



# Advent Devotional



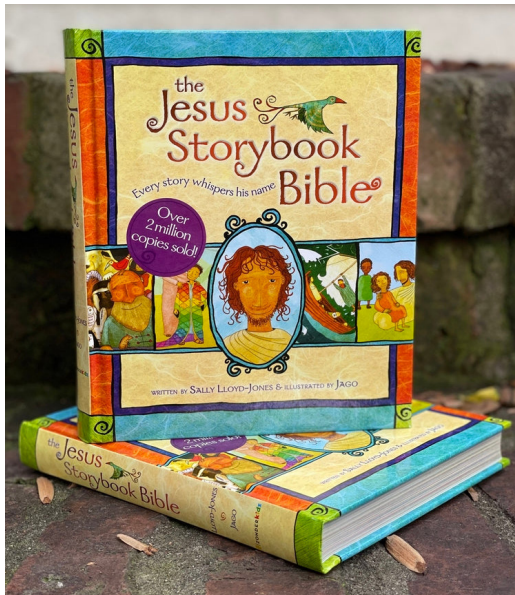
**2023**



Advent is the four weeks leading up to Christmas, where we take time to prepare our hearts for the birth of Jesus. This Advent season, we are zooming out and looking at the bigger picture of the story of Jesus.

There are several ways that you can participate in the Advent readings:

1. Use this companion guide with the historical context sections as you read through the passages of Scripture.
2. Read the *Jesus Storybook Bible*, from the beginning. Each day lines up with the reading plan of this companion guide.
3. Listen to the Intentional Podcast. Each day of the podcast lines up with the reading plan of this companion guide. All the episodes can be accessed at [wearetrinity.com/advent](http://wearetrinity.com/advent)



## **Discovery Bible Method:**

This is a way to study the Bible with other people.

**READ:** Ask someone to read the passage aloud while people read along in their Bibles.

**RETELL:** Ask either one person or the group to repeat the story in their own words, retelling it in everyday language. Is there something they added or left out? As long as the group doesn't miss a key component of the passage, continue.

If they miss something, read the passage again.

If someone states something that isn't in the passage, ask, "Where did you find [what they said] in the passage?" Reread the passage, if necessary.

**Pray:** Ask someone to pray, inviting the Holy Spirit to lead you to encounter the living Jesus in His Word.

### **Questions to ask:**

- What did you like about the passage?
- Did anything in it bother you?
- What does this passage tell us about God/Jesus/Holy Spirit?
- What does this passage reveal about people (ourselves)?
- About our relationships with each other or with God?
- What is God saying to you personally from this passage?
- How could you act on it?

## Day 1: December 1, 2023

### OPENING PRAYER:

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### SCRIPTURE:

Psalm 19

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

CS Lewis says this about Psalm 19, “I take this [Psalm 19] to be the greatest poem in the Psalms and one of the greatest lyrics in the world.”

The book of Psalms is a collection of poems and songs and are grouped into five books:

- **Book 1** (1-41): Mainly personal psalms
- **Book 2** (42-72) and **Book 3** (73-89): Mainly National psalms linked to temple choirs
- **Book 4** (90-106) and **Book 5** (107-150): Mainly Public Worship

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus’ coming?

## **Day 2: December 2, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Genesis 1-2:3

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

How do we know something exists? In our culture today, we place existence in two categories: material things or experiences. In the ancient world, however, existence had to do with function — having a role to play. The Hebrew word for “create” (bara) is a verb having to do with God being the one who separates and names creation. In the ancient world, there were gods who separated things and gods who named things. God is setting the stage for being the answer to all people for all things.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus’ coming?

