



SUSIE LARSON



PREPARE
HIM
ROOM

A DAILY ADVENT DEVOTIONAL





PREPARE
HIM
ROOM

BOOKS BY SUSIE LARSON

FROM BETHANY HOUSE PUBLISHERS

Your Beautiful Purpose

Blessings for the Evening

Blessings for the Morning

Your Sacred Yes

Your Powerful Prayers

Blessings for the Soul

Blessings for the Morning and Evening

Bountiful Blessings

Fully Alive

Prevail

Prepare Him Room

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*To Mom
For making Christmastime something to behold.
Love you so much,
Susie*



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I've been a big proponent of fasting for many years. I don't believe fasting needs to be limited to food. (Some people have health issues that keep them from entering a standard fast.) I've done creative fasts for decades (social media, TV, sweet treats, snacks, etc.). My husband, Kev, and I recently read Dr. Alicia Britt Chole's book *40 Days of Decrease*, in which she invites the reader to a different fast each day (fast from skepticism, self-protection, etc.). The fasts at the end of each chapter in this Advent devotional were inspired both by Dr. Chole's book and my own passion to practice restraint in seasons of indulgence. I highly recommend Dr. Chole's book for your Lenten season. It's a brilliant read. I pray you'll enter this journey with your whole heart.

INTRODUCTION

PREPARE: To make ready; to make necessary adjustments; to position yourself to receive your King and to receive His blessing.

Christmas is a time of great joy, expectancy, and celebration. Yet all too often we lose ourselves in holiday preparations and miss the sacredness of the season. Why does it matter? Because it's *this* holiday on which we honor the birth of our Savior. It's *this* time of year when people are most open to the things of God. And it's precisely *this* season when Christians most often lose sight of what's available to them in Christ Jesus.

We are people created in God's image. We have access to His presence and His promises. So why all the strain and stress? Dare we ask ourselves what honestly matters most to us this season?

God invites us to push away the clutter, turn down the noise, and offer Him the sacred space in our lives so that the King of Glory may enter, take up residence, and radically change us

from the inside out. We can race through the holiday season more stressed than blessed, or we can slow down, ponder the reality of Christ within us, and *respond* to His miraculous work within us.

*Change your focus,
determine your pace,
adjust your priorities,
and this could be
your most life-giving
holiday season yet.*

Change your focus, determine your pace, adjust your priorities, and this could be your most life-giving holiday season yet.

Whether you already walk intimately with Jesus or you see Him more like a distant relative, do know He's very near and that He came to redeem every aspect of who you are.

The gospel of Luke offers us a detailed account of Jesus' birth, life, death, and ultimate resurrection. Jesus' life will transform ours if we let Him. Journey with me through this amazing gospel. Let's prepare our hearts to encounter Jesus in a fresh, compelling, and life-changing way.

Let earth receive her King!

*With breathless expectancy,
Susie Larson*



Day 1

EMBRACE EXPECTANCY



Today's Reading: Luke 1

OTHER PASSAGES TO PONDER

But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently. —Romans 8:25

In the morning, O Eternal One, listen for my voice; in the day's first light, I will offer my prayer to You and watch expectantly for Your answer. —Psalm 5:3 VOICE

The message of Christmas . . . is not about manufacturing sentimental feelings in vain hopes of a miracle. It's about believing the reality that God has birthed something new in Jesus and because of this, God will birth something new in you and in me. And that

newness is breaking out, still today, in the hearts of God's people amidst a broken world. —Daniel Darling¹

Something new. When it comes to the lives and hearts of God's people, God is always up to something new. Though we love to look for signs or subtle shifts in circumstance, though it's such a gift to sense God's presence and receive insight from His Word, He's working even when we can't see Him, feel Him, or sense Him. He's always working, continually listening to our prayers and faithfully interceding for us—orchestrating circumstances that, when displayed in all their fullness, will reveal God's fatherly heart for His children, will unveil His meticulous attention to detail, and will leave us breathless.

All of heaven is *for* us. Imagine.

What joy when the breakthrough finally comes! What a blessing when He reminds us that He keeps His promises.

Yet how do we navigate *before* the breakthrough comes? What are we to do with our disappointments? How are we to frame our heartbreaks in light of God's promises?

Righteous and barren. Honorable and heartbroken. It's hard to put such words together.

Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations.

They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old.

Luke 1:6–7

Zechariah and Elizabeth loved God and honored Him with their lives, even though their quiet home reminded them daily that God hadn't come through for them in the way they had hoped.

