



DAY 1

Hope in the Lord

*Be strong and take heart, all you
who hope in the LORD.*

PSALM 31:24



*W*hat must have been going on in Mary's heart the night the angel came to deliver the message that she, an innocent young girl, would bring the Savior into the world?

My three girls are much older than Mary was at the time the angel brought this shocking news. I wonder what each of my daughters would have done or said if an angel had come to one of them and said she had been chosen to bear God's Son. What would have gone through her mind?

The obedience Mary displayed, plus her strength and hope in the Lord, are astonishing and admirable. Can you imagine

this young girl going back to her family to tell them the news? She must have been terrified to face all the questions she knew would be coming . . . anxious about Joseph’s reaction . . . fearful of judgment during that time in history. She would have needed great strength to face so many unknowns.

..... ✨

**HE IS FAITHFUL
TODAY AND
ALWAYS.**

..... ✨

We learn that Mary was “highly favored” by God (Luke 1:28). God saw her heart, a heart that hoped in the Lord, and He was faithful to her throughout her life.

God sees the hearts of His people too. He is faithful today and always.

You might be going through a season where you need to be strong in the Lord, where you need to take heart and know that He goes before you and will be your hope in this world. Spend time today pondering what it means to take heart, to be one whose hope is in the Lord.

Early in this Advent season, let’s pause and pray to the One who brings hope—right in the season *you’re* in today.



Dear Lord,

This is the first day of Advent . . . a time of waiting . . . a time of expectation. I pray that You would go before me this day and keep my eyes fixed on You and the mighty promises You have for my life. Where there is doubt, Lord, I pray that You would turn it into trust. Where there is pain, Lord, wrap Your arms around me and carry me through. You and You alone are my strength, and I will find rest in You. Today, Lord, my hope is in You. Thank You for walking alongside me, and thank You for Your promises.

*In the name of Jesus,
Amen.*





DAY 2

Be Not Afraid

Lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"

ISAIAH 40:9



I don't know about you, but the global COVID-19 pandemic and the years since have been so strange for me. The fear, the sadness, the misinformation at times, the unknown—it's all been overwhelming and jarring.

My mom, who is a mighty prayer warrior, always talks about "the woes of the world," increasingly so in the past few years. I do believe we are living in some surreal times that aren't in line with biblical truth, but what I always tell my mom is that God is on the throne with Jesus at His side. They aren't up in heaven, pacing back and forth, wondering what to do

next. They are seated and victorious, watching what we do on this earth.

Are we wearing out the soles of our shoes as we anxiously worry about what's happening in the world? Or are we trusting in

the Lord and putting our hope in Him? Are we acting based on what we hear in the news, or are we turning to God's Word and trusting Him for all things? Are we heeding the command that appears so many times: "Fear not"?

Today, I pray that you would set aside anything that worries you, anything that fills your heart with anxiety. I pray that

you would surrender those things to the Lord, who is seated on His throne and waiting for you to turn to Him. The Son He delivered to us will calm your fears, quiet your mind, and bring you hope.

..... ✨

**THE SON HE
DELIVERED TO US
WILL CALM YOUR
FEARS, QUIET
YOUR MIND, AND
BRING YOU HOPE.**

..... ✨



Dear Lord,

I surrender my heart to You today. Anything and everything that might be weighing me down, Lord, I surrender to You. I choose to trust in You and Your Word. I choose to cling to hope even though everywhere I look seems hopeless. Bring peace in the midst of the storm. I give You glory for what You've done and for what You will continue to do. You are my strength and my hope. I will cling to that today, no matter what.

*In the name of Jesus,
Amen.*





DAY 3

Overflowing

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ROMANS 15:13



Even though I grew up in the church, I didn't know much about the Holy Spirit. My mom was "baptized in the Holy Spirit" when I was a teenager and consequently dragged my sister and me to some healing services where people spoke in tongues. As a teenager I was mortified by this seemingly strange behavior and had no idea what was going on. But as an adult, when I had a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit, my perspective on Him changed completely. I was awed by the power of the Holy Spirit, His presence, His ability to touch me in real and powerful ways.

The Holy Spirit's role in the Trinity, not only during the Advent season but every day, is so integral to our lives as believers. The Trinity is, admittedly, a difficult concept to grasp, but I used to explain it to my children when they were younger in this way: Visualize God as if He were the three components of water—liquid, ice, and steam. The Trinity is similar; it is three different parts but the same thing: God the Father, God the

Son, and God the Holy Spirit. What an incredible gift to humankind—that we have access to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all the time!

Years ago, I had a surreal moment while visiting Turkey, when I stood in the very same church where the Nicene Creed was written and where it had been

agreed upon that the Trinity consisted of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Chills ran down my spine as I stood inside those ancient walls. I could feel the Spirit's power then, just as I can now.

Spend time today opening your hands and your heart and surrendering to the Holy Spirit. I pray that He will pour forth into your life and empower you in all that you do and that He will be your hope this season.

..... ✨
**HE WILL BE
YOUR HOPE
THIS SEASON.**
..... ✨



Lord,

I open my hands today to receive the Holy Spirit as a gift to me from You. I empty every part of my being in order to be filled with the power and the hope of the Holy Spirit, from the tips of my toes to the top of my head. Lord, fill me up. Fill me until I am overflowing. Cleanse my heart of any doubt. Cleanse my heart of anything that would hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in my life. In faith I receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and trust that You will empower me on this faith journey.

*In the name of Jesus,
Amen.*





DAY 4

Refuge in His Word

*You are my refuge and my shield; I
have put my hope in your word.*

PSALM 119:114



I will never forget when my mom became a born-again believer. I was fifteen years old, and she would tell me to open my Bible to any random page and just read what God wanted to say to me. Just open the Bible, point, and read.

This may not be your approach to reading the Bible, but looking back on that practice, I can see how God does speak through His Word in even the simplest of ways—and especially for those new to opening a Bible in the first place. God’s Word is not confined by a reading plan! It is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12).

On the days when I need most to seek the Lord's refuge, there is no better starting point than opening up my Bible. I go to His Word on a daily basis, document what is going on in my life, mark the highs and lows and everything in between as I drink of God's truth. I pray that all of my many Bibles, scattered all over my house, will be a legacy for my children. I hope some-

day they will open the pages and see my handwritten prayers and pleas to God—how I needed Him to be my refuge and my shield for my marriage, my children, our circumstances, anything that I was going through. I hope they see how I clung to His Word.

Many of my notes are in the Psalms, a source of great hope for

me. My practice is to read a psalm, allow God's Word to sink deep within my soul, and then journal my pains, my hopes, and my dreams.

This Advent, whatever season you might be going through—loss, despair, wonder, joy—my prayer is that you would open up His Word and find hope. Make notes in the margins of your Bible so you can go back later and see the hand of God moving in your life. He is your shield and refuge—today and always.

..... ✨

**HE IS YOUR
SHIELD AND
REFUGE—TODAY
AND ALWAYS.**

..... ✨



Dear Lord,

Your Word is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword. I come to You today with an expectant heart, believing that You will speak to me through Your Word. I pray that You would comfort me, that You would guide me, that You would show me the way in which I should go. Speak to me through Your living Word. And when I don't understand, I pray that the power of the Holy Spirit would reveal Your truth in my life. Today, as I go about my day, I pray that You would give me a word to cling to—a promise that You have for me. Let me find refuge in You and Your unfailing love.

In the name of Jesus,

Amen.

