ADVENT

PRAYER DEVOTIONAL
by STEPHEN G. DERGES

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INTRODUCTION

Over the centuries, although Christian denominations have varied in their approach and traditions, the period leading up to Christmas has been associated with people preparing themselves.

Advent derives its name from the Latin word *'adventus'* meaning *'arrival'* or *'coming'*. It's a time of expectation, of waiting in anticipation and getting ready for a momentous event – interesting as the term *'expecting'* is commonly used in the context of the birth of a baby.

Whilst initially the focus of Advent was on the birth of Jesus, over the centuries there has been an increasing emphasis on His Second Coming – Jesus' return as King of kings and Lord of lords. We'll be exploring both aspects in this Devotional.

The dates of the Advent season vary each year, but always start on the Sunday nearest to 30th November and runs until Christmas Eve. This means the actual number of days in Advent is variable so this Devotional is updated every year and in 2026 provides 27 days of meditations and prayers. But as a bonus, I've included some thoughts for Christmas Day too – the culmination of what we'll be thinking about.

Whilst it's implausible that 25th December was the actual date of Jesus' birth – it was most probably early springtime – the primary focus of this Advent Devotional is not so much about the *'when?'* but the *'why?'* and the *'who?'* and we're going to reflect on four primary themes:

- **The Promises**
- **The Purpose**
- **The People**
- **The Presence**

Each day there will be a **Bible reading** to consider, a time to **pause and ponder** on the implications and a **responsive prayer**.

But please don't stop there. My hope is that as we read this Devotional we will take time to look in depth at the Bible passages, consider the impact for our lives today and commit to whatever challenges the Holy Spirit brings to us.

Hopefully, this Devotional will help us understand the height, depth and width of God's love. But more importantly my prayer is that it will spur us into action so that God's Kingdom is extended in our lives and in the lives of those with whom we are involved.

Be richly blessed.

Stephen G. Derges

THE PROMISES

Over the next few days, we're going to look at some of the prophesies about Jesus – the promises that have already been fulfilled about His First Coming and those yet to come relating to His Second Coming.

DAY 1 – SUNDAY 29TH NOVEMBER 2025

LIVING IN THE GAP

Reading:

> ***"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times"***
> – Micah 5:2 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

Micah wrote these words some 750 years before Jesus' birth. He was reflecting on what was happening in Israel and Judah, nations imploding from the effects of ungodly leadership ahead of an impending invasion by the Assyrians. But Micah was also looking forward to an eternal kingdom ruler of peace (Micah 5:5). Micah's prophesy balances the requirement for judgment with the prospect of restoration and security.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Advent is about looking back to the First Coming of Jesus but also looking forward to the Second Coming – His return to usher in the culmination of the Father's redemption plan.

We're 'living in the gap' between the birth and the return of Jesus. In the meantime, Micah 6:8 lays out God's desire for us – ***"to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with Him"***.

As we wait for Jesus' return there are a couple of key questions to ask ourselves:

- Am I really *'eternity focused'* or primarily concerned with here and now?
- How can we validate our faith in everyday scenarios by practising humility, demonstrating compassion and working for justice?

Prayer:

Thank You Father, that You see what we're really like. We've been unfaithful to You yet You have shown us mercy and compassion.

We are so grateful You made a way for us to be redeemed and restored to relationship with You through Jesus. Amen.

THE PROMISES

DAY 2 – MONDAY 30TH NOVEMBER 2025

HE CAME FOR US

Reading:

> ***"…the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us')"*** – Isaiah 7:14 (NLT)

Pause & Ponder:

Another prophesy from around 700 years before Jesus was born – one of over 20 Messianic prophecies in the book of Isaiah alone. In fact, Bible scholars claim there are over 360 Old Testament prophecies alluding to the birth, life, death and resurrection of the Messiah.

Jesus' birth was no accident, no after-thought, no knee-jerk reaction to sin. It was pre-planned and prophesied long before it occurred.

The sign would be miraculous: a virgin conceiving and giving birth to a Saviour who would be called Immanuel – God is with us. God incarnate comes to earth so we could know and appreciate Him, the immortal, invisible creator of the world.

One of the key differentiators between the Christian faith and other religions is that we don't have to go searching for God – He came to us! But He not only came **to** us, He came **for** us. And now we can come boldly, with confidence, to Him (see Hebrews 4:16) when we're in need.

The Bible says that the plan of salvation was formulated before the creation of the world – see Ephesians 1:4. Even before we stepped on to this planet, God had us in mind and Psalm 139 declares He knew us before we were born and goes with us wherever we may go. Amazing!

- What are the implications of knowing Jesus came to us and for us?
- How will that impact our lives today?
- Who in our sphere of influence needs to know how much Jesus loves them?

Prayer:

I'm so amazed You provided a pathway between You and me Father. Thank You I am never out of Your sight. May my life always reflect my gratitude that Jesus is with me and for me. Amen.

THE PROMISES

DAY 3 – TUESDAY 1ST DECEMBER 2025

BEARING FRUIT

Reading:

> ***"'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land'"*** – Jeremiah 23:5 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

Here's a further prophesy from a different source – Jeremiah – who lived around 400 years after King David.

The prophesy isn't referring to one of David's immediate natural successors but to Jesus who would be born in David's hometown Bethlehem. Jesus' adopted father, Joseph, was a direct descendant of David.

Jeremiah was looking forward to a righteous, wise, holy ruler who would enable us to have a *'right'* relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Another prophesy, this time from Isaiah, also connects some of the dots here. Isaiah 11:1 (NIVUK) says, ***"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit."*** Jesse was David's father and Jesus referred to Himself as ***"the Vine"*** (see John 15:1-8) that will bear fruit.

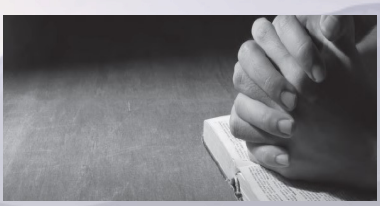
Take time today to read John 15:1-8 and reflect on Jesus as the Vine and us as the branches.

Many of us don't like the idea of pruning but it appears it's inevitable – either because we're producing poor fruit, i.e. we're ineffective, or because we're capable of yielding an even more productive harvest.

