



*And the  
glory  
of God  
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around  
them.*

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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

DR. BRIAN SIMMONS with JEREMY BOUMA

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## AND THE GLORY OF GOD SHONE AROUND THEM

Advent Devotional

Property of BroadStreet Publishing. Do not duplicate.  
By Dr. Brian Simmons with Jeremy Bouma

Inspired by *The Passion Translation* by Dr. Brian Simmons  
[www.thepassiontranslation.com](http://www.thepassiontranslation.com)

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## INTRODUCTION

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I just love the Christmas season! Do you? What I love even more is the story behind the season, the story of Jesus—the reason for the season, as they say. This is why I'm thrilled to share with you these twenty-one devotionals. Each one is inspired by the passionate love story of Jesus to guide your celebration of his birth.

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As you allow these words to warm you this Christmas season, walk in the hope Joseph had when Gabriel visited him; rest in the peace Mary experienced when she was told she'd bear the Son of God; join her in shouting for joy in praise of the mighty Miracle Worker; and delight in God's furious, passionate love—a love so big and wide and deep that he sent his loving Son to suffer and die in your place.

Advent is a season to both celebrate Jesus' first coming and prepare for his second. I trust these encouraging words about the birth of God's Son will help you prepare him room this Christmas season—in your life, your home, your heart.

Now, let heaven and nature sing in celebration of our loving King!



## WHAT IS THIS DEVOTIONAL, AND HOW SHOULD I USE IT?

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It's the most wonderful time of the year!"

The 1960s pop singer Andy Williams perfectly captures the emotion many of us feel during the Christmas season with his hit song of the same title. It really is the most wonderful, magical time of the year, isn't?

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There's something about this season that makes people come alive, that draws out the inner child of even the "Scroogiest" of adults.

Perhaps it's how the snow transforms any landscape into an epic fairytale land.

Perhaps it's the smell of fresh-baked gingerbread out of the oven or a stew that's been simmering in the Crock-Pot all day. Or the taste of hot cocoa with a candy cane perched on the side.

Perhaps it's seeing the face of a child light up when she opens up that *one* present she's been dreaming about all winter long.

Of course as Christians, we know why it's so wonderful. The angels said it best: "Glory to God in the highest realms of heaven! For there is peace and a good hope given to the sons of men" (Luke 2:14).

Christmas time is the most wonderful time because a peace and a good hope have been gifted to humanity by the God of the universe! In fact, this peace and good hope were wrapped in the unlikeliest of ways: flesh and blood. Here is how the apostle John speaks about this gift:

He was not born by the joining of human parents  
or from natural means, or by a man's desire,

but he was born of God.

And so the Living Expression

became a man and lived among us!

And we gazed upon the splendor of his glory,

the glory of the One and Only

who came from the Father overflowing

with tender mercy and truth! (John 1:13-14)

This is the most wonderful time of the year because it is the time when God came to us by becoming one of us. And it is this gift, this coming, that we celebrate during this sacred season of Advent.

The term Advent may be unfamiliar to you. It is this time of anticipation and preparation that begins the Christian

liturgical calendar and includes the four Sundays before Christmas. The name comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming.” During the Advent season, Christians prepare for the different “comings” of Christ—first as a baby born to take away the sins of the world, and second as the victorious King come again to put the world to rights.

If your particular Christian tradition celebrates Advent then you are already familiar with the Advent wreath and four candles, which help the church celebrate Christ’s first coming: hope, peace, joy, and love. Each Sunday, a new candle is lit and a new theme is unpacked to help Christians reflect upon Christ’s birth. It is this practice that inspired this Advent devotional using a faithful and fresh, reliable and relevant new translation of the Bible, *The Passion Translation*.

*The Passion Translation* is a groundbreaking attempt to reintroduce the passion and fire of the Bible to the English reader. It doesn’t merely convey the original, literal meaning of words. It expresses God’s passion for people and his world by translating the original, life-changing message of God’s Word for modern readers.

God longs to have his Word expressed in every language in a way that would unlock the “passion” of his heart. Our goal is to trigger inside every English speaker an overwhelming response to the truth of the Bible, unfiltered by religious jargon. This is a heart-level translation, from the passion of

God's heart to the passion of your heart. And we've put this devotional together to help introduce you to it in a way that will bless your walk through the Christmas season.

This book is organized around the four weeks of Advent and its themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. Each week begins with a Psalm reading and section of the Christmas narrative from either Luke or Matthew, which coincides with the Advent readings of the liturgical calendar. You can choose to read the selection of Scripture at the beginning of the week on Monday, or do so at the start of each day. You'll find a short devotional along with Scripture passages from *The Passion Translation* for five days of the week, Monday through Friday, which are based on those Scripture readings. Christmas Eve (or Christmas Day, depending how you want to use it) has its own special reading and devotional.

We trust this version of God's Word will kindle in you a burning, passionate desire for him and his heart, while influencing the church for years to come. We also pray this Advent devotional will encourage and inspire your faith in the One who came to rescue us and the One who will come again to create us anew!

