



BELKIS LEHMANN

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# *Great is Your Faithfulness*

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AN ADVENT CELEBRATION  
OF GOD'S CHARACTER REVEALED  
IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY



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## WHY CELEBRATE ADVENT?

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Christmas is the time of the year when we rejoice that God sent his Son into the world to usher in his kingdom. The birth of the Messiah was the culmination of thousands of years of promises and preparation by our Father to restore his rule and reign by redeeming humanity from flesh, sin, and the devil.

Unfortunately, Christmas has become increasingly more about materialism and less about redemption. The word Advent means coming or “arrival”. The season of Advent is a celebration of the birth of the Messiah in His First Advent and the expectation of the return of our “Conquering King” in this Second Advent. It is more than looking back at an event that happened 2,000 years ago. It is the observance of God’s redemption story past, present, and future.

In Advent, we affirm that God sent his Messiah, that He is at work in the world today through his Spirit, and that He will return again in power. These are core truths of our faith. As we celebrate God becoming flesh and entering our history, we anticipate the time when he will come again and every eye will see Him. At the same time, we acknowledge our responsibility in the present, to be God’s people of the future today and His ambassadors to those who don’t yet know him.

Through Advent we celebrate God’s faithfulness by taking time to remind ourselves how he has meticulously worked through the centuries to open a door to his kingdom to all nations. As we review the glorious history of redemption, we rediscover God anew as we see his character revealed in his plan. As we recount what he has done, we discover ourselves in his story. This inspires us with the courage we need to do His will until His next advent.

## USING THIS BOOKLET

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Advent usually begins the Sunday after Thanksgiving. This booklet includes material for each week of Advent and Christmas Day. Our focus is for you and your family to discover how God works to bring about his plans and purposes in the world and your life as you read through the Christmas story.

Each week includes:

- A short reading for younger children
- A long reading for adults and older children
- A lesson to read aloud or share in your own words
- An opportunity to share your own story
- A suggested prayer focus
- A suggested Christmas carol

Each lesson centers around an attribute of God as revealed in the Christmas story, in the story of redemption, and in our lives today. These three levels of understanding will help you see how what happened 2,000 years ago connects to your life today. As you read through each lesson, keep an eye out for these different levels.







## THE ADVENT WREATH

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The lighting of the Advent candles is a fun and symbolic worship experience each member of the family can participate in. A basic Advent wreath consists of a circle with four candles with one candle in the middle. It may be garnished with holly or pine boughs. Traditionally, three of the candles in the circle are purple, one is pink and the center candle is white. It is called the Christ candle. We don't always follow this pattern. Feel free to use whatever colors you think will communicate to your family. We usually use three purple, one red, and one white candle.





## WEEK 1: GOD REMEMBERS

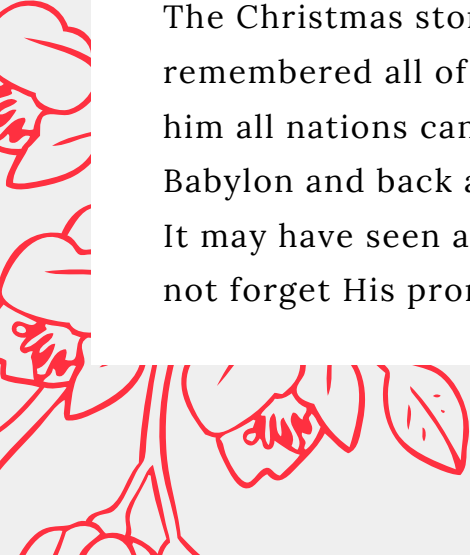
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Short Reading: Luke 1:5-14, 57-58

Long Reading: Luke 1:5-25, 57-80

The account of the birth of John the Baptist is one of the most beautiful in all of history. Like Abraham and Sarah of old, Zechariah and Elizabeth had no child. Though they were righteous servants of the Lord, and had obviously prayed for many years, their prayers, it seemed, were not to be answered. They'd apparently given up hope and simply gone on with their lives. Then one day the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah as he was carrying out his priestly duties. You'd think he would have been in a spiritual mindset. Yet both the angel's appearing and the message he shared overwhelmed him. He couldn't believe what the angel had to say. His faith had run out long ago. After years of petitioning prayer, he probably felt forgotten by God. Though he went on with his religious practice, he no longer expected God to respond. He gave up. God had forgotten about it, so would he. Yet, God never forgot. God remembered. In God's perfect timing, their prayers were answered.