Here are some questions to consider:

- How much pruning is required in our lives and what form does that take?
- What does it mean for us to ***"remain in Him"*** and for Jesus to ***"remain in us"***?
- In what ways am I producing the ***"fruit of the Spirit"*** in Galatians 5:22-23?

Prayer:



Lord Jesus, I want to always remain in You and to bear good, plentiful fruit for You.

Help me to grow in faith and be obedient to Your eternal purposes. Amen.

THE PROMISES

DAY 4 – WEDNESDAY 2ND DECEMBER 2025

LISTEN AND OBEY

Reading:

> ***"…the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus" –*** Luke 1:31 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

Prior to the birth of Jesus we have an astonishing promise made by the angel Gabriel to Mary.

We don't know exactly how old Mary was at the time – most Bible scholars reckon she was in her early teens – and none of us could possibly imagine how Mary felt confronted by an angel. It's probably an understatement to record she was ***"greatly troubled"*** (verse 29). By the way, Gabriel had the same effect on Zechariah in Luke 1:12 when he told him that he and his wife Elizabeth, although elderly and previously child-less, were going to become the parents of John the Baptist who became the forerunner of Jesus.

Although I've never, to my knowledge, had an angelic visitation, I have received several life-changing prophecies from people who have brought direction and wisdom from God. And of course, there have been numerous passages of Scripture that have informed and inspired me.

The bottom-line question though is, *'how willing are we to listen and obey?'*

How much does the opinion of other people or the prospect of failure paralyse us?

I find it so encouraging that there are numerous examples in the Bible of people who were challenged to do something that seemed to be way *'out of their comfort zone'* yet did so anyway. Think of Abraham, Moses, Gideon and others.

Mary was prepared to step out in faith, whatever the cost – ***"I am the Lord's servant…may your word to me be fulfilled"*** (Luke 1:38). The question has to be asked – are we?

Prayer:

Samuel prayed, ***"Speak Lord, for your servant is listening" –*** see 1 Samuel 3:11

Help me have the same response and when I've heard what You have to say, enable me to obey. Amen.

THE PROMISES

DAY 5 – THURSDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2025

A FOREVER HOME

Reading:

> ***"In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also"*** – John 14:2-3 (ESVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

Some theologians claim there are three times as many prophetic references to Jesus' Second Coming as there were to His First Coming. All 9 New Testament writers refer to His return and there are at least 60 references to His promised arrival. Jesus Himself prophesied about coming back (as recorded in all 4 Gospels).

The inference is clear – Jesus is coming back and during Advent we're encouraged to look forward.

When thinking about moving, people often talk about finding *'their forever home'*. Here Jesus promises He is preparing a place for us – an eternal home where we can be with Him forevermore.

Read Daniel 7:13-14 – it's probably the most explicit Old Testament prophesy about the Second Coming. Jesus references it Himself twice in Matthew 24:30 and Matthew 26:64. And both Psalm 145:13 and Daniel 7:27 refer to an everlasting kingdom that will endure forever.

We don't know when Jesus will return – He said Himself in Mark 13:32 (repeated in Matthew 24:36) that only the Father knows when it will happen. And in Matthew 25:13 Jesus instructs us to ***"...keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour"***.

What are the implications for us now? Are we living our lives in the light of the prospect of eternity?

Prayer:

I can't fully comprehend or imagine what eternity will look like Father but I believe this life on earth is not all there is or will be.

Thank You that You have promised nothing can separate me from "***the love of God that is in Christ Jesus"*** (Romans 8:39). Amen.

THE PROMISES

DAY 6 – FRIDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2025

COURAGE AND DOUBT

Reading:

> ***"…suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven'" –*** Acts 1:10-11 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

The 4 parallel accounts of the Great Commission and Ascension (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; Acts 1) are fascinating. Obviously, there are many similarities but only Luke in Acts recalls the angelic promise of Jesus' return.

The disciples had witnessed the Resurrection and now they are informed Jesus will come back. We're told ***"some doubted"*** (Matthew 28:17) but my sense is that the revelation of future reunion with Him filled them with the assurance and courage they needed to proclaim the Gospel, even though all of them would face persecution and most martyrdom.

Doubts aren't a sign of unbelief – doubt presumes at least some kind of faith!

We're encouraged to ***"live by faith, not by sight"*** (2 Corinthians 5:7) implying some – if not many – questions won't necessarily be answered. But when any questions are resolved it gives me the reassurance I need and leads me to increased faith and a determination to *'keep on keeping on'*.

And that leads us to contemplate the following questions:

- In what areas do we need reassurance and confidence today?
- How does the knowledge that we're members of an eternal kingdom help alleviate our doubts?
- How courageous are we prepared to be? Are we willing to be **"fools for Christ"**? (see 1 Corinthians 4:10)

Prayer:

I'm determined Lord to follow You, even if I have unanswered questions. Just like the father who brought his son to Jesus to be healed, my prayer today is, ***"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (***Mark 9:24). Amen.

THE PROMISES

DAY 7 – SATURDAY 5TH DECEMBER 2025

UNTIL HE COMES AGAIN

Reading:

> ***"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come"*** – Matthew 24:42 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

There have been many people who have attempted to work out when Jesus will return. Yet, as mentioned before, even Jesus Himself said He doesn't know when it will be (Mark 13:32).

Rather than speculate about dates and times, I'd to encourage us to read and consider the following scriptures:

- ***"We are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Saviour"*** – Philippians 3:30
- ***"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes"*** – 1 Corinthians 11:26
- ***"Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again"*** – 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NLT)

And one other thought: is it possible that Jesus' return is being delayed to give others the chance to accept Jesus as their Saviour? 2 Peter 3:9 declares God doesn't want anyone to miss out on His salvation plan.

Remember we are His ambassadors (envoys, representatives) on earth – 2 Corinthians 5:20.

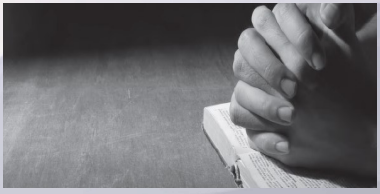
Here are some questions to consider:

- What part can we and should we be playing?
- Am I eagerly waiting for Jesus to return?
- How does His return impact my lifestyle?