## **Day 3: December 3, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Genesis 3

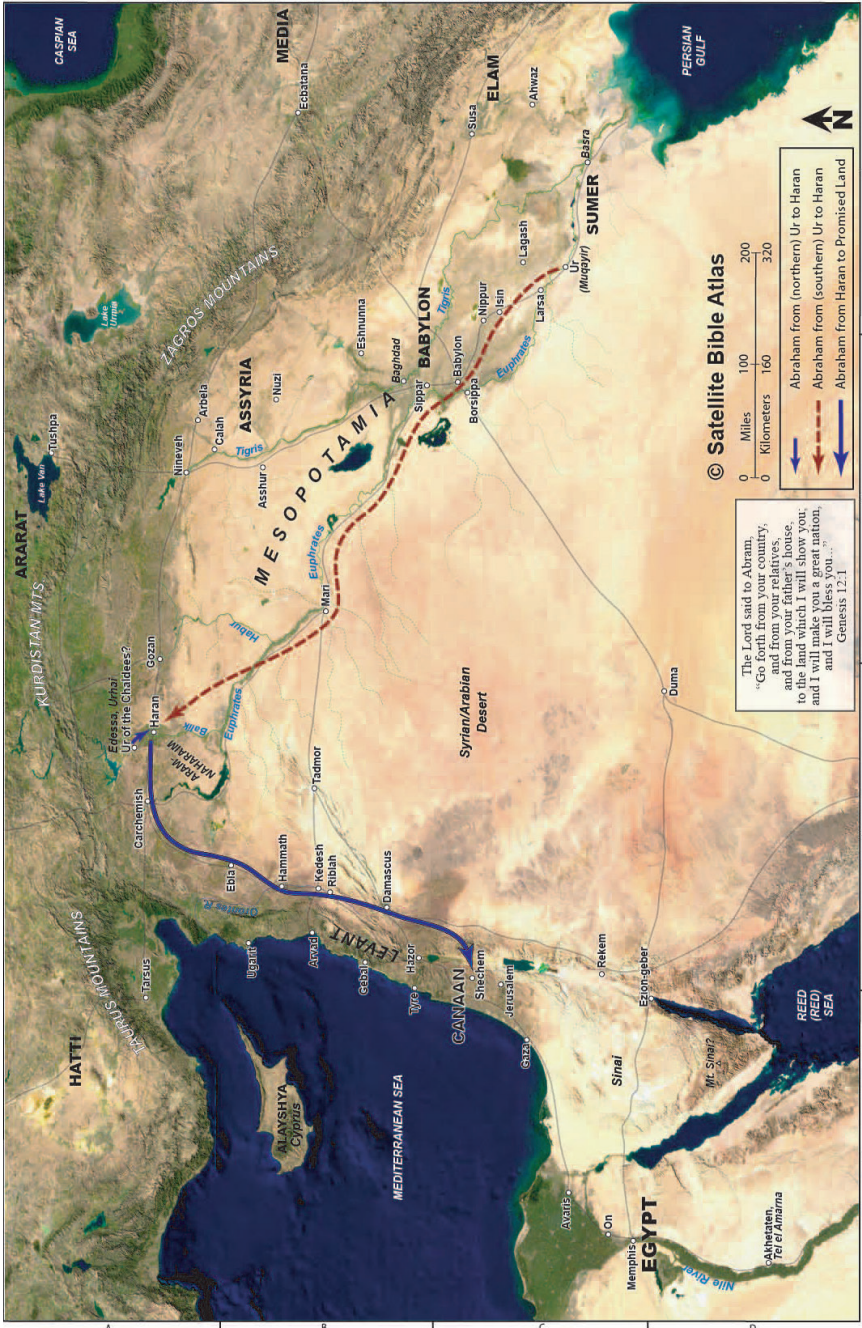
### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

See page 6 for a map of the area. The site of the Garden of Eden is likely set in the well-watered valleys of ancient Mesopotamia.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?







## **Day 4: December 4, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Genesis 8:20-9:17

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Let's talk about Covenants...

- There are three major types of covenants: Royal Grants, Parity, and Suzerian-Vassal.
- The Noahic covenant is a Royal Grant covenant that is unconditional. God makes commitments to Noah, but asks nothing of Noah in returns.
- The Noahic covenant is unique because it includes "every living creature," not just humans or Noah's family specifically.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?

## **Day 5: December 5, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Genesis 11:1-9

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Ancient readers would have understood the language in verse 4 to be referring to a Ziggurat. Ziggurats looked like pyramids, but they had no inside -- they were packed with fill dirt. Ziggurats were not places of worship. It was a temple that linked heaven and earth and accommodated the god of the people.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?

## **Day 6: December 6, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Genesis 15

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Genesis 15 is a repeating of the covenant and calling of Abram from Genesis 12. God reaffirms His covenant with Abram, after Abram expresses his doubts. This isn't the typical style of a covenant (like we noted in Day 4), so it's important to note that God responds to the doubts of His people with kindness and compassion.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?

## **Day 7: December 7, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Genesis 22:1-19

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Verse 14 is a demonstration of revolutionary faith on Abraham's behalf. At this time people had gods for the long-term life concerns and then patron (city, ancestors) gods for the short-term daily issues. The original language shows that Abraham is saying that God/Yahweh is providing the short-term AND the long-term needs.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?

## **Day 8: December 8, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Genesis 29:15-35

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

This marriage contract was unusual for the time because it was double the going rate for work. Typically, if a groom had no money he would work-for-hire. Bride prices were typically 30-40 shekels of silver and workers would be paid 1 shekel per month.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?



