



THE **MIRACLE**
OF CHRISTMAS

An Advent Devotional



AZUSA PACIFIC
UNIVERSITY



Christmas greetings from Azusa Pacific University!

I'm excited to share with you this short devotional guide as we begin the Advent season and celebrate the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Over the coming four weeks, we will join Christians from all around the world and enter into a season of joy-filled hope and anticipation of the Miracle of Christmas. Leading us through this devotional guide are four members of the APU community—faculty and staff who share their deep reflections on the significance of the Incarnation. Luke 2:8-14 will be our guide, and I trust that these meditations enhance your time with the Lord as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

From all of us at APU, and from our family to yours, we wish you a blessed Christmas season!

President and Mrs. Adam J. Morris



WEEK 1: HOPE

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and she will name Him Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14 (NASB)

Does God care about me and my situation? Does God know all that is going on in the world? How can God stand by and let these things happen? Though these questions could easily be spoken today, they also embody how the people of Israel felt during the time of the prophet Isaiah.

In Isaiah chapter 7, the king of Judah is especially troubled because his enemies are joining forces against him. We might be able to relate to this! Our stresses and anxieties often fuel one another and make it seem as though all are against us. It is precisely during such troubling times—when we are *desperate* for God to intervene, when we are *desperate* for a Messiah—that God offers a hopeful sign: the miraculous birth of Immanuel, God with us. When the world brims with conflict and chaos, God promises His personal, tangible presence. What a powerful symbol of care for God's people!

Phil Cox, PhD, Associate Professor
Department of Biology and Chemistry

Where do you hope the Messiah intercedes in your life or in the world?

What signs of hope do you notice around you this Advent season?



WEEK 2: PEACE

“For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6 (NASB)

We live in a world filled with trouble, injustice, and challenges. This verse in Isaiah was written when the exile of the Israelites was imminent, and many of us may feel exiled today—whether emotionally, spiritually, or relationally. Yet Isaiah reminds us that in Christ’s reign, which began at His birth, peace pervades. Christ incarnate came to dwell with us, and His presence is a profound gift. Even now, in 2024 AD (*anno Domini*—“the year of our Lord”), we mark time by His arrival. Christ’s coming to earth in bodily form holds special meaning in our digital age, reminding us of His closeness and tangibility. His birth fulfilled the promise of Scripture, bringing forth the Prince of Peace, whom we are called to worship now and for eternity.

May we invite Christ to reign as the Prince of Peace in our hearts and lives. Let us no longer live in exile, but instead embrace Christ’s wisdom, love, and guidance. May His presence govern our lives now and forever. Amen.

Regina Chow Trammel, PhD, LCSW, Professor
Department of Social Work

In what areas of your life do you need Christ’s counsel and peace?

How does Christ’s birth in history relate to your life today?



WEEK 3: JOY

“In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock at night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood near them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. And so the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.’” Luke 2:8-10 (NASB)

As we journey deeper into the Advent season, our focus shifts to joy—a joy that surpasses all understanding and is rooted in the presence of God. In Luke 2:10, the angel proclaims to the shepherds, “I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.” This message was not meant just for the shepherds—it is a message for us today.

Joy is not tied to our circumstances. It is anchored in the assurance that God is with us, His promises are true, and His love never fails. Amid the busyness, stress, or even sorrow that this season may bring, we can still experience joy by remembering that Christ has come—and He will come again. This powerful truth should fill our hearts with a deep, enduring joy that rises above any worries or struggles we encounter.

LaShan Epperson, DBA, Assistant Professor
School of Business and Management

What life circumstances are distracting you from experiencing the deep joy rooted in God’s presence?

How does the angel’s message of “good news of great joy” apply to your life today?



WEEK 4: LOVE

“For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”
Luke 2:11-12 (NASB)

There is something special and beautiful about the manger scene as depicted in Luke 2. In fact, during the Christmas season, it is not uncommon to see artistic portrayals of the Nativity in the form of lawn decorations, ornaments, or even tiny figurines carefully assembled on a mantel to commemorate the night Jesus was born. A friend of mine has a tradition of collecting hand-crafted global Nativity scenes that tell the story of the miraculous birth of Christ in a way that is contextualized to that region—using raw materials such as wood, metal, and straw to represent Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and the magi, all dressed in clothes particular to their culture. Whether in the form of modern-day global Christmas decorations or the angelic proclamation to a group of unexpecting Bethlehem shepherds more than 2,000 years ago, “Today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior.” John the Apostle aptly captures this scene in this truth: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.”

Coba Canales, EdD, Dean of Students

Imagine you were with the shepherds who received this good news and were invited to come and see the newborn Savior. What would you feel? How might you respond?

How has God shown you His love in a way that is particular to your story, situation, or circumstance?



CHRISTMAS DAY

As we celebrate Christmas today, I pray you're able to find time to reflect deeply on the birth of the promised Messiah. I'm often drawn to the shepherds we read about in Luke 2:8 who received news of Christ's birth while out in the fields keeping watch over their flock by night. As the scene unfolds, the glory of God envelops them (v. 9) and the skies fill with an army of angels (v. 13). What must that moment have been like? I love how the shepherds literally dropped everything and went “in a hurry” (v. 16) to see the Christ child.

Shepherds don't just drop everything—especially at night! But this night was different. Having encountered the living God, their priorities changed in an instant. And after seeing baby Jesus with their own eyes, they made widely known (v. 17) the news of His coming and began glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen (v. 20).

As we celebrate Christmas and approach the New Year, my prayer is that the birth of Jesus Christ is just as miraculous and real for us today as it was for the shepherds when they “dropped everything and ran.” And I pray that having met Jesus personally, we'd follow in the shepherds' footsteps and tell others about the greatest gift ever given.

Today, the APU community celebrates the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May your day be filled with joy, and may the coming year be filled with God's continued blessings.

Adam J. Morris, PhD, President
Azusa Pacific University

Merry Christmas!