Prayer:

Help me today Lord to wait patiently and eagerly wait for Your return.

Enable me to be an ambassador for You and faithfully proclaim Your love in every situation and to every person I encounter. Amen.



THE PURPOSE

We're moving on from the prophesies and promises to think about the purpose of Jesus' coming to earth. We'll be looking at Jesus' mandate and ministry and the ultimate '*end game*'.

DAY 8 – SUNDAY 6TH DECEMBER 2025

GOD LOVES US - PERIOD!

Reading:

> ***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him"*** – John 3:16-17 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

John 3:16 is one of the most well-known verses in the Bible but I've included verse 17 as well because it supplements the reason Jesus came to earth.

God loves everyone – hard though that may be for some of us to comprehend.

Martin Luther said: *'God does not love us because we're valuable, but we are valuable because God loves us.'* Many people have a hard time believing God loves them and that they are precious to Him. They may be prepared to accept He loves the world but not them as an individual.

But believe it. God loves us – period! Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession for us now, awaited return, is demonstratable proof.

Jesus told Zacchaeus that He had come to ***"seek and save the lost"*** (Luke 19:10). As John 3:17 says, He came to save not condemn the world, so why do many of us doubt God's amazing, generous , undeserved love?

And if Jesus loved us enough to sacrifice Himself for us, shouldn't we emulate Him in the way we love other people? Our love for others will be rooted in our love for God.

Prayer:

I'm sorry Father that my life doesn't always reflect the grace and mercy You have shown to me. I often see the negative in others, can be quick to criticise, judge and slow to forgive. Teach me how to show compassion today. Amen.

THE PURPOSE

DAY 9 – MONDAY 7TH DECEMBER 2025

ANNOUNCING GOD'S FAVOUR

Reading:

> ***"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour"*** – Luke 4:17-19 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

Jesus quotes from Isaiah chapters 58 & 61 to announce the purpose of His ministry and mandate – notice the three *'proclaims'* -

- ***"Proclaim good news to the poor"***
- ***"Proclaim freedom for prisoners"***
- ***"Proclaim the year of the Lord's favour"***

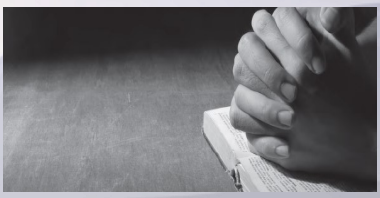
Whilst most Bible translations use the word *'year'*, the word could also be translated as *'time'* or *'day'*. Our broken world isn't much different to Jesus' day – often devoid of good news; where people are blinded by avarice and materialism or oppressed through injustice, persecution, prejudice and inequality.

Our faith in Jesus should inevitably lead us to ***"defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed" –*** Psalm 82:3 – see Isaiah 1:13 for further confirmation.

- Where can we be involved in emulating Jesus' mandate?
- What ***"good deeds"*** can we be involved in?
- How can we be *'good news people'* in proclaiming (announcing, declaring, making known) God's favour?
- In what ways can we stand against discrimination in all its forms and "***proclaim God's favour"***?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, give me the courage today to stand up and speak up where it will be appropriate and helpful. Let both my words and my actions validate my faith in the areas where I can have influence. Amen.



THE PURPOSE

DAY 10 – TUESDAY 8TH DECEMBER 2025

BRINGING GLORY TO THE FATHER

Reading:

> ***"Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, 'Father, save me from this hour'? But this is the very reason I came! Father, bring glory to your name'"*** – John 12:27-28 (NLT)
>
> ***"I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do"*** – John 17:4 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

These two passages confirm Jesus was fully aware of His purpose – to bring glory and honour to His Father.

Everything Jesus accomplished here on earth points to the Father – the miracles, healings, the grace and mercy He showed and ultimately, as John 17:4 says, His death, resurrection and ascension.

Hebrews 1:3 tells us, ***"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being…"*** and is endorsed by other Scriptures – see John 14:8-9; Colossians 1:15 & 2:9.

But now it's our turn!

Matthew 3:13-14 refers to us being ***"salt and light"***, and Jesus instructs us in Matthew 5:16 (ESVUK), ***"…let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."***

1 Corinthians 6:20 tells us to ***"glorify God in your body"*** and 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, ***"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."***

- How does that happen in practice?
- Hand on heart, can we really claim that everything we will do today will bring glory to God?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, this is a tough ask and I can't do it on my own. Help me to channel my words, my thoughts, my actions so that I fulfil the desire in my heart to bring glory to the Father.

Amen.

THE PURPOSE

DAY 11 – WEDNESDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2025

TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY

Reading:

> ***"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost"*** – Luke 19:10 (NIVUK)
>
> ***"Here's a word you can take to heart and depend on: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I'm proof – Public Sinner Number One – of someone who could never have made it apart from sheer mercy"*** – 1 Timothy 1:15 (MSG)

Pause & Ponder:

The context of the first reading is when Jesus met Zacchaeus. I don't know what motivated him to climb a tree – perhaps it was his stature, maybe curiosity, or possibly, just like Matthew (Levi), he was a tax collector before joining Jesus' team and wanted to remain anonymous. Maybe it was a guilty conscience – Zacchaeus says later he would repay people "***if I have cheated anybody***", which probably implies he had.

There are some shared similarities with the second reading referring to Paul - formerly Saul, the chief persecutor of the early Church. Both of them:

- Had a divine encounter with Jesus
- Were called by name (see Acts 9:4 in Paul's case)
- Had chequered histories
- Responded to the call on their lives.

Jesus knew who they were and wanted them to know Him.

The people we meet may not be social outcasts like Zacchaeus or, as the Apostle Paul was, complicit in persecution against others like Paul, but everyone needs the Saviour. My prayer is that we'll ***"always be prepared to give an answer"*** for the hope we have – see 1 Peter 3:15. The eternal destiny of those we know may well rest on us *'stepping out in faith'* and speaking about our faith. That's not meant to be burden, or guilt trip, but it may well be a challenge. It is to me anyway!

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, sometimes I know I miss, or even avoid, opportunities to share Your love with others. Help me to be aware and willing to speak up as and when opportunities occur. Amen.

