



A THRILL OF HOPE

A 25-Day Advent Devotional Journal

LeaderTreks[®]
YOUTH MINISTRY

SAMPLE

A THRILL OF HOPE

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A Thrill of Hope: A 25-Day Advent Devotional Journal

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CONTENTS

A Thrill of Hope	1
How It Works	2
WEEK ONE: HOPE.....	3
Day One: Waiting Is Hard!	5
Day Two: Promises.....	7
Day Three: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”	9
Day Four: It’s Your Hope Too.....	11
Day Five: Hope in Jesus	13
Family Day: Christmas Wish Lists	15
WEEK TWO: PEACE.....	17
Day One: She Chose Peace	19
Day Two: Spiritual Peace	21
Day Three: “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day”	23
Day Four: New Family	25
Day Five: Peace Goals.....	27
Family Day: A Whirlwind of Peace.....	29
WEEK THREE: JOY.....	31
Day One: Angels and Shepherds	33
Day Two: Saving Joy	35
Day Three: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”	37
Day Four: The Source of True Joy	39
Day Five: Joy Tree	41
Family Day: Joy Jars	43
WEEK FOUR: LOVE.....	45
Day One: Overflowing Love.....	47
Day Two: The Sacrificial Lamb.....	49
Day Three: “O Holy Night”	51
Day Four: The Disciple Jesus Loved	53
Day Five: Love Chain Reaction.....	55
Family Day: Gift of Love.....	57
You’re Done! Kind Of.....	59
BONUS: CHRISTMAS FAMILY DEVOTIONAL.....	61
Appendix: Joy Tree Outline	64

A THRILL OF HOPE

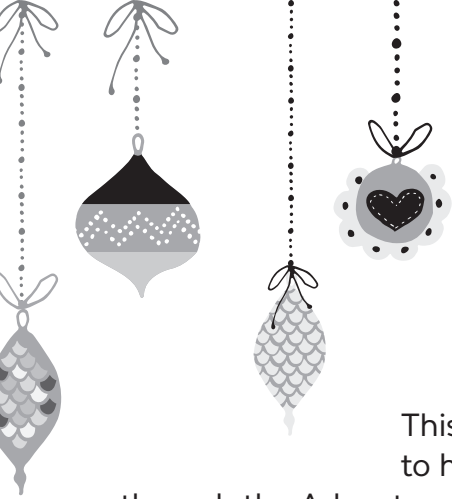
Sometimes, even our favorite Christmas traditions can start to feel a bit too familiar. You know, like when you watch the same classic movie for the millionth time. Yawn. When you hear the same Christmas music everywhere you go. Sigh. When you've heard the same nativity story too many times to count. Snooze.

Christmas traditions aren't bad. It's just that sometimes the same old Christmas stuff makes us forget what the Advent season is all about.

So, what is Advent? It literally means arrival. Since the very first Christmas over 2,000 years ago, people have been remembering and celebrating the thrilling story of how the God of the universe came to earth. He was expected, but he came in the most unusual way. His arrival was anticipated, but took longer than everyone hoped. He brought the most amazing gifts, but they weren't what you'd find on the average wish list.

This Advent devotional journal is designed to help you recapture the thrill of Christmas and to prepare your heart to receive God's amazing gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love.