God remembers! Just like he remembered Abraham and Sarah, he remembered Zechariah and Elizabeth.



Our Father is a God who remembers. When he makes a promise, he keeps it. The Christmas story is proof of this beautiful character quality. He remembered all of humanity by sending His Son into the world so that through him all nations can be reconciled to him. From the garden, to Egypt, to Babylon and back again, God promised redemption, redemption, redemption. It may have seen a long time coming. Many may have given up, but God does not forget His promises or our prayers. He remembered and sent his Son.

Is there a promise you're still waiting on God for? Don't give up! He remembers! Keep praying. Keep believing. Though circumstances can beat up your faith. Put your confidence in his steadfast faithfulness that always remembers. "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15). We are confident he hears us, cares for us, and will return, because He remembers.

**Your story:** Share a time you felt forgotten by God and what happened to show you that he did indeed remember you.

**Light:** Light the first candle "God remembers"

**Pray:** Express your thanksgiving to God for his faithfulness. He does not forget but always remembers. Renew old requests, that you might have given up hoping for and let the Lord know that you trust in his faithfulness.

**Suggested Carol:** Joy to The World. We rejoice that "the Lord is come." God has remembered us and will continue to do so.





## WEEK 2: GOD CHOOSES


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Short Reading: Luke 1:26-33

Long Reading: Luke 1:26-56, Matthew 1:18-25

In his plan to bring forth his Son into the world, God used incredibly average people: a young Jewish girl and carpenter. Mary was a young girl about to be married. When along came an angel and gave her some news. How did she feel about this news? To be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah was an amazing honor. Yet, it came at a great cost. She would be labeled a law breaker, and could potentially be stoned. Even if the worst did not happen, she would most likely lose the man she would soon marry.

Joseph too had a cost to bear. If he took Mary to be his wife, he would live the rest of his life under the shadow of gossip. Today, Joseph and Mary are known the world over, not because they were smarter, richer, or more talented than their contemporaries, but because God chose them. Not only that, they responded to his commission with complete obedience even though they probably did not really understand what was being asked of them. They simply obeyed.



The history of redemption is one marked by God's choosing and humanity's obedience. God chose Abraham, Moses, Miriam, David, Deborah, Paul, Augustine, Jarena Lee, William Seymour, Gladys Aylward, you and me. All those chosen of the Father had a cost to pay. In any situation in life, being chosen is an honor and accepting that honor always comes with a cost. How much more of an honor is it to be chosen to be a part of God's own family. He chooses. He calls. We obey. Like David we insist on paying and not giving to God what costs us nothing (2 Samuel 24:24)





**Your Story:** Share an example of how God chose you and called you to himself.

**Light:** Light the first candle “God remembers”, and the second candle “God chooses”

**Pray:** Thank the Father for choosing you, calling you out of darkness and into his marvelous light. Commit yourself again to complete obedience in whatever he asks of you so that you too can be part of bringing redemption to others.

**Suggested Carol:** What Child is This? As you sing this song, pay close attention to the line in “The Babe the Son of Mary.” He who is the Son of God is also called, “The Son of Mary.” What great privilege God gives us as He chooses us to be a part of his redemption plan.



## WEEK 3: GOD ORCHESTRATES

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Short Reading: Luke 2:1-7


Long Reading: Luke 2:1-7, 22-40

God had spoken through the prophet Micah that he would give the little town of Bethlehem the privilege of being the birthplace of His Messiah. Yet, he choose a girl who lived in Nazareth to be his mother. How could God reconcile these two divergent elements to accomplish his will? Luke tells us that “In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.)” Notice the detail he uses. After all, he was dating the birth of a king. “And everyone went to their own town to registered.” What a simple little phrase that tells us how God orchestrated bringing his Son to Bethlehem to be born.

Biblical history is filled with God’s orchestration of events, situations, and circumstances. He moves through apparently unrelated elements. He uses those who do not even know him to place his servants in the center of His will. He is Sovereign over everything!

“But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship” (Galatians 4:4-5). Jesus was born at the exact right time in history. God orchestrated world events so that the news of Jesus could spread to all nations.