THE PURPOSE

DAY 12 – THURSDAY 10TH DECEMBER 2025

ABUNDANT LIFE

Reading:

> ***"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"*** – John 10:10b (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

In this discourse with the Pharisees, Jesus refers to Himself as both the Good Shepherd who lays down His life and the gateway by which people can be saved or more literally ***"can be kept safe"***.

Jesus isn't talking about the kind of abundant life most people seek – power, possessions, prosperity, position, prestige – but lasting fullness of life, in other words, eternal life. Jesus defined eternal life in John 17:3, ***"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent".***

Secondly, I believe Jesus wasn't talking about the duration of eternal life but more about the quality of relationship we enjoy with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Colossians 3:2-3 encourages us to ***"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God"***.

God knows we have material needs (see Matthew 6:25-31; Philippians 4:19) but our primary focus should be to ***"seek first his kingdom and his righteousness"*** (Matthew 6:33).

God's Kingdom and purposes have an eternal perspective – that's where our emphasis should be.

Let's ask the questions:

- Have I lost focus on what real – abundant – life is all about?
- Am I more concerned about the life I'm living right now and what the culture around me prioritises?
- What steps am I going to take to address these issues?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, forgive me for the times I have allowed my focus to stray from Your Kingdom purposes. Give me a deeper understanding of the eternal perspective I pray, starting today. Amen.

THE PURPOSE

DAY 13 – FRIDAY 11TH DECEMBER 2025

THE PROMISED HOLY SPIRIT

Reading:

> ***"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever - the Spirit of truth...But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" –*** John 14:16-17a & 26 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

In case anyone is wondering, I've included these verses because it's vital we recognise and appreciate Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to His followers (including us) as part of His purpose for coming.

Titus 3:5 says Jesus ***"saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit"***. In addition to convicting us of our sin (see John 16:8) the Holy Spirit:

- Helps us and will be with us forever (see verses above)
- Guides us into all truth, instructing us and reminding us of Jesus' teaching (John 14:26)
- Is the seal and deposit that guarantees our redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14)
- Enables us to be effective witnesses (Acts 1:8)
- Empowers us with spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-10) and the spiritual fruit that should characterise our lives (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Intercedes on our behalf (Romans 8:26-27)

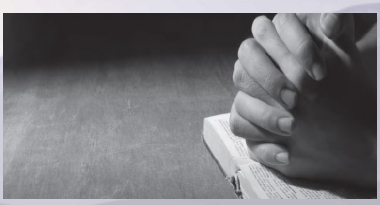
In a similar manner to Jesus walking with the Disciples whilst He was here on earth, the Holy Spirit now walks alongside us. Jesus called the Holy Spirit ***"another Counsellor"*** or *'Paraclete'* – the One who is beside us every step of the way.

Today's challenge is to consider in what areas do I need to depend on the Holy Spirit to work in my life rather than relying on my own abilities?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, I can't do this on my own. I need Your supernatural power to fill me continuously (Ephesians 5:18b).

Help me to increasingly submit to You today and every day. Amen.



THE PURPOSE

DAY 14 – SATURDAY 12TH DECEMBER 2025

THE ULTIMATE END GAME

Reading:

> ***"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"*** – Philippians 2:9-11 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

Reading Philippians 2:1-13 we see Jesus demonstrated the character traits of humility, servanthood and obedience. And we're exhorted to emulate Jesus – to have the same attitude as He had. We acknowledge Him as Lord as we humble ourselves, sacrificially serve and obey the calling on our lives.

2 Corinthians 3:18 encourages us to ***"contemplate the Lord's glory"***. Other versions talk about ***"beholding***", i.e. looking intently. As we do, we'll reflect His glory resulting in us ***"being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory***".

Note this is a continuous process, not a one-off occurrence. Becoming more like Jesus is a whole-life event.

And this leads us to the ultimate *'end game'* scenario – the reason Jesus came to earth. The breath-taking salvation plan that was put in place before creation (see 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 1:4) will result in all creation bowing and acknowledging Jesus as Lord with the Father given the glory.

We finish this section on the purpose of Jesus' coming as we consider a few questions:

- In what aspects does my attitude need to be adjusted?
- Where does my character need attention and improvement?
- Am I doing my part in becoming more like Jesus and demonstrating humility, servanthood and obedience?

Prayer:

As I meditate on all You have accomplished Lord Jesus, it's difficult to articulate my gratitude for all You have done.

May my life reflect Your amazing love, grace and mercy and become more like You, Jesus. Amen.

THE PEOPLE

This week we're re going to look at some of the characters in the Advent story.

Whilst none of us were there at the time, let's use our imagination to reflect on how they responded and reacted to the scenarios they faced and ask the Holy Spirit to impart understanding and inspiration to us as we consider how we can learn from their experiences.

DAY 15 – SUNDAY 13TH DECEMBER 2025

MARY – HIGHLY FAVOURED

Reading:

> ***"God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth…to a virgin…The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you'"*** – Luke 1:26-28 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

What an angelic endorsement to receive – that you are ***"highly favoured!"*** My first thought is why was Mary highly favoured? Was the *'are'* in the sentence a reflection of her life of faith up to that point, or was it somehow prophetic, i.e. you've been chosen to be highly favoured? Whichever it was, the key is that Mary was obviously special and had the qualities required to become Jesus' mother.

Mary's response, ***"May it be to me as you have said"*** (Luke 1:38) indicates she's instantly enthusiastic to take on the challenge but did she have time to take in the enormity of what was being asked of her or have any doubts or reservations? Did she consider the ramifications or the potential reaction of her parents?

We don't know, but I doubt an all-knowing God would have selected Mary for this special role if it wasn't within her capabilities or willingness. What about us?

- How likely are we to step out in faith to attempt something we've never done before or do we find excuses or potential obstacles when faced with a challenge?
- To what extent are we prepared to completely trust the God Who plans everything in meticulous detail?

Prayer:

Father, I confess there have been occasions when I have limited Your power and purposes because I've been unwilling or afraid. Help me to fully trust You today – whatever You ask of me. Amen.

THE PEOPLE

DAY 16 – MONDAY 14TH DECEMEBER 2025

MARY – THE WORSHIPPER

Reading:

> ***"And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour'"*** – Luke 1:46-47 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

These verses are part of 'The Magnificat' – Mary's song of praise. She bursts into jubilant song when her cousin Elizabeth (more about her later), filled with the Holy Spirit, recognises Mary is going to have a child. Some translations of verse 37 indicate this was a short time after Gabriel's visit, e.g. ***"a few days later"*** (NLT).