HOW IT WORKS

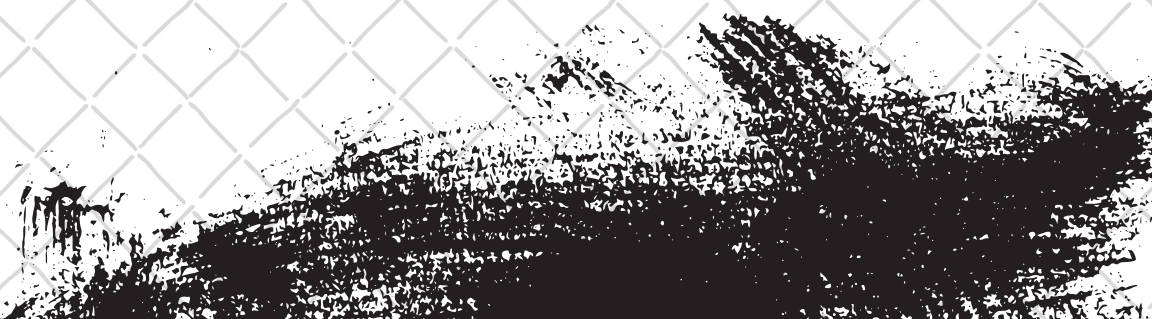
This book has four weeks of journal pages to help you focus on Christ as you journey through the Advent season. Each week contains five days of devotions and activities. Here you'll have an opportunity to see the nativity story with new eyes, study the Bible with engaging tools, revisit the heart behind your favorite Christmas carols, or take on challenges that help you take a closer look at why Christ came to earth that first Christmas. At the end of each week, you'll find a FAMILY DAY. This is an opportunity to share what you're learning with friends and family. We've also included a special Family Devotion for you to go through together on Christmas Day.

Remember, you'll get out of this book what you put into it. The challenges you'll encounter won't always be easy—they're designed to stretch you! Take a risk and use this journal to run hard toward God. When we make ourselves available to him, he'll transform us and use us in ways that will blow our minds!




WEEK
ONE
HOPE

WEEK ONE INTRO



Christ came to give us hope, so now we wait expectantly for him to move among us. This week, you'll take a look at why the nation of Israel—and humankind as a whole—needed the hope of Jesus so desperately.



DAY ONE WAITING IS HARD!

.....

The end of the fall semester is a dark time. You know the feeling: cramming for finals, hustling to finish term papers and projects, juggling all the performances, playoffs, and events. It seems to drag on forever. Christmas break is right around the corner, but the waiting is just not fun.

Humankind also had a dark time of waiting, but ours was at least 4000 years. Think about it: Adam and Eve had it all in the Garden of Eden. Life was literally perfect. But then they sinned and lost it, and for 4000 long years the world endured the pain and darkness of a life with sin. But God chose a group of people, the Israelites, and promised to give them a Savior—a Messiah—to deliver them from darkness and bring the freedom and hope they longed for. In their waiting, God gave them several prophecies about the coming Messiah. He would be a King, someone who could give them rest for their souls and peace with their enemies. He would solve everything. Looking back, we now know that the prophecies clearly pointed to Jesus.

READ ISAIAH 9:2-7

(one of the prophecies God gave to his people) and consider these questions as we head into the week.

1. On a scale of 1-4 (1=not at all; 4=completely/all the time), how patient are you?

2. Typically, it's hard to wait for the things we want most. When is it hardest for you to be patient?

3. How would you define hope from a biblical point of view?

4. How is that different than our culture's definition of hope?

5. Why do you think God waited so long to send the Messiah?

DAY TWO

PROMISES



The Bible is full of connections to the connections are like a thread running through every page, constantly pointing toward the coming Savior. In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, God promises to bless a man named Abraham by creating an entire nation out of his family and descendants. We now know that nation as the nation of Israel. One-thousand years later, God builds on his promise to Abraham through a prophecy that he gives to King David. In his Psalms, David writes that God has also promised to establish a throne—a King for Israel—forever. Through these promises, God is revealing to Abraham, David, and the entire nation his plan to save them. Now we know that these promises are fulfilled perfectly by Jesus, except he didn't come to just save the nation of Israel. Jesus came to save us all.

Messiah. These

Read Genesis 12:1-3 and Psalm 89:1-4 using the **OPA** method outlined below. *Helpful tip: the more effort you put in to making observations, the principles and applications will be easier to see.*





OBSERVATION:

Compile all the facts found in these passages.
Try to make 15–20 observations about what you read.



PRINCIPLES:

Draw a few principles from the observations you made.
What is God trying to teach you in this passage?



APPLICATION:

How will you apply these principles to your life? Be specific—a good application will tell who, what, and when.

