



Prayers  
of  
Christmas



AN ADVENT STUDY

ASHLEE JOHNSON





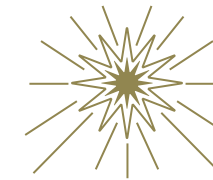
## Advent

Advent is a beautiful time of anticipation among God’s people in which we celebrate the coming of Jesus as Messiah and look forward to his second coming as King. The Advent season begins four Sundays before Christmas and concludes on Christmas Eve.

During these weeks, we’ll continue our Reynolda tradition of offering a special Advent study for individual and group use. You’re invited to take a fresh look at Jesus’ birth narrative by studying the “Prayers of Christmas,” which was written to align with sermons in December. We’ll not only fix our eyes on the Lord in the midst of the holiday hustle, but we’ll also spend time growing in prayer—a profound gateway of grace.

This journey is designed to enhance your personal worship this Christmas season, as well as draw you deeper into the rich gift of community. While you’re welcome to utilize this resource alone, it would be well worth spending a few hours in December with others discussing the content and connecting in fellowship.

Scan the QR code below to see Advent groups being offered at your campus.



## WEEK 1

### *Longing Prayer*

### Luke 1:5-25



This week we’ll explore the amazing reality that God is actively listening to our prayers and welcomes our truest, deepest longings. In fact, prayer involves the intersection of our desires and God’s plan in a glorious way.

After exploring this theme in our study of Scripture, we’ll conclude each day by journaling through an answer to prayer we’ve received and bringing a longing of our hearts before the Lord.



## Monday, December 2nd

Luke 1:5-25

*\* Discover \**

1. Write down everything you learn about Zechariah and Elizabeth in v. 5-7.
2. What tension is introduced by Luke describing their lineage, position, and difficulty at the outset of this story?
3. Note where the people are located and what they are doing in this passage. Also, note where Zechariah is located.
4. Read Psalm 141:2 and Revelation 5:8. What does incense represent in the Bible?
5. See Exodus 30:7 and Exodus 30:34-35. What do you learn about the timing of the hour of incense? In addition, what do these passages communicate about the heart of God and the nature of prayer?

*\* Respond \**

Journal through one answer to prayer you've received as well as one of your deepest longings.

*The altar of incense was located in the Holy Place of the temple, just outside the veil that separated this section of the temple from the Holy of Holies. It stood about 3 feet high, was 18 inches square, and was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Once a year priests dabbled blood on the altar's horns to atone for the people, but day and night, fine spices smoldered here as their smoke arose.*

## Tuesday, December 3rd

Luke 1:5-25

*\* Discover \**

1. What does Gabriel's announcement imply about Zechariah's prayer? Knowing that he is a priest and that the people are praying in the outer court of the temple while he is in the Holy Place, what can we gather about the two-fold nature of his prayer? [praying for his longing AND the longing of the people]
2. List the phrases of comfort and promise the angel speaks to Zechariah.
3. Take note of all we learn about the promised child from Gabriel.
4. Zechariah's scenario and particularly his response are reminiscent of which prominent Old Testament figure? (Hint: See Genesis 17:15-21) Why do you think Luke would make an allusion to this pivotal moment in Israelite history?
5. Put yourself in Zechariah's shoes. How do you imagine Zechariah felt after expressing his longing to the Lord, hearing from God via an angel, and becoming the sign for which he asked in the face of an impossible circumstance?

*\* Respond \**

Journal through one answer to prayer you've received as well as one of your deepest longings.


Advent 2024


O Come O Come Emmanuel

ADVENT

*Words: various, combined by unknown author approx 12th Century. Translated by John Mason Neale, 1851.  
 Music: 'Veni Emmanuel' 15th Century French processional. Setting: "Common Service Book" (ULCA), 1917.  
 copyright: public domain. This score is a part of the Open Hymnal Project, 2005 Revision.*

♩ = 130



1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, And ran - som cap - tive Is - ra - el,  
 2. O come, Thou Wis - dom from on high, Who or - derest all things might - i - ly;  
 3. O come, Thou Rod of Jes - se, free Thine own from Sa - tan's ty - ran - ny;  
 4. O come, Thou Day - spring, come and cheer Our spi - rits by Thine ad - vent here;  
 5. O come, Thou Key of Da - vid, come, And o - pen wide our hea - v'nly home;

That mourns in lone - ly e - - xile here Un - til the Son of God ap - pear.  
 To us the path of know - ledge show, And teach us in her ways to go.  
 From depths of hell Thy peo - - ple save, And give them vic - t'ry ov'r the grave.  
 Dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night, And death's dark sha - dows put to flight.  
 Make safe the way that leads on high, And close the path to mi - - ser - y.

Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - - u - el shall come to thee, O I - - sra - el.


Prayers of Christmas


## Wednesday, December 4th

Luke 1:57-66

\* Discover \*

1. Why do you think Zechariah was unable to speak until the 8th day after John's birth? (See Luke 1:20)
  
2. Referencing the passages in Luke 1 we've read this week, what would have been "all these things" from v. 65 that the people in Zechariah and Elizabeth's community talked about, wondered about, and laid up in their hearts?
  
3. What was Zechariah's response to his lips being loosed versus the reaction of their neighbors?
  
4. In what ways has the Lord shown you great mercy (see v. 58)?
  
5. What do the following passages teach us about bringing our deepest desires to God in prayer?
  - a. Psalm 62:8
  
  - b. Matthew 7:7-11
  
  - c. Luke 22:39-46

\* Respond \*

Journal through one answer to prayer you've received as well as one of your deepest longings.

## Thursday, December 5th

John 1:19-23 / Isaiah 40:1-5

*\* Discover \**

1. When questioned by the priests and Levites, who did John the Baptist say that he was NOT?
2. Who did John the Baptist say that he was?
3. How does the prophet Isaiah comfort the Israelite people who had been in exile for decades?
4. In the ancient world, highways were constructed for visiting kings to travel within their kingdoms with special care given to making as level and straight a route as possible. Knowing this, what is John the Baptist communicating about his purpose by quoting Isaiah 40?
5. How does Zechariah's personal longing and the longing of the people of Israel come together in John the Baptist's birth?

*\* Respond \**

Journal through one answer to prayer you've received as well as one of your deepest longings.

*In the first 39 chapters Isaiah has a tone of warning and judgment. Therefore, the opening verses of Isaiah 40 come as a healing balm of hope to the weary, exiled Israelites. For the rest of the book Isaiah prophesies about the coming peace the Messiah would bring.*

## Friday, December 6th

Malachi 2:17-3:1, 4:5-6

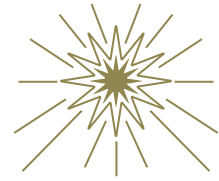
*\* Discover \**

1. What claim do the people bring against the Lord in Malachi 2:17?
2. How could the people have restated this concern in the form of a longing rather than an accusation? What makes us want to come to the Lord with a dispute rather than communicate our heart's desire underneath the concern?
3. Who does the Lord promise to send in response to the people's dispute against him? And who will come to the temple after that?
4. Use Malachi 4:5-6 to help you interpret what Gabriel told Zechariah in John 1:16-17. What does Gabriel's reference to Malachi 4 show us about the role John the Baptist would play in God's kingdom?
5. For what would John the Baptist prepare the people?

*\* Respond \**

Journal through one answer to prayer you've received as well as one of your deepest longings.

*The book of Malachi was written to those who had been living in Jerusalem since the return of the exiles about 100 years prior. Though the temple had been rebuilt, much corruption remained among the people. The need for a Savior and renewal was palpable. Malachi consists of a series of six disputes that the Israelites bring against the Lord and his responses to their complaints.*



## WEEK 2

### *Biblical Prayer*

Luke 1:26-38



It is more powerful by far to agree with God's Word than to merely express your own desires. Mary models for us effective, potent prayer as she receives, embraces, and repeats back to God his Word.

This week we'll practice praying the Scriptures with prayers that bring common concerns during the holiday season to the Lord. Allow them to be a jumping off place as you bring your needs before our gracious God.

## Monday, December 9th

Luke 1:26-38

### *\* Discover \**

1. What is the definition of favor? What significance does Gabriel's greeting play in our understanding of this passage?
2. List all that Gabriel tells Mary about the baby she will conceive.
3. Look at v. 38 in several different translations and write them below as a method of meditating on Mary's beautiful response to Gabriel's announcement.
4. What does Mary's response in v. 38 communicate about her posture toward the Lord?
5. What thoughts or feelings arise when you read, "For nothing will be impossible with God"? (v. 37)

### *\* Respond - Praying for intimacy with God throughout Advent \**

Father, in the midst of a busy holiday season, please draw me close to you. Though there are many things fighting for my attention and affection, give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name (Ps. 86:11). May I be full of wonder, not simply at the delights of the season, but at the glorious news that in the fullness of time you sent Jesus to redeem me (Gal. 4:4). Lord, fill my mouth with your praise as I go about my day (Ps. 71:8)