As I read the story in verses 30 to 56, I particularly noted two aspects:

- Mary was a worshipper – her immediate response to Elizabeth's joyful, prophetic exclamation was to give glory to God.
- Mary and Elizabeth had both begun to understand the significance of what was happening. Elizabeth refers to Mary being the ***"mother of my Lord"*** (v43) and Mary declares she ***"rejoices in God my Saviour"***.

Confirmation of the Holy Spirit's call on our lives can come from many different sources. I've experienced this personally as people who didn't know me or who were unaware of my circumstances, have brought prophetic direction, confirmation and encouragement.

We're instructed not to treat prophecies with contempt but to test them and above all, not quench the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21). Remember that prophesy should always **strengthen**, **encourage** and **comfort** (see 1 Corinthians 14:3). It's always the Holy Spirit's intention to positively impact our lives.

Whilst He may convict us in certain areas, He'll never cause us to be ashamed.

And another thought: the instruction about prophesy in 1 Thessalonians 5 comes in the context of ***"rejoicing always", "praying continually"*** and ***"giving thanks in all circumstances"*** (verses 16-18) because ***"this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"***.

Prayer:

Touch my life today Holy Spirit, that I may be thankful in every circumstance and be a worshipper in **"Spirit and truth"** (John 4:24). Amen.

THE PEOPLE

DAY 17 – TUESDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2025

JOSEPH – A RIGHTEOUS MAN

Reading:

"Joseph…was a righteous man" – Matthew 1:19 (NLT)

Pause & Ponder:

Joseph is often portrayed as a *'bit part player'* in Nativity Plays – he usually leads the donkey, asks the inn-keeper for a room (neither of which actually occur in the Bible) and looks on lovingly as Mary holds the baby. He's only mentioned by name 16 times in Scripture, yet he is integral to Advent.

Imagine with me the scene. Mary tells Joseph, to whom she's engaged, that she's pregnant. Joseph knows the baby's not his – they haven't been that intimate – but I'm not sure he's totally convinced when Mary assures him her pregnancy is as a result of the Holy Spirit. Two mind-blowing revelations! Legitimately, he could expose Mary to public ignominy, resulting in potential capital punishment. But we read he was righteous and planned to divorce Mary quietly and probably leave town in shame and dishonour to avoid the ridicule and gossip.

Sometimes life throws us *'curve balls'*. They seem to come out of nowhere and are totally unexpected. It could be slander, cynical comments, false accusations, misunderstood actions or even someone else's attempts at *'one upmanship'*.

Living righteously is tough but primarily it all boils down to the choices we make and every time we choose, there are consequences. Joseph had ample opportunity to make different decisions yet he doesn't strike me as someone who would be tempted to retaliate or *"get his revenge in first"*.

Here's a verse to consider: ***"Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbours. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honourable behaviour"*** – 1 Peter 2:12 (NLT).

- Will that be the way we live today?
- Will we live blameless and righteously and will the Gospel be hindered or helped as we witness to others who may not know Jesus?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, my desire is to be righteous in my thoughts, actions and the choices I make today and every day. Please, please help me I pray. Amen.

THE PEOPLE

DAY 18 – WEDNESDAY 16TH DECEMBER 2025

SUPERNATURAL INTERVENTION

Reading:

> ***"When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded"*** – Matthew 1:24 (NLT)

Pause & Ponder:

Joseph was to become no stranger to supernatural angelic intervention. On four different occasions he's recorded as having dreams, each of which was strategic in terms of Jesus' future.

- Matthew 1:20-21 – an angel reassures Joseph it's God's will and plan for Mary to have a baby
- Matthew 2:13-15 – he receives angelic instruction to leave for Egypt to protect Jesus from harm
- Matthew 2:19-21 – the angel of the Lord informs Joseph it's safe to return to Israel
- Matthew 2:22-23 – another dream guides him to move to Nazareth.

Notice that on the first three occasions (and by inference, the fourth), Joseph doesn't delay – he acts decisively and immediately, no hanging about waiting for further confirmation.

Are we prone to procrastination, unwilling to move in the revealed flow of God's purposes or paralysed by fear when opportunities come our way to demonstrate our faith in action?

The apostle Peter quoting the prophet Joel at Pentecost says, young men will have visions and old men will dream and sons, daughters and servants, male and female will prophesy (Acts 2:17-18).

We may not receive angelic revelation as Joseph did, but just like the prophets and authors who wrote the Bible when the Holy Spirit revealed God's truth to them – see 2 Peter 1:20-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16 – let's be open to any *'prophetic nudges'* He has for us.

Prayer:

Father, Your Holy Spirit speaks through Your word, the Bible, and through individuals empowered to bring direction and instruction. May I be available to receive Your revealed truth and guidance. Amen.

THE PEOPLE

DAY 19 – THURSDAY 17TH DECEMBER 2025

ZECHARIAH AND ELIZABETH – PATIENTLY WAITING

Reading:

> ***"But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John'"*** – Luke 1:13 (NLT)

Pause & Ponder:

Whilst unusual, it wasn't unique to learn you're going to become a parent via an angelic visitation – it happened for Abram and Sarah, Samson's parents, Mary and Joseph – now Zechariah.

Taking his turn as a priest in the Temple, an angel appears with the news he's going to become a father. Verses 6 & 7 tells us both he and his wife Elizabeth were righteous and blameless before God, had been praying, and no doubt patiently waiting, for a child, but were now ***"very old"***. Zechariah, stunned, fearful and hesitant to believe the angel, is struck dumb, yet on his return home, Elizabeth becomes pregnant.

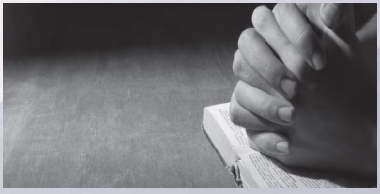
The son that is born is no ordinary child – he's filled with the Holy Spirit before birth, is empowered with the attributes of Old Testament prophet Elijah and becomes John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, calling people to repentance.

