of Christ, which pushes back the darkness.

Many churches then use the Christ candle to light smaller candles, which are passed throughout the congregation during a candlelight service on Christmas Eve. This practice symbolizes the light of Christ filling the earth as all nations find hope in Him.

Each devotional in this guide includes a Scripture reading and a prayer prompt. Every Sunday during Advent and on Christmas Eve, meditate on the passage, ponder the content provided, and discuss or pray through the prompt.

Whether you use this devotional guide with your family, with a small group, or individually, we pray it will enrich your life in Christ this Advent season. May we lean in and experience all that the Lord has for us as we joyfully prepare to respond to His arrival.

ADVENT WEEK ONE

The Candle of Hope

by Eli Rambo

READ

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

–Romans 15:13

I have hoped so hard it hurt.
Refreshed the message that wouldn't come,
stared at a screen that stayed unread,
scrolled past headlines that stack disaster on disaster,
until hope feels like something only fools still carry.

I have hoped in the next paycheck,
the next appointment, the next "good" scan.
I've bargained with algorithms and inboxes,
whispered "please" into a world
that answers with three gray dots, then nothing.

And when it all fell through anyway,
when the thing I hoped for didn't come,
didn't heal, didn't call, didn't stay,
I felt my hope go out like a dropped call.
Gone before I even said goodbye.

I have been the one who stopped praying out loud,
because asking meant admitting I still needed rescue.

But hope did not begin with my believing.
Hope broke into history before I ever needed it . . .
not as an idea, not as a feeling,
but as God Himself, wrapped in skin,
born low so I would never hope alone.

He is not a good luck charm or a coping mechanism.
He is the Word made flesh, crowned above every failing thing I trust instead.
Every scroll, every headline, every empty inbox will pass away.
But He will not.
He holds tomorrow's outcome and has already won.

He was hope while I was hopeless. He reigns while I still doubt.
And on the day every knee bows–and every scan, every silence,
every "not yet" bends to His name–He will still be Hope.
Worthy. Unshaken. Enough.

So I don't come to You brave.
I come with shaking hands and half a prayer,
because the King of Glory already walked into my dark to find me.

Come, Lord Jesus. Reign here. Reign now.
I am hoping in You. Because You alone are worthy.

PRAY

May we recognize that the Lord is the only source of true hope, and may we overflow with this hope into the lives of others through the Holy Spirit's power.

Awesome Heavenly Father, when I try placing my hope in anything other than You, would You remind me that no other true hope exists? Give me the strength to know that my future belongs to You. Bring me an overwhelming peace that can only come from You, Father. May you help me recognize that all other hopes are nothing compared to Yours. Amen.

ADVENT WEEK TWO

The Candle of Peace

by Noah Detwiler

READ

"Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.'"

–Luke 2:13-14

Peace is a hard commodity to come across in today's world. News headlines and social media feeds serve as constant reminders that our world is broken. Wars break out, violence is commonplace, and friction is abundant. It's easy to see all this unfolding around us and become discouraged.

Even in our own lives we experience fractures caused by sin. Relationships can be strained by harsh words, and we can be wounded by the actions of others. We may find ourselves asking the question, "Is there any hope?"

The beautiful message of the angel's proclamation was that God fulfilled His promise of peace. The One who would rule in righteousness and eternal justice had finally arrived!

Indeed, Jesus stepped in to make peace between us and the Father, but the promise goes even deeper. Christ will one day return as the just, righteous King and establish eternal peace that can never be shattered. When we see the chaos around us, may we remember that Jesus sits on the throne. As we face trials today, let us take heart! For we hope in the One who sustains us now and reigns forever as our Prince of Peace.

PRAY

Are there moments in your life where peace seems distant?

Are you trying to find peace in someone or something other than Jesus?

This Advent season, may we relinquish our control and trust that our Wonderful Counselor and Prince of Peace sits on the throne of our lives.

Lord, thank You for being faithful to Your promises. I trust that my life is Yours and You bring peace to chaos. Help me to place all my fears, worries, and pain in Your hands. I worship You as my wonderful Prince of Peace. Amen.

ADVENT WEEK THREE

The Candle of Joy

by Evelyn Anderson

READ

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

–1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always?
We've heard this before.
In theory, it sounds great. But practically, not so much
If you've gotten a taste for this world, you know it's a difficult
place to be. So to "rejoice always" feels like a lofty ask.

Maybe we feel annoyed by the idea of fake positivity
Maybe we feel discouraged that we don't meet this holy standard.
Maybe we haven't been honest with the Lord about
how we really feel, because it's not joyful.
Maybe this is getting in the way of our intimacy with Him.