## Tuesday, December 10th

**Psalm 119:169-172**

*\* Discover \**

1. What phrase do you see repeated here that also appeared in Mary’s response to Gabriel in yesterday’s reading?

2. Fill in the chart below to note the parallel nature of these verses. (Note: “a” refers to the first portion of the verse and “b” to the second portion.) What emphasis does the repetition of words and ideas bring to this passage?

v. 169a	Let my cry come before you, O Lord,	v. 170a	Let my plea come before you
v. 169b		v. 170b	
v. 171a		v. 172a	
v. 171b		v. 172b	

3. What is the significance of the Psalmist making requests according to God’s word?

4. From where do the Psalmists’ praise and songs come?

5. As New Testament believers, how can we be confident that the Lord hears our cries and pleas?

*\* Respond - Praying the Scriptures for joy in generosity throughout the holidays \**

Lord, as I exchange gifts this Christmas, help me to believe and practice that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Thank you that you promise to give me all the grace I’ll need to generously attend to what you’ve called me to this holiday season (2 Corinthians 9:8). Keep my heart from the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10) and help me to trust in you (Prov. 3:5). I take you at your word – a generous person will prosper (Prov. 11:25). Thank you, Father, for sending your one and only Son. You’re the most extravagant gift-giver of all time (John 3:16)!

## Wednesday, December 11th

**Isaiah 55:8-11**

*\* Discover \**

1. Find two reasons in this passage that it’s a wonderful idea to pray God’s Word.

2. Have you heard a passage preached or read a portion of the Bible that makes you realize that God’s thoughts are higher than your thoughts and His ways higher than your ways? What was the passage of Scripture and how did God show Himself to you in it?

3. Take a few minutes to visualize the metaphor of verses 10-11. What agrarian principles do you notice?

4. What insights come to mind about the power and purpose of God’s Word?

5. Write a prayer thanking God for the perfect integrity of his Word. What He initiates, He will fulfill! Ask him to bring the promises of the Scriptures to fruition in your life.

*\* Respond - Praying the Scriptures through loneliness and grief at Christmas \**

Heavenly Father, though there are many moments of holiday delights to be enjoyed, I can feel a nagging sense of loneliness during the Christmas season. Jesus, how comforting it is to know that you are attentive to my sorrows (Ps. 56:8) and well-acquainted with my grief (Is. 53:3). Every pain I feel you have already taken on yourself (Is. 53:4) that I might have hope and fellowship with you. Thank you that you are near to the broken-hearted (Ps. 34:18) and promise to meet my needs (Ps. 23:1) this holiday season.





## Friday, December 13th

Matthew 6:7-13

*\*Discover\**

1. If our Father knows what we need before we ask him, why pray?

2. What are the different elements of prayer included in the Lord's prayer?

Matt. 6:9 –

Matt. 6:10 –

Matt. 6:11 –

Matt. 6:12 –

Matt. 6:13 –

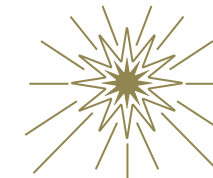
3. How does verse 10 relate to the central message of Christmas? Read Matthew 26:36-44. How does Jesus prayerfully wrestle through this surrender?

4. Verse 11 speaks of God's provision and our dependence upon Him. How does the incarnation bolster our trust that the Father will provide? How can we apply this principle to the Christmas season?

5. Which part of the Lord's prayer is most comforting to you? Which portion is most challenging to you?

*\*Respond – Praying through the Lord's Prayer in anticipation of the holidays\**

Write your own prayer for your holiday season using the Lord's Prayer as an outline.



## WEEK 3

*Spirit-led Prayer*

Luke 2:22-35



Simeon received prophetic revelation of the Christ child's messianic identity as he listened to God. Prayer is a two-way conversation in which we hear from the Lord and enjoy the benefits of the Spirit's leading and intercession before the Father.

In response to the story of Simeon, we'll spend time in silence before the Lord this week and grow in hearing his voice as we ponder the rich details of this narrative.

## Monday, December 16th

**Luke 2:22-35**

*\* Discover \**

1. List the details Luke shares about Simeon.
2. What do we learn about the person and work of the Holy Spirit in this passage?
3. Re-read Luke 1:31-33 and take note of what Mary learned from Gabriel about her coming child. What additional details about his purposes for Jesus did the Holy Spirit use Simeon to communicate to Mary and Joseph?
4. Undoubtedly, newborns were brought by Jewish parents daily into the temple as their mothers came for their ritual purification after giving childbirth. (See Leviticus 12.) How did Simeon know that this child was different from the myriads of others he had likely encountered?
5. Simeon was a man waiting and on the lookout for the comfort that the Messiah would bring to the Hebrew people. What part can waiting have in Spirit-led prayer?