We've already reflected that when Mary visited her, the baby leaped in Elizabeth's womb (verses 41 & 44), and the joyful Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit.

A couple of thoughts to consider:

- After years faithfully praying, Zechariah seems unprepared and hesitant when told his prayers were going to be answered. Has that been our experience? If so, what's our reaction been?
- Elizabeth was filled with joy at Mary's pregnancy. How do we react when other people are blessed?

Prayer:



Sometimes I can be disappointed when someone else's prayers are answered when mine seem unfulfilled. Help me to be gracious and generous when others are blessed and to persist in faithfully bringing my requests to You. Amen.

THE PEOPLE

DAY 20 – FRIDAY 18TH DECEMBER 2025

SIMEON – WAITING AND WAITING

Reading:

> ***"Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah"*** – Luke 2:25-26 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

I realise this is part of the post-Nativity narrative, but both Simeon and Anna (we'll look at her tomorrow) were in action ahead of Advent. Take a moment to read Luke 2:22-40 to understand the context.

Once again it's interesting to note the connection between righteousness and being led by the Holy Spirit – look back over the past few days! Simeon is described as both ***"righteous and devout"*** – morally upright and totally committed – and aware of the Holy Spirit's guidance.

He was holding on to a promise, which must have been revealed to him earlier in his life by the Holy Spirit, that he wouldn't die until he saw the Messiah. Simeon was waiting expectantly and I believe, confidently, that the prophetic word he'd received would be fulfilled. Then one day, he was ***"moved by the Holy Spirit"*** (Luke 2:27). Simeon was in the right place at the right time because he was in tune with the Holy Spirit.

Advent is about waiting, patiently and eagerly, ready for action.

- Could we be described as righteous and devout? If so, how do those attributes play out in our daily lives?
- Are we waiting expectantly and ready to share our faith as and when opportunities come along?
- How dependent are we on the Holy Spirit's leading and direction?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, I willingly submit to becoming more righteous and devout. Guide me to be in the right places at the right times to accomplish the Your purposes for my life.

Amen.

THE PEOPLE

DAY 21 – SATURDAY 19TH DECEMBER 2025

ANNA – SEEING WHAT OTHERS DON'T SEE

Reading:

> ***"She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying"*** – Luke 2:37 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

In just 3 verses we have the story of an 84-year old widow (no mean feat in that day and age) who had made a life-long commitment to serve and worship God, devoting herself to prayer and fasting.

Whilst we know little of her *'back story'*, Anna is recognised as a prophet – someone with divine insight. The Greek here suggests intuition and perception – Anna *'saw'* what was hidden to others. Could that have been an outcome of her dedication to worship, fasting and prayer?

Simeon had just blessed the family and spoken prophetically over Mary (verses 34 & 35) and then Anna confirms to everyone present that Jesus was the one Israel had been waiting for. She was an evangelist too!

Imagine how many children Anna must have seen attending the purification ceremony during her many years serving in the Temple. Yet she picks out this 40-day old boy who was being presented to the Lord – she saw something others didn't see.

Four people – Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon and now Anna – all of them advanced in years. None of them were particularly famous but they were faithful.

We're never too old to be useful in God's Kingdom. With age comes experience – which we can pass on to others.

We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us and who have helped us grow in knowledge and understanding. How can we do the same for the next generation?

Could we identify someone younger than us that we could mentor, coach and disciple who will be instrumental in influencing future generations? Pray about it.

Prayer:

Open my eyes Lord to see what You see and help me to equip others with the lessons I've learned to enable Your Kingdom to advance.

Amen.

THE PRESENCE

We're heading towards the culmination of this Advent period.

As we do so let's focus on how the presence of the Lord Jesus in our lives impacts us and those around us.

DAY 22 – SUNDAY 20TH DECEMBER 2025

OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

Reading:

> ***"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"*** – John 1:14 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

John describes Jesus as the ***"Word"*** who ***"was God"*** and ***"with God"***. Yet as we read in Philippians 2:5-8, Jesus took on humanity and humbly, obediently and sacrificially died on the Cross.

As a man, Jesus was tempted yet didn't capitulate to sin (Hebrews 4:15) so He can understand and empathise with us. The temptations He faced in the wilderness following His baptism (see Matthew 4 and Luke 4) illustrate three categories of struggle that confront us:

- **Physical provision**: turning stones into bread
- **Protection**: jumping off the Temple pinnacle
- **Power, Prestige and Pride**: being offered the kingdoms of the world.

Just like Jesus, we always have a choice. We can give in to temptation or fight it by standing on God's Word, both the Bible and our relationship with Jesus – the Word made flesh, Immanuel, God with us.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT) tells us, ***"The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure"*** – 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT). Claim this promise today!

Prayer:

Thank You Lord Jesus that You know me through and through. Help me to overcome temptation by relying on Your strength at work in me.

Amen.

THE PRESENCE

DAY 23 – MONDAY 21ST DECEMBER 2025

RECOGNISING HIS PRESENCE WITH US

Reading:

> ***"As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognising him"*** – Luke 24:15-16 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

It may seem somewhat bizarre to include the Emmaus Road account in an Advent Devotional but please take a moment to read the passage found in Luke 24.

Cleopas plus one, most probably his wife Mary, are walking home, no doubt heart-broken and confused. They were debating everything they'd witnessed – Jesus' betrayal, trial, crucifixion, death and burial. But they couldn't comprehend why there was no trace of Jesus' body in the tomb. And now some of the women, plus Peter and John, had reported the tomb was definitely empty.

Suddenly someone they don't recognise joins them and engages them in an Old Testament Bible Study. But it's not until later, after inviting the stranger in for a meal, and He breaks the bread, that they recognise it's Jesus – risen and alive.

How often do we *'miss'* Jesus' presence with us in the frenetic hurly-burly of life?

- Are we willing as The Message Version of Romans 12: 1 says to ***"Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking around life – and place it before God as an offering"***?
- Can we explain our faith simply and relevantly to others, even if we still have unanswered questions?
- Would we be prepared to offer hospitality to strangers? Hebrews 13:2 (NLT) has an interesting take on this.

Here's a suggestion: take a *'time-out'* at regular intervals during the day. It will enable us to reset our minds and acknowledge Jesus' presence is with us wherever we are and whatever we're doing.