Let's detangle this mess by looking at the life of Jesus.
Son of man, born into flesh, with no sin in Him–the perfect example.
Does Jesus appear joyful all the time?

He does not.
In the Garden of Gethsemane, He was entangled with the greatest sorrow.
Yet, Hebrews 12:2 tells us it was "for the joy set
before Him" that He bore suffering.
But that joy was before Him. So was Jesus rejoicing always?

This is where the distinction becomes clear–joy is not found
in our flesh; it is a gift from the Holy Spirit.
Joy does not rest in our feelings, but even our most
bitter sufferings can amplify it.
Joy is hope in our Father, His sovereignty, and His promises.
Joy flows from right understanding of who He is
and where we fit into His design.

Thus, Jesus is our perfect example. He is the One who felt deeply, was completely honest with His Father, yet acted in accordance with His Father's will, rejoicing through His actions of faith and obedience.

So, rejoice always. And you don't have to do it smiling.
Be completely honest with your Father–the One who cares
for you and promises divine purpose for your life.
Let your joy be about Him, finding a secure place for your hope.

PRAY

Close your eyes and allow yourself to be fully seen and known by Your Father. Thank Him for His boundless love for you, now, just as you are. Invite Him into what you're experiencing and ask Him to speak truth into you. Pray in faith that the Spirit of God would empower you to live in the everlasting joy of our everlasting God.

ADVENT WEEK FOUR

The Candle of Love

by Emma Wordelman

READ

"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins"

–1 John 4:9-10

God's gift of unconditional love for the world could once be found by unraveling the swaddling cloth around the babe in the manger. That little vulnerable flesh was God incarnate–Immanuel, God with us.

Our Living Hope was humbly born into a weary world. That babe would take His first steps, and one day walk on water. The feet of Jesus would walk toward His Crucifixion, become pierced for our transgressions, but then walk out of the grave–trampling death and all dominions of darkness.

Now the feet of Jesus are ours to sit at, as He rules on the throne of grace. Our Redeemer lives! Not only on the throne, but by the Holy Spirit, He dwells

within our feeble flesh. You and I are now the vessels through which God pours His unconditional love out upon the world. As Jesus was the presence of God in the world, so are you. Love shines forth when we slow down enough to look each other in the eyes, listen intently, breathe deeply, sit quietly, weep earnestly, laugh loudly, and simply be with those around us.

The love story of the gospel is relentless in pursuit and tender in approach. God's love seeks after us most when we're at our worst, and it is faithful to the very end. In every way, Jesus unconditionally loved and pursued those marred by the effects of sin and suffering before "fixing them." It was and still is by His loving presence that lives are transformed for God's glory and great delight.

"The moment He looks at you, you will know that you've been seen in a way that you've never been seen before, and you've been loved with the love you've been longing for your whole life." –Lisa Harper

PRAY

Who is a person in your life who could experience the presence of God this Christmas through your loving presence?

Do you currently have an area of your life that is broken by the effects of sin and suffering? If so, you're invited to take this time to ask God to reveal His presence in the midst of that brokenness. Invite Him to reveal His unconditional love so you can walk forward in the redemptive hope of His Son.

CHRISTMAS EVE

The Christ Candle

by Shawna Jones

READ

"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

–Philippians 2:9-11, ESV

Philippians 2 paints a beautiful picture of who Jesus is and of what He accomplished for us through His birth, life, and death on the Cross. Paul tells us that Jesus is the One who humbled Himself for our sake, became like us in humanity, obeyed God even when it meant His suffering and death, and is the One who still lives exalted on high today.

With this, Jesus has earned the title of being Lord of all–the One to whom every knee in all of creation will soon bow. How does knowing this affect the way we continue in this season?

There is much hope in knowing that Jesus is exalted. Meditating on this truth reminds us that this life isn't all there is. The purpose of living isn't found in the deadlines, chores, successes, failures, or promotions that come our way. Instead, it is found in knowing that life revolves around the fact that God is actively working in creation to restore it and call all people to Himself. Personally, this sobering reminder convicts me of my self-centeredness and reorients my attention to what God has been doing and continues to do in the world.

As you celebrate Jesus' birth, let your knowledge that Jesus is in control remind you that your life is not your own. It belongs to the One who came as a baby and now sits exalted on high at the right hand of the Father.

PRAY

Read Philippians 2:5–11 and visualize yourself kneeling at the feet of Jesus. Take a moment to meditate on the fact that He holds all power and authority.

Jesus, You are worthy of all praise. Thank You for choosing to come into this world and do for us what we could have never done for ourselves. Please help us to live in a way that honors Your Lordship and brings You glory. Thank You for the blessing of serving You. In Your name we pray. Amen.



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