DAY THREE

“O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL”

Today is a different kind of journal day; it’s like your very own Christmas carol listening party. If you take the time, you’re likely to come away with a whole new appreciation for this song and Christmas carols in general. Here’s what you need to do:

Take a moment and search the internet for your favorite version of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”

Play this song and listen to at least 3 verses.

Soak it in—both the tune and the lyrics. Observe what emotions the song encourages.

You can probably tell that this song is ultimately a prayer to God, reflecting a longing and a hope for the Messiah.

Even though this song hadn’t been composed yet, imagine the Israelites singing this song all year round. Christmas—the coming of Christ—hadn’t happened yet! They were still in captivity, waiting for God to provide a Savior who would free them from the bondage of sin.

After you listen to “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” take time to answer these questions.



1. What is the general feel and tone of the song?
(i.e. does it sound sad or happy, reflective or energetic,
melancholy or excited?)



2. List all the names of Jesus in this song (find at least 5-6).



3. What do these names tell us about Jesus?



4. Look up the definition of Emmanuel. Why is the meaning of
this name so important in this song—and in the Scriptures?



5. What kind of hope does this song encourage?




6. In your daily life, how does Jesus Christ give you hope?

DAY FOUR

IT'S YOUR

HOPE TOO



If we're unsure that something will happen, we typically say that we hope it happens. Like, we hope our grandparents don't give us a sweater for the fourth Christmas in a row.

But when we talk about hope and Christmas, we're talking about a different kind of hope. This hope says, "I know it will happen," rather than, "I wish it would." It's not wishful thinking; it's a future reality we can count on.

Israel's hope was the Messiah's coming. Our hope? His second coming. When Jesus returns, we'll meet him face to face. We'll enter heaven with him as his friends. We'll finally realize just how good it is to be God's children—what a day!

It's helpful to remember this hope when we are discouraged, depressed, or overwhelmed. Remember, nothing on earth is more important than our future hope—the joy of being with Jesus forever! No more fear, sadness, or pain—only perfect peace in the presence of our Savior.

Study 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 by using the **5P** method for Bible study.

PURPOSE

Why do you think the author wrote this? Why is it important enough to be in the Bible? In a sentence or two, write what you think the overall theme or topic is.

PRIMARY VERSE

Which verse seems to contain the most important thought in the passage? Which one stands out most to you? Write out the verse completely and the corresponding reference.

PROMISES

Make a list of any promises you find in this passage.

PROBLEMS

If you find anything you don't understand—even if it's just a word—write it down as a question. Then ask someone for the answer or look it up yourself.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

What do you need to change or work on so that what you have read is real in your life? Be specific—your application should tell who, what, and when.

DAY FIVE HOPE IN JESUS

The Christmas season is a time of celebration and anticipation, but often we celebrate and anticipate things that don't matter in eternity. For instance, we dream about Christmas dinner, mom's special casserole, and great gifts from our family. Those things are good, but they don't last forever.

Christmas exists to celebrate Christ's birth, but what do we actually do to celebrate that?

Think about what the holiday season is like for you and place a checkmark by the statements that apply to you. None of these are explicitly right or wrong, but your answers might give you an idea of what your heart longs for during this season.

DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON, I...

- Am hesitant and/or embarrassed to share the real reason I celebrate Christmas with my peers.*
- Feel forced and unenthusiastic about going to the Christmas production in my area.*
- Already reserved the time on my calendar for the Christmas Eve service at church.*
- Listen to Christmas music almost 24/7.*
- Feel in awe of the gift of salvation.*
- Have/plan to invite my unbelieving family, friends, or coworkers to a Christmas service.*
- Already made a Christmas wish list months ago.*
- Am so busy shopping, decorating, and baking that I forget to spend time in prayer.*
- Spend time each day meditating on and/or memorizing part of the biblical Christmas story.*

1. What do your results tell you about where your hope is found?
2. Is this discouraging or encouraging to you?
3. Why do you think it's important to put the holidays in the right perspective?
4. How does the hope of Christmas relate to Jesus' second coming?
5. How should this big-picture perspective of eternity change the way you celebrate Christmas?