Prayer:

I want to praise You Lord that Psalm 139:7-10 reminds me that nowhere is out of Your sight. Thank You that are always with me.

Amen.

THE PRESENCE

DAY 24 – TUESDAY 22ND DECEMBER 2025

WE ARE NOT ALONE

Reading:

> ***"I will not leave you orphaned. I am coming back...you will know absolutely that I'm in my Father, and you're in me, and I'm in you"***
> – John 14:18-20 (MSG)

Pause & Ponder:

I said earlier that we're living in the gap between the First and Second Coming. We can't physically see Jesus now but He promised to impart His Holy Spirit to us so we'll never again be alone.

Note the sequence in these verses: Jesus is **in** the Father; we are **in** Jesus and He is **in** us. In John 14:16-17, Jesus says the Spirit will be with us forever and lives with us and in us. Isn't that amazing – we have the Trinity with us.

John 17:20-25 re-emphasises this truth – Jesus and the Father are one and we're included in that unity. The outcome is that the world will know what true love and unity is.

One of the many implications and outcomes of the Covid-19 pandemic was that many felt isolated, abandoned, even orphaned, especially when parents and so many and loved ones succumbed to this terrible disease.

The unity talked about in these two passages is both **vertical** and **horizonal**. We aren't meant to be independent of God or one another but in relationship with Him and each other.

The first stanza of Psalm 68:6 says, ***"God sets the lonely in families"***. One of our God-given challenges is to help alleviate loneliness and isolation, by offering practical friendship to those needing reassurance or encouragement and to make ourselves available as necessary.

There is a host of practical activities we become involved in to help those around us. Let's become *'difference-makers'* to those with whom we have influence!

Prayer:

Because I am in You and You are in Me, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, help me be aware of those in need that I can support and help today.

Amen.

THE PRESENCE

DAY 25 – WEDNESDAY 23RD DECEMBER 2025

HE IS WITH US – ALWAYS

Reading:

> ***"And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age"*** – Matthew 28:20b (NLT)

Pause & Ponder:

Whilst there is some debate over what Jesus meant by ***"end of the age"***, it's the preceding phrase, ***"I am with you always"***, that's pivotal for me, especially in the context of the Great Commission.

None of us is immune to difficulties, disappointments, trauma, tragedy and a host of other circumstances that result in heartbreak or suffering. But because we're all unique, our approach to these setbacks and trials will be different – there is no *'one size fits all'* approach.

Ultimately though there are some serious questions to face:

- Where is my security? Do I really trust my Heavenly Father that He knows and cares for me?
- Am I confident that what He has started in my life will be achieved – see Philippians 1:6?
- How is what I may be experiencing shaping my character, my values, my outlook, my service, my maturity?
- Am I being transformed to become more like Jesus through this process, painful though it may be?

Whilst we wait for the day Jesus will return, remember Advent also includes the Second Coming, we have been given the task of helping people to become disciples, equipping them to continue the work of sharing the good news of salvation through Jesus. It's vital we know Jesus is always with us and that His Holy Spirit will assist us complete our assignment.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Your Word declares that all things, even the difficulties we may face, work together for our benefit when we love You and are in line with Your will for us (Romans 8:28). Help me to trust You fully and to complete the work You prepared for me (Ephesians 2:10). Amen.

THE PRESENCE

DAY 26 – THURSDAY 24TH DECEMBER 2025

CHRISTMAS EVE

Reading:

> ***"In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"*** – John1: 4–5 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

Christmas Eve – the waiting is almost over.

Our reading today emphasises the purpose of Jesus' coming – to bring light to a world of darkness. In John 8:12 Jesus refers to Himself as be ***"...the light of the world."*** He goes on to say that those who follow Him will never walk in darkness because ***"they will have the light of life"***. Isaiah 9:2 tells us people walking in darkness have seen a great light and that light has dawned on those living in a land of deep darkness.

Jesus came to dispel the darkness around us because He defeated the sin, death and grave that have the capacity and capability to hold in bondage, fear and shame. Jesus brings light, hope and freedom and His birth is just the start we need to experience the fullness of His grace, mercy and salvation.

But what does that mean in practical terms? Firstly, this is too good an offer to refuse and its too good for us to keep to ourselves, especially as Jesus has told us we are now the light of the world – see Matthew 5:14.

Secondly, we are to shine brightly everywhere we go. Matthew 5:16 instructs us to let our light shine so other people ***"...may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*** This is reinforced in Ephesians 5:8 where Paul writes, ***"For you were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light."***

Christmas may only come once a year but our mission is continuous. It won't end until we either *'pass through the veil'* or Jesus comes back again. Let's be up for the challenge and the responsibility of sharing the Good News.

Prayer:

Lord, today and every day, my desire is to be a child of the light and shine brightly in the darkness around me. I know I won't always perfectly represent You but it's my aim and I ask Your Holy Spirit to give me the ability to trust You to lead, guide and empower me. Amen.

THE PRESENCE

DAY 27 – FRIDAY 25TH DECEMBER 2025

CHRISTMAS DAY

Reading:

> ***"While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them"*** – Luke 2:6-7 (NIVUK)

Pause & Ponder:

Christmas Day – the culmination of our Advent reflections. Today may be a time to celebrate but when Jesus was born it was an inauspicious, almost anonymous start.

There was no pomp and ceremony, no media circus or paparazzi – even for a royal baby, remember Joseph was a descendant of King David. There may have been a cast of thousands of angels, but that was out of town, so the only witnesses were a few shepherds although later, wise men would come to pay homage.

Jesus may have been born in relative obscurity yet His birth changed the course of history and eternity and demands a response from all of us.

Some people have reflected Jesus to have been a good man who helped people; a great orator and people motivator; an agitator or even a political activist; or, more cynically, a crutch for weak people to lean on.

Alternatively, we can see Him as Bible portrays Him – the incarnate Son of God Who will one day return.

In one sense the waiting is over – but in another sense the waiting continues. James 5:7 encourages us, ***"Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming"***. We may not know when it will be but what we do know is that it will be a ***"great and glorious day"*** (Acts 2:20).

In the meantime, keep believing, keep watching, keep praying, keep serving, keep sharing, keep becoming more like Jesus!