## **Day 9: December 9, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

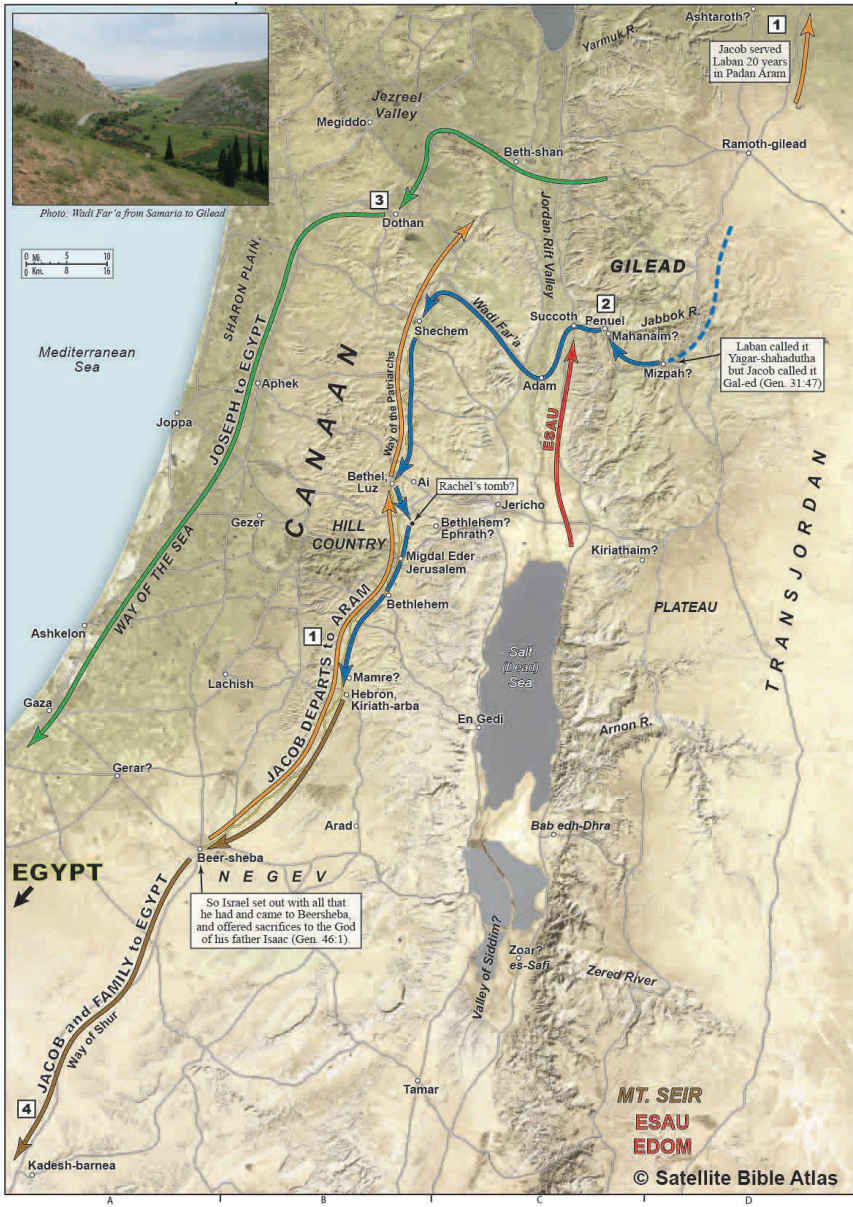
Genesis 45

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

See the map on page 13 to see where the places in this passage are located and how Joseph traveled.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?



## **Day 10: December 10, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Exodus 3

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

In verse 5, Moses removes his sandals and goes barefoot. This would have been a standard practice during this time. People would remove their sandals in the presence of a god or King, even if the King were wearing his shoes. Removing sandals could have also been an acknowledgment of Moses knowing that he was unclean and stepping into “holy ground.”

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?

## **Day 11: December 11, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Exodus 15:1-19

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

This song from Moses is a victory celebration of epic proportions. Imagine being in this position and just witnessing God defeat your enemy and rescue you from slavery. Moses is also communicating to the Israelite people that God, Yahweh, is not a mythical king. He is ever present with them now and forevermore.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?

## **Day 12: December 12, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Exodus 20:1-21

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

The Ten Commandments are a framework for how to live a sanctified life, no matter your societal structure. In the ancient world, there were many different structures for societies and the Ten Commandments address how we are to live. God is calling us to live to a higher standard than the people around us.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?