What happens in your heart when God doesn't give you what you want? Do you loosen your grip on what you know to be true? Do you wander from the very things that keep your soul free and whole? Especially at Christmastime, we tend to gravitate toward indulgence because we prefer to feel a surface level of happiness rather than to acknowledge the pain buried beneath the surface.

But the loving voice of our Savior beckons us back to honesty so He can lead us to a better place of hopeful expectancy. He never overlooks our prayers or underestimates our worth. He delights in every detail of our lives. Confident hope is our birthright when we belong to Him.

Elizabeth and Zechariah were people of depth and conviction. They honored God with their lives even though (it seemed) He hadn't heard their prayer.

But then one day their story took a turn. And, *as it happened* . . . Don't you just love that phrase? I would like to study every "as it happened" moment in Scripture. I wonder if I'd find stories of God's people faithfully tending to their

God-given duties, unsuspecting of the sudden shift in the spiritual atmosphere.

God ordained it one day for Zechariah to enter the Temple to offer sacrifices. I'm not sure what Zechariah expected, but I think it's safe to say he was not at all prepared for what was about to happen. Zechariah was alone. And then he wasn't. Right before his eyes an angel of the Lord visibly appeared and spoke audibly to Zechariah. Not a dream or vision. This happened!

Try to imagine Zechariah's response. His cheeks flushed, his heart raced, and he forgot to breathe. Zechariah was shaken to his core and overwhelmed with fear. Think about it. Even though Zechariah righteously loved and honored God, he was speechless when God finally moved miraculously in his life.

I wish I could have overheard Zechariah's prayers when he wasn't at the temple, could have seen how he turned his eyes upward from time to time. Zechariah kept his heart engaged with the things of God. That's a big deal when your story hasn't turned out as you'd hoped.

While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. 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. You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth."

Luke 1:11-14

The angel Gabriel not only announced the promise that this dear couple would have a son, but that this boy would be great in the eyes of God, filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth! Marked by the spirit and power of Elijah, John would prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. John's holy influence would turn the hearts of fathers to their children. Imagine. His humble, holy presence on the earth would cause the rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.

Even though God delays, He delivers.

The Lord then sent Gabriel on another assignment: to Nazareth. Gabriel appeared before Mary and called her highly favored of God. He announced that she would give birth to a son, the Son of the Most High God.

The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. For the word of God will never fail."

Luke 1:35–37

People used to say Elizabeth was barren. But no more.

Do you believe God is capable of changing the narrative of your story? Can you embrace the idea that He wants to do such a thing for you?

What if you engaged your faith this Advent season? Decided to believe for the impossible? Prioritized things you know are necessary? And what if you dared to lift your requests before the Lord? Are you ready to dream again? It's time for expectancy to make a comeback.

Step out of the hustle-bustle of the season. Find a quiet place to rest and reflect. What comes to the surface for you? How have your delays impacted you? Are you mad? Sad? Expectant and glad? Most of us tend to

It takes great maturity to embrace holy contentment and holy expectancy simultaneously.

loosen our grip when we lose heart, yet this is precisely the time to lean in and engage your faith and dare to believe once more. It takes great maturity to embrace holy contentment and holy expectancy simultaneously. Great things happen in the

heart of one who holds fast to faith, peace, and gratitude, all mixed with an essential dose of expectant hope.

Though God often answers our prayers in ways different than we ever expect, He will answer. He's Emmanuel.

God is *with you*. Go about your daily duties with a renewed awareness of God's presence. Be joyful. And thankful. Embrace expectancy. And when God moves in and upon your circumstances, dare to pray what Mary prayed:

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true."

Luke 1:38

PREPARE HIM ROOM

Lord, I am Your servant. May everything You've said about me come true. May everything You want for me become my reality. Show me my self-limiting thoughts. Reveal to me my own God-limiting beliefs. Nothing is too complicated for You! I don't want a rat-race holiday. I want to be present with You this Christmas season. I will look for You. I'll listen to You. I'll live with expectancy because of You. O come, Thou long-expected Savior. My soul waits for You. Amen.

LOOK UP

Fast from impatience and discontentment. Pursue God until you come to a place of holy contentment mixed with holy expectancy. His grace abounds for you here.