FAMILY DAY 20-30 minutes

Christmas is a season of anticipation. We make our wish lists and eagerly hope to find every item under the tree. It's that hope that makes presents so exciting. Yeah, the bows and wrapping paper are fun, but the potential to get what you hope for is the special part.

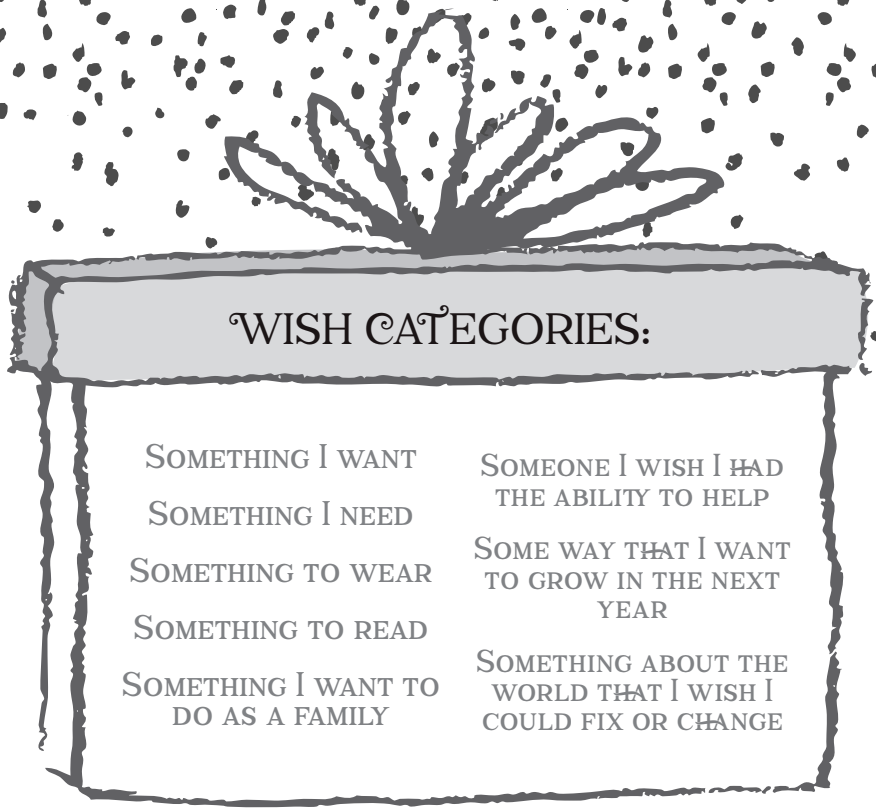
Wish lists can reveal what a person really wants in their heart. Sharing your wish lists as a family can be a fun way to learn what everyone cares about—what they hope for—and have meaningful conversations about the hope that Christ brings us all year long.

HOW TO GET YOUR FAMILY INVOLVED:

Invite your family to create wish lists with you using the categories listed below. It'll take about 20-30 minutes, so you can do this while you're in the car or eating a meal together, or you can set aside a special time just for this activity. *This exercise is just for fun, but you can decide as a family to add some of these categories to your Christmas gift exchange this year.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Each family member should pick one (and only one!) wish for each category below.
- Share your wishes. As you listen, try to hear the deeper hope behind each person's wish. Remember, this is for fun, so anything goes—don't judge anyone else's wishes.
- You can take turns asking each other questions like:
 - Why did you put that on your list?
 - What difference would it make if you got this wish?



WISH CATEGORIES:

- SOMETHING I WANT
- SOMETHING I NEED
- SOMETHING TO WEAR
- SOMETHING TO READ
- SOMETHING I WANT TO DO AS A FAMILY
- SOMEONE I WISH I HAD THE ABILITY TO HELP
- SOME WAY THAT I WANT TO GROW IN THE NEXT YEAR
- SOMETHING ABOUT THE WORLD THAT I WISH I COULD FIX OR CHANGE

ASK YOUR FAMILY:

Imagine you can each submit one of these wishes to God. Knowing that money is no object and nothing is impossible for God, which one would you pick and why?

Is there any wish in particular we can start praying about as a family?