## **Day 13: December 13, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Joshua 6:8-21

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

See page 18 for a map of where Jericho is located, along with an aerial photo.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?



## **Day 14: December 14, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

1 Samuel 16:1-13

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Verse 7 reveals that God has a higher value for the heart of a person, rather than the outward appearance. In Hebrew culture, “the heart” was the central location of intellectual, ethical, moral, and religious consciousness. It is also interesting to note a common theme through the Bible that birth order is not of ultimate importance to God’s plan being moved forward.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus’ coming?

## **Day 15: December 15, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

1 Samuel 17:32-51

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Check out page 21 to see on a map where David fought Goliath and an aerial photo of area.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?





5-3 David and Saul Date: Late 11th century BC

5-3





## **Day 16: December 16, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Psalm 51

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Psalms are typically grouped into these five categories:

- Hymns in praise of God's character and deeds (ex. 8, 19, 29)
- Community laments (ex. 44, 74)
- Royal Psalms (ex. 2, 18, 20, 45)
- Individual laments (ex. 3, 7, 13, 25, 51)
- Individual thanksgiving (ex. 30, 32, 34)

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
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3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?

## **Day 17: December 17, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

2 Kings 5:1-19

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

This is a story that Jesus refers to later in the New Testament in Luke 4:27.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?

## **Day 18: December 18, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Isaiah 9:1-7

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

This passage is a prophecy from the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah is acknowledging the dark days of the present, but calling the people to look to the future which will be bringing the coming Messiah. This “Prince of Peace” that Isaiah is talking about is going to be bringing much more than just no war, but peace that includes safety, wholeness, and good relationships.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus’ coming?

## **Day 19: December 19, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Daniel 6

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Daniel would have likely been around 80 years old when this took place. No matter the consequence, Daniel was unwilling to not pray for 30 days or to pray in secret. The “den” that he was thrown into was like an enclosure that allowed for people to watch, as this was a common execution tactic during this time.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus’ coming?

## **Day 20: December 20, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Jonah 2

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

There is scholarly debate about whether the book of Jonah is Jewish folk-tale or a historical account. No matter the outcome of that debate, there is still a strong message of love and justice that we can glean from this book. Jonah 2 focuses on the prayer of Jonah in the belly of the fish. Pay attention to the progression of Jonah's prayer as he finds himself in a low and scary point in his life.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
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3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?



## **Day 21: December 21, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Malachi 3

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

The concept of “messengers” was very common during this ancient time period. Kings and gods would send messengers often to communicate things to the people and carry out missions. Messengers filled diplomatic, business, and administrative functions and carried the authority of the one who sent them.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?

## **Day 22: December 22, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Luke 1:26-56

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

When we transition to reading the New Testament, we have to remember that much of the New Testament parallels and fulfills what was spoken about in the Old Testament. For example, Mary's song in verses 46-56, possibly connects with Hannah's song found in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. Take a minute and look at the two passages together as you read Luke 1:26-56 today.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
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## Day 23: December 23, 2023

**OPENING PRAYER:** Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 2:1-20

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT:** Augustus was the most powerful ruler in the Mediterranean world. This table shows the contrast between the current ruler and the ruler that is born in Luke 2.

Augustus	Jesus
Augustus (v.1) ruled from a palace	Jesus was placed in a animal feeding trough shortly after birth (v.7)
Earthly choirs in imperial temples praised Augustus, celebrating his birthday	Heavenly choirs praised Jesus at his birth (v.13)
Augustus was hailed as bringer of the Pax Romana, the Roman peace	Heaven's choirs praised Jesus as bringer of true peace (v.14)
Augustus was hailed as savior and lord	The angel of the Lord announces Jesus as Savior and Lord (v.11)
Augustus enjoyed the praise of the powerful	Angels announced Jesus' birth to shepherds, who were considered lowly and often despised (vv.8-9)

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus' coming?

## **Day 24: December 24, 2023**

### **OPENING PRAYER:**

Before you read the Scripture for today, limit the distractions around you and spend time in prayer. Spend time thanking God for the opportunity we have to spend with Him through the reading of His Word.

### **SCRIPTURE:**

Matthew 2

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

It was very common for Magi to come and worship the new King. What “disturbed” King Herod was that he was currently King! Back in ancient times, astrology would have been considered the “science” of the time.

### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS:**

1. What phrases stood out to you?
2. What might God be saying to you through this passage, and how can you respond today?
3. What does this passage tell us about God? How does it look forward to Jesus’ coming?

### **Sources:**

Cultural Backgrounds NIV Bible  
Handbook of the Bible from Zondervan  
Photos from Satellite Bible Atlas