Jesus was born during the famed “Pax Romana,” the Roman peace that spread across the Mediterranean world. You've heard the phrase “all roads lead to Rome.” That statement was literally true. The Romans had built a road system that stretched from Rome in all directions. These roads, combined with the Roman peace and the Greek language that had become common throughout the empire, created the perfect conditions to spread the gospel throughout the entire Roman empire and beyond.

Today God continues to orchestrate events and situations to bring about his will in this world and in our lives. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). No matter the obstacle, God can and does orchestrate what needs to change so that what he desires will come to pass. We can have full confidence as we look around that He is orchestrating the events of this world for Jesus’ Second Advent. Are you dismayed by the news, the state of your country, or your family? Pray his kingdom come! God can and does orchestrate. Believe it!

**Your Story:** Share an example of how God has orchestrated events to place you in His will.

**Light:** Light the first candle “God remembers,” the second candle “God chooses,” and the third candle “God orchestrates”

**Pray:** Thank God for working in your life. Pray for those situations that need his orchestration. Pray his kingdom come and his will be done.

**Suggested Carol:** O Little Town Of Bethlehem, As you sing this song think about how God moved on the heart of a pagan Caesar to proclaim a census that would compel Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem. He used this pagan King to fulfill his promise to David and this city.



## WEEK 4: GOD REVEALS

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Short Reading: Luke 2:8-15

Long Reading: Luke 2:8-21, Matthew 2:1-12

God is a revealing God. He reveals himself through nature. “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day, they pour forth speech; night after night, they reveal knowledge” (Psalm 19:1-2). He revealed himself to Moses through a burning bush, to Nebuchadnezzar through a dream, and to the Ethiopian eunuch through Scripture. The Bible is more than a record of God revealing himself throughout history. It is God’s revelation to all peoples in all times. It is a living Book through which he reveals himself.

God’s ultimate revelation came in his Son. “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Hebrews 1). As Jesus himself said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father (John 14:9). God made the announcement of Messiah's birth to two very different groups of people. Both were invited to come and worship his Messiah: shepherds and wise men.

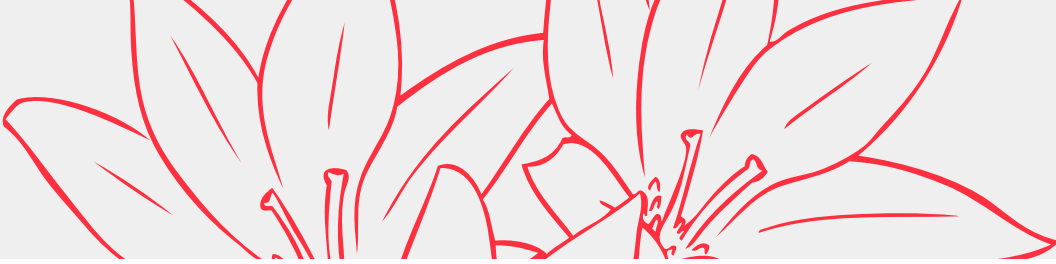




The Shepherds were poor, simple, uneducated, Jewish men. The news of Jesus' Advent was announced to them by a visitation of angels as they were going about their daily task. The wise men were rich, intellectual, Gentiles from a faraway country. They were invited to come worship through a celestial sign they seemed to be looking for. Even before they saw the star, they must have had some knowledge that led them to conclude its meaning. Two different revelations. One subtle, planted in history for the wise and seeking. The other overt, impossible to miss. Yet both required effort to pursue it. The shepherds searched throughout the city, which we know was overflowing at the time. The wise men traveled for approximately two years.

Two completely different groups of people—two completely different methods of revelation. Why? To reveal to us God's fervent desire and continued habit of revealing himself to all peoples in all ways. One of the most beautiful aspects of the gospel and of God himself is he is the God of all people, all languages, all nations. Not just of the Jew, but also of the Gentile. Not only of the rich, but also of the poor. Not only of the intellectual, but also of the simple. Whether they know him or acknowledge him, he is their God. For "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1).

Today God continues to reveal himself for he can do nothing else. He uses simple conversations, sophisticated technology, and divine dreams. He also uses you and me. The church is the "body of Christ." Today, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, God uses us to reveal himself to the world. How wonderful to know that it is God's desire to reveal himself to us and through us- to those who don't yet know him, but still belong to him.



**Your Story:** Recount one way God has revealed himself to you or to someone you know or have read about. Let these wonderful stories build your faith.