*\* Respond – Spirit-led prayer through the story of Simeon - “[he] blessed God” \**

Re-read Luke 2:28 and let your mind dwell upon this picture of Simeon taking the Christ child into his arms and blessing God. The word translated “blessed” is the origin of our word “eulogy,” which means “good word.” Set a timer for five minutes. Listen for the Spirit’s leading of your thoughts and affections and jot down “good words” about the Lord. With all that is within you, bless his holy name (Psalm 103:1)!

## Tuesday, December 17th

**John 10:1-18**

*\* Discover \**

1. List all that you learn about these two roles of Jesus as described in this text.

**The door of the sheep**

**The good shepherd**

2. What relationship do the sheep have to the voice of the shepherd?
3. What do these verses reveal about the heart of Jesus for his people?
4. In verse 14 Jesus states, “I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.” What are the implications of this profound statement for our relationship with Jesus?
5. Spirit-led prayer is about Jesus leading and us following. How would you like to grow in hearing the Lord? What would it look like for you to grow in being led by the Lord as you pray?

*\* Respond \**

*Spirit-led prayer through the story of Simeon – “my eyes have seen your salvation”*

Re-read Luke 2:30 and ponder the reality that many physically saw the baby Jesus, but did not perceive him to be the salvation God had promised. Set a timer for five minutes and ask the Lord to open your eyes to his truth and goodness in areas where you are not clearly perceiving his work in your life. Jot down anything the Holy Spirit brings to mind.

## Wednesday, December 18th

Romans 8:14-17, 26-27

*\* Discover \**

1. According to Romans 8:14-17, what are the ways in which the Holy Spirit relates to believers?
2. Why do you think Paul juxtaposes the Spirit of adoption with the spirit of slavery?
3. List all these passages reveal about the role of the Holy Spirit in prayer.
4. When was the last time that you did not know how to pray? What comfort does it bring you to know that, in your weakness, the Spirit was interceding for you according to the will of God?
5. If God knows the mind of the Spirit and the Spirit intercedes according to the will of God, what advantage would we gain in learning to listen for the Spirit's leading as we pray?

*\* Respond – Spirit-led prayer through the story of Simeon – “a light for revelation” \**

Re-read Luke 2:32. Quiet yourself, set a timer for five minutes, and bring before the Lord any place in your life where revelation, clarity, or understanding is needed. Ask him to shed light on that area and make note of how the Spirit speaks to you as you wait for him.

## Thursday, December 19th



Acts 18:1-11

*\* Discover \**

1. Note where Paul is in this passage and the groups of people he's spending time with there.
2. How do you imagine Paul must have felt while facing fierce opposition from the Jews?
3. What command and what promise did the Lord give Paul in his night vision?
4. How did hearing this word from the Lord impact Paul and those around him?
5. Can you think of other times in the Bible that the Lord promised his presence in the face of a scary or difficult situation?

*\* Respond – Spirit-led prayer through the story of Simeon - “glory to your people” \**

Re-read Luke 2:32. The word translated “glory” means radiance or splendor. Set your timer for five minutes. Be still before the Lord and allow him to remind you of your true worth. He is the one who is your glory! Confess your tendency to seek a radiant life outside of him and receive anew the gift of His presence that brings worth and weight to your life.

 *Recall the words of Simeon when he took up the Christ child in his arms and called Him “a light for revelation to the Gentiles.” It’s fascinating to recognize that the persecution of the early church in Jerusalem is what propelled them into Antioch, Asia Minor, and Greece, as detailed by the missionary journeys of Paul in the book of Acts. What a beautiful picture of the Lord turning the Enemy’s evil intentions for good!* 







# WEEK 4

## Declarative Prayer

Luke 2:8-20



There is a kind of prayer, speech directed to God, that isn't petition or intercession but is declaration – declaration of His goodness and His power and accomplishments. And, sometimes prayer has the force of heaven behind it as it announces the glories of God as related to the needs of the world – “peace on earth!”.

This week we will explore what it means to pray from victory rather than for victory! As David Holland states in his excellent devotional Praying Grace, “[Declarative prayer] puts you in the position of partnering with God by giving voice to His will for you and for those around you.”

### Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

CHRISTMAS

Words: Charles Wesley, 1739, alt.  
 Music: 'Mendelssohn' from 'Festgesang' Felix Mendelssohn, 1840. Setting: William H. Cummings, 1857.  
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♩ = 100

1. Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King;  
 2. Christ, by high - est Heav'n a - dored; Christ the ev - er - last - ing Lord;  
 3. Hail the heav'n - ly Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Right - eous - ness!  
 4. Come, De - sire of na - tions, come, Fix in us Thy hum - ble home;  
 5. Ad - am's like - ness, Lord, ef - face, Stamp Thine im - age in its place:

Peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners re - con - ciled!"  
 Late in time, be - hold Him come, Off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.  
 Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with heal - ing in His wings.  
 Rise, the wo - man's con - qu'ring Seed, Bruise in us the ser - pent's head.  
 Se - cond Ad - am from a - bove, Re - in - state us in Thy love.

Joy - ful, all ye na - tions rise, Join the tri - umph of the skies;  
 Veiled in flesh the God - head see; Hail th'in - car - nate De - i - ty,  
 Mild He lays His glo - ry by, Born that man no more may die,  
 Now dis - play Thy sav - ing po - wer, Ruin - ed na - ture now re - store;  
 Let us Thee, though lost, re - gain, Thee, the Life, the in - ner man:

With th'an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"  
 Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Je - sus our Em - man - u - el.  
 Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them se - cond birth,  
 Now in my - stic un - ion join Thine to ours, and ours to Thine.  
 O, to all Thy - self im - part, Formed in each be - liev - ing heart.

Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King!"

## Monday, December 23rd

Luke 2:8-20

*\* Discover \**

1. What questions does this story provoke for you? Also, what words, phrases, or concepts strike you most about this passage?
2. Take a look at the following verses and note how these three themes from the angel's announcement appear throughout the Christmas story.

Good news – Luke 1:19

Great joy – Luke 1:14, Luke 1:44, Luke 1:46-47, Matthew 2:10

All people – Matthew 2:1-2, Luke 2:32

3. The angel makes an announcement to the shepherds, which prompts the heavenly host to make a declaration. What's the difference?
4. How is this heavenly visitation to the lowly shepherds a demonstration of the angel's message?
5. What kind of peace was the heavenly host declaring as they lit up the night sky? Explore the verses below to get a sense of how the Bible talks about peace.

Romans 5:1

Romans 15:13

John 14:27

Ephesians 2:14

*\* Respond \**

Heavenly Father, though you know that I don't feel peaceful about \_\_\_\_\_ right now, I declare that you have given me peace in Christ. I trust in your promises and receive the security and stillness of soul that only you can give. You, Lord, and not calm circumstances – your presence with me and kingdom within me – provide peace.

## Tuesday, December 24th

Revelation 12:1-5, 7-12

*Revelation 12 is the Christmas story told from a cosmic perspective. Some biblical scholars interpret the woman as representing Mary, but many believe she represents the people of God, the messianic community, from whom the Promised One came. Also, keep in mind as you read - apocalyptic literature is not concerned with communicating in a linear fashion but rather gives us windows into the realities of the kingdom of God.*

*\* Discover \**

1. What does the text tell us about the woman?
2. Who does the dragon represent? Note all that you learn about him.
3. What similarities exist between this passage and Genesis 3:15?
4. John wrote Revelation to encourage Christians to remain steadfast in the face of persecution. How would this passage have brought his readers courage, comfort, and perseverance?
5. How does this view of Christmas differ from depictions of a silent night nativity?

*\* Respond \**

Declarative prayers are spoken from a place of victory, which is so powerfully displayed in today's reading. Apply this passage to your life by writing declarative statements in prayer that are rooted in the truths of Revelation 12:9-11.

## Wednesday, December 25th

Merry Christmas!

Matthew 1:22-23

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).

Apply this beautiful truth to your life by writing a prayer declaring Immanuel’s presence in areas where you tend to feel alone or even God-forsaken. May we embrace the best gift this Christmas Day – our God is with us.

## Thursday, December 26th

Psalm 103:1-5

*\* Discover \**

1. Describe David’s tone in this passage. In what way does he display authority over his own soul?
2. List the verbs in this passage associated with the actions of God toward His people.
3. How do you stir yourself to worship when you don’t feel like it?
4. Why do we have a tendency to forget the Lord’s benefits?
5. What are a few of the ways you’ve experienced the kindness of the Lord this week? Remind your soul!

*\* Respond \**

Use the following prompts to declare these truths in prayer.

Father, I walk in your forgiveness—whole and free.

I am healed—whether in this life or the life to come.

I’m not where I used to be; I am redeemed.

Your steadfast love is the defining reality of my life and identity; I am the beloved of God.

More than any counterfeit good the world offers me, you alone satisfy and strengthen my soul.









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