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WEEK ONE



*Hope*

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## *Week One*

# SCRIPTURE READINGS

### PSALM 80:1-7, 17-19

<sup>1</sup> God-Enthroned, be revealed in splendor

as you ride upon the cherubim!

How perfectly you lead us, a people set free.

Loving shepherd of Israel—listen to our hearts' cry!

Shine forth from your throne of dazzling light.

<sup>2</sup> In the sight of Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh,

stir up your mighty power in full display before

our eyes.

Break through and reveal yourself by coming to

our rescue.

<sup>3</sup> Revive us, O God! Let your beaming face shine

upon us

with the sunrise rays of glory;

then nothing will be able to stop us.

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<sup>4</sup> O God, the mighty Commander of Angel Armies,  
how much longer will you smolder in anger?  
How much longer will you be disgusted with  
your people  
even when they pray?

<sup>5</sup> You have fed us with sorrow and grief  
and made us drink our tears by the bowlful.

<sup>6</sup> You've made us a thorn in the side of all the  
neighboring lands,  
and now they just laugh at us with their mocking  
scorn.

<sup>7</sup> Come back, come back, O God, and restore us!

You are the Commander of Angel Armies.

Let your beaming face shine upon us with the sunrise  
rays of glory,

and then nothing will be able to stop us!

<sup>17</sup> Strengthen this Branch-Man, the Son of your love,  
the Son of Man who dwells at your right hand.

<sup>18</sup> Then we will never turn back from you.

Revive us again, that we may trust in you.

<sup>19</sup> O God, the mighty Commander of Angel Armies,  
come back and rescue us!

Let your beaming face shine upon us  
with the sunrise rays of glory.

Then nothing will ever stop us again!

## MATTHEW 1

### *From Abraham to Christ*

<sup>1</sup> This is the scroll of the lineage and birth of Jesus, the Anointed One, the son of David and descendant of Abraham.

<sup>2</sup> Abraham had a son named Isaac, who had a son named Jacob, who had a son named Judah (he and his brothers became the tribes of Israel).

<sup>3</sup> Judah and Tamar had twin sons, Perez and Zerah. Perez had a son named Hezron, who had a son named Ram, <sup>4</sup> who had a son named Amminadab, who had a son named Nashon, <sup>5</sup> who had a son named Salmon, who, along with Rahab, had a son named Boaz. Boaz and Ruth had a son named Obed, who was the father of Jesse, <sup>6</sup> and Jesse had a son named David, who became the king.

<sup>7</sup> Then David and Bathsheba had a son named Solomon, who had a son named Rehoboam, who had a son named Abijah, who had a son named Asa, <sup>8</sup> who had a son named Jehoshaphat, who had a son named Joram, who had a son named Uzziah, <sup>9</sup> who had a son named Jotham, who had a son named Ahaz, who had a son named Hezekiah, <sup>10</sup> who had a son named Manasseh, who had a son named Amos, who had a son named Josiah, <sup>11</sup> who was the father of Jeconiah.

It was during the days of Jeconiah and his brothers that Israel was taken captive and deported to Babylon. <sup>12</sup> About the time of their captivity in Babylon, Jeconiah had a son named

Shealtiel, who had a son named Zerubbabel,<sup>13</sup> who had a son named Abiud, who had a son named Eliakim,<sup>14</sup> who had a son named Azor, who had a son named Zadok, who had a son named Achim, who had a son named Eliud,<sup>15</sup> who had a son named Eleazar, who had a son named Matthan, who had a son named Jacob,<sup>16</sup> who was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary the mother of Jesus, who is called “the Anointed One.”

<sup>17</sup> So from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the Babylonian captivity, fourteen generations, and from the Babylonian captivity to Christ, fourteen generations.

### *An Angel Comes to Joseph*

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<sup>18</sup> This was how Jesus, God's Anointed One, was born.

His mother, Mary, had promised Joseph to be his wife, but while she was still a virgin she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> Her fiancé, Joseph, was a righteous man full of integrity and he didn't want to disgrace her, but when he learned of her pregnancy he secretly planned to break the engagement.<sup>20</sup> While he was still debating with himself about what to do, he fell asleep and had a supernatural dream. An angel from the Lord appeared to him in clear light and said, “Joseph, descendant of David, don't hesitate to take Mary into your home as your wife, because the power of the Holy Spirit has conceived a child in her womb.<sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son and you are to name him ‘Savior,’ for he

is destined to give his life to save his people from their sins.”

<sup>22</sup> This happened so that what the Lord spoke through his prophet would come true:

<sup>23</sup> Listen! A virgin will be pregnant,  
she will give birth to a Son,  
and he will be known as “Emmanuel,”  
which means in Hebrew,  
“God became one of us.”

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from his dream, he did all that the angel of the Lord instructed him to do. He took Mary to be his wife, <sup>25</sup> but they refrained from having sex until she gave birth to her son, whom they named “Jesus.”

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## NOTHING WILL BE ABLE TO STOP US!