Day 2

THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD



Today's Reading: Luke 2

OTHER PASSAGES TO PONDER

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. —Romans 5:1–2

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created

us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. —Ephesians 2:8–10

The entire universe worships the King of kings—but as humans, we often miss out on this privilege. We're often so focused on ourselves that we become prideful, angry, and annoyed with others, especially in the busyness of the holiday season. Today, take your eyes off yourself, and fix your gaze on the King of Glory. Worship Him today. —Asheritah Ciuciu¹

Over two thousand years ago, shepherds stood on a hillside as they had done countless times before. They were most likely guarding sheep that would later serve as a sacrifice at the temple. Imagine what a night's work might look like for them. The stars overhead, the moon shining brightly; animal noises fill the air as the shepherds banter back and forth. Here again, you find unsuspecting souls going about their daily duties, unaware that heaven is about to invade earth.

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes,

the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.”

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom God is
pleased.”

Luke 2:8–14

The first Christmas was anything *but* commercialized, hurried, or overdone. Jesus came into the world through the womb of a poor, teenage girl, was born in a cave and placed in an animal trough. The world didn’t make room for Him. Still, heaven celebrated Him. Those with ears bent toward heaven discerned Jesus’ presence on the earth. The power of the Most High God rested upon this little makeshift gathering of shepherds, a baby, and His young parents. But much of the world missed Him then just as many in the world miss Him now. Yet He came to us anyway. What a gift God’s given us!

Interestingly, as Jesus grew up, some recognized Him immediately because they’d been waiting for Him. Others actually observed His miracles, watched Him fulfill prophecies before their very eyes, and still refused to believe. Every heart needs Him. Few are willing to receive Him.

In her Bible study *Secrets Jesus Shared*, Jennifer Kennedy Dean writes,

Every step that Jesus took on Planet Earth, the spiritual realm was shouting: “This is what God is like!” As He healed and taught and touched and laughed and loved, “This is what God is like!” As He hung broken on the cross, “This is what God is like!” When He rose from the grave and triumphed over death, “This is what God is like!”²

Have you noticed it? Celebrities, pop stars, and high-level leaders typically have an entourage to serve them, to anticipate and meet their needs. Someone to cook, clean, run errands, or run interference. Imagine what that would do to your ego if you had people to open doors, serve you food, and treat you like you’re more important than they are.

Many in positions of power or prosperity leverage their privilege in a way that benefits them even if it unfairly costs another.

Before there was time, there was Jesus. Every created thing came through Him. He is the star-breathing God, the King of the universe, and the Savior of the world. Yet Jesus did not even consider equality with God something to manipulate for His benefit. He did precisely the opposite. Jesus leveraged His status as God because He could, for our benefit. And it cost Him His life.

Prideful people won't even wait on hold unless they'll be talking to someone more prideful and vital than themselves. But Jesus stands at the door of your heart and knocks. And waits. And lets you decide if you'll let Him in.³ Asheritah Ciuciu writes,

We do not trifle with a weakling, nor do we worship an incompetent wannabe rock star. We worship the King of kings who deserves all the honor and glory, and continually receives it from the heavens, creation, angels, and the chorus of His redeemed. Who is this King of Glory? His name is Jesus.⁴

*The Christmas
story isn't old news.
It's good news.
It's NOW news!*

The King of the universe is not a tyrannical leader. He's the Savior of the world. The Christmas story isn't old news. It's good news. It's *now* news! Salvation is not just an addendum to the end of your life, and Christmas isn't just a quaint little story. When Jesus was born, God's kingdom came to earth!

Don't let another moment pass by without giving God the glory He deserves. He sent His Son to die in your place. Celebrate with joy. Give meaningful gifts to those you love. Help the poor. And enjoy a good party. But *refuse* to let the commercialism of Christmas quench the true spirit of this earth-shaking holiday. Jesus came, and He's coming again. Oh, worship the King of Glory, for He has done great things.

PREPARE HIM ROOM

Jesus, my Savior, You came! You saw a world desperately in need, and You came. I receive Your gift of grace. I believe You died in my place. Forgive me of my sins, cleanse me from all unrighteousness, fill me with the power of the Holy Spirit, and show me how to live in a manner worthy of Your name. The holidays quickly become self-indulgent noise if You're not in them. Fill my home, my family, and my heart with the wonder of Your love and presence. Amen.

LOOK UP

Fast today from a shallow commercialized holiday. Refuse to get weighed down by temporary circumstances. Consider the heavenly wonder that surrounds this actual celebration. Marvel that Jesus came to earth on a rescue mission with you on His mind. Rejoice!