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I want to thank You, on this great and glorious day, that You became Immanuel – God with us – and that You are still with us now as we wait patiently for another great and glorious day, when You return. In the meantime, may my life bring You honour and glory I pray. Amen.

EPILOGUE

Thank you so much for journeying with me through this Advent period – I trust these brief reflections will have been beneficial.

The challenge for all of us is to live out our faith in such a way that others will come to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour. But actually it's more than accepting Jesus into our lives. We're called to become His disciples and to encourage others to do so.

We've already looked at the Great Commission in Matthew 28 where Jesus assigned us the task to ***"make disciples"*** and to baptise and teach these new believers. This means we need to know what we believe, and why, and are willing to share our faith wherever, whenever and with whomever we're with. God's Kingdom needs disciples, continuously filled with the Holy Spirit, living lives to the glory of God the Father.

There are several questions we need to ask ourselves.

- Who am I mentoring, teaching and supporting in their faith journey?
- From whom am I receiving direction and instruction from to help me grow in my spiritual maturity?
- What aspects has the Holy Spirit *'put His finger on'* as I've worked through this Advent period? And what am I going to do about it?

As we conclude this Devotional I'd like to refer to 2 Peter 1:3-11 – a passage that means a great deal to me. Please take a few moments to read it and note the following *'promise statements'*:

- We have divine power providing us with everything we need to live a godly life.
- We have very great and precious promises to enable us to participate in the divine nature.
- When we make every effort to add – in increasing measure – to our faith the qualities of goodness; knowledge; self-control; perseverance; godliness; mutual affection and love, we will become more effective and productive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- As we confirm our calling and election, we will not stumble and will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Patiently waiting involves **persistence** and **perseverance** – let's *'hang on in there'*, secure in our faith and the confident hope that Jesus is coming again.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Stephen Derges had an eclectic business career and was a Chartered Surveyor and Chartered Banker. His property and financial experience spanned over 30 years before he became a freelance consultant with the world's largest outplacement and career development business, leading and overseeing projects for local, national and international clients.

Having been involved in numerous church and Christian ministry leadership roles, he was invited to become the Pastor of Bridgnorth Baptist Church in Shropshire and subsequently Chair of Trustees and the Leadership Team of an Independent, Evangelical church when he moved back to his home county of Devon. Having led the church through an extensive restructuring period, he is now involved with several local church initiatives to positively influence communities promoting Christian unity as well as sharing the Gospel.

Before returning to the West Country, he led the annual Shropshire Prayer Breakfast for many years, and was the visionary behind Shropshire Hope, a county-wide collaboration of churches and Christian ministries across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

This Devotional was originally conceived under the banner of his Focused Life activities and was subsequently published in conjunction with **Houses of Light** (formerly Neighbourhood Prayer Network) of which Stephen is a Trustee.

He has written numerous articles for Christian publications and websites and has appeared on TV, regular radio interviews on faith, charity and business issues. Stephen has authored a series of books, ***"BITESIZE BELIEFS"***, and other devotionals – see the following pages and the website for more information. Virtually all his books and devotionals are available to download, read and/or print, FREE of charge.

Stephen's wife Rosalyn, trained as a Christian Counsellor with CWR and contributed to their "Introduction to Biblical Counselling" courses. In addition she was a member of CWR's Women's Leadership Team and has extensive experience in setting up, leading and advising on women's ministry groups. She has written various devotionals and is the author of "The Beauty Within".

Both Stephen and Rosalyn are accredited Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)® practitioners and speak at churches, conferences and other events.

More information and contact details are available via
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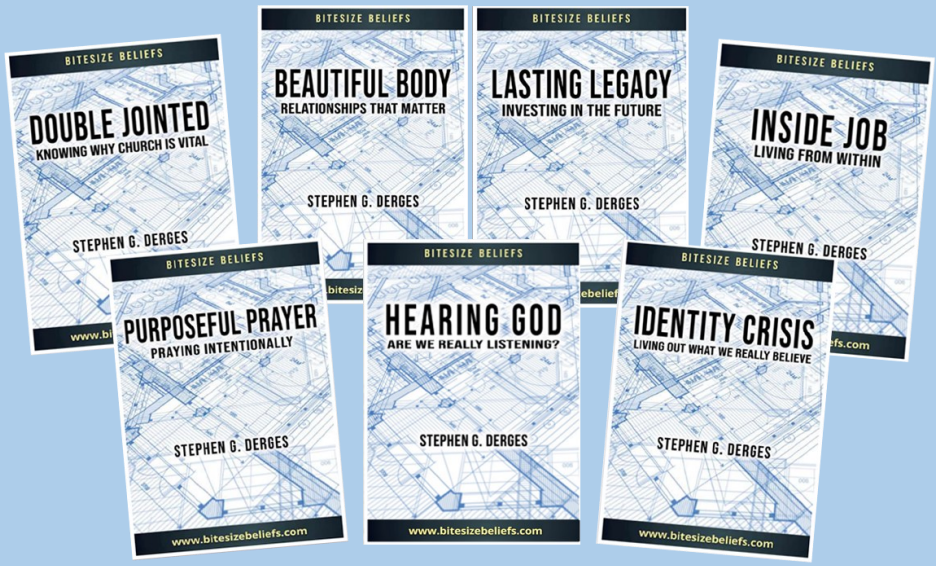

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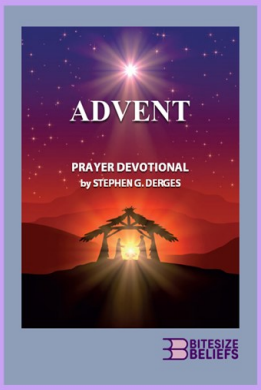

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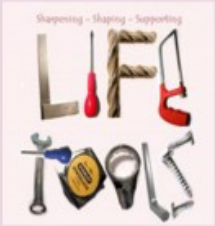

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The vision of **Houses of Light** (formerly Neighbourhood Prayer Network) is to see at least one Christian living on their street **PRAY** for their neighbours, **CARE** for their neighbours and **SHARE** Jesus with their neighbours, believing that in 2030, there will be 5 new disciples of Jesus on every street.

Join us by registering as an individual or as a church on our website:

www.housesoflight.net

BITESIZE BELIEFS