(Psalm 80:1–7)

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Throughout history—even during Christmastime—the church of Jesus Christ has cried out to God during times of persecution, decline, and internal strife.

Under the Roman Emperor Nero, Christians suffered immense persecution—being burned at the stake to light his courtyards, crucified on crosses lining Roman highways, and murdered in the Colosseum to the delight of Roman citizens. They cried out, “Why, Lord?”

During the second through fifth centuries, the early church experienced intense internal strife because of false teachers bent on warping the message of Christ and his church. Leaders like Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Augustine all asked, “Why, God?”

During the Middle Ages, Muslim hordes butchered and ransacked Christian towns, churches, and holy sites throughout Northern Africa, the Middle East, and much of Europe. And the collective Body of Christ wondered, “Why?”

Then, during the Great Awakenings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of America, the likes of Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, and D.L. Moody cried out to God to revive the churches and her members, wondering why the “city on a hill” of religious freedom known as America had become watered down.

More recently, Western churches are mourning their demise and praying for a restoration of the great times of the past. The world-wide church is asking the question the people of God have asked for millennium: “Why, Lord?”

The same was true of Israel’s story too, which Psalm 80 represents. This song of lament was a prayer members of tribes of Judah offered up to God. They were in decline, they were in trouble, they had been rejected by God because of rebellion.

Sounds familiar, doesn’t it?

And so the people of God got on their knees and sang or said this psalm as a prayer, asking the “Loving Shepherd of Israel [to] listen to our hearts’ cry!”

They wanted him to “stir up your mighty power” and “break through and reveal yourself by coming to our rescue.”

They longed for God to “revive us,” to “let your beaming face shine upon us with the sunrise rays of glory.”

Because if he did, “Then nothing will be able to stop us.”

This same song and prayer was probably on the lips of Jews living in Palestine under Roman occupation two thousand years ago too.

They were in decline, in trouble, they hadn’t heard from God in nearly four centuries, and they were waiting for the Anointed One—the “Branch-Man, the Son of your love, the Son of Man who dwells at your right hand” (Ps. 80:17).

God promised this One would come to save them, rescue them, and put them back together again.

And guess what? He did!

The Branch-Man did come to revive and rescue, but not just Israel. For as Luke wrote, “The Son of Man has come to seek out and to give life to those who are lost” (Luke 19:10). All the lost, not just lost Israel.

As the church looks around us this Christmas season, we may feel like Israel felt: we’re in decline, we’re in trouble, our nation needs restoration. While we could pray this prayer along with Israel, the truth is God fulfilled their hearts’ cry—and ours!

The promised Branch-Man came in full glory and power to reveal God, rescue, revive, and restore us.

And because he did, nothing can ever stop us—not even

the power of death will be able to overpower the church (Matt. 16:18).

## *Advent Prayer of Hope*

*Commander of Angel-Armies, while things may seem hopeless for your people, remind us this Christmas season that your Branch-Man, the Son of your love and the One who dwells at your right hand, has come in full glory and power to reveal, rescue, revive, and restore!*

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Day 2

## EVERY GREAT STORY HAS A GREAT BEGINNING

(Matthew 1:1–17)

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Think about your favorite stories and how they begin.

For Charles Dickens, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” “Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy,” opens *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. A recent favorite opener is probably this one: “Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much”—which introduced a generation to Harry Potter.

Every great story has a great beginning. The story of Jesus is no different, yet most of us miss its significance. Check out its first line:

“This is the scroll of the lineage and birth of Jesus, the Anointed One, the son of David and descendant of Abraham.”

There are two things to notice here. The first is that the gospel of Matthew is a “scroll of the lineage and birth of Jesus, the Anointed One.” Another way of translating this is “the book of the origin of Jesus Christ.” *Lineage* and *origin* are connected to the Greek word *geneleos*, which is where we get *Genesis*.

Matthew wants us to do a Genesis double take. He wants us to remember the original creation and what happened shortly thereafter—mainly our rebellion against our Creator—but then look to the *re*-creation happening in Jesus. In other words, the broken, busted original creation is being re-created anew through Jesus, the Anointed One!

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What's remarkable about this story and its beginning is that it doesn't begin here at all but, well, back at the beginning—which Matthew helps us remember by tracing Jesus' story back to David and through to Abraham.

After humanity ruined creation by rebelling against God, he got to work to make things right again by choosing a man named Abraham to be the vessel through which the Lord would bless all peoples on earth. He formed a relationship with Abraham and his offspring, which he renewed with David along with a promise of an heir who would establish his reign and God's promises forever.

Matthew's genealogy presents the legal claim of Jesus to

be King through the lineage of David from Joseph all the way back to the promises given to Abraham.

The beginning of Jesus' story reminds us that God made good on his plan and promise to rescue this world and put it back together again, which should give us hope. Because no matter how dark things look and tough things get, God has a plan. He also has a number of promises, which he will fulfill for you—just like he did for his own Son.

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## *Advent Prayer of Hope*

*God, this Christmas season I am thankful that you had a plan from the beginning to rescue and re-create the world. Remind me of this when things look dark and things get tough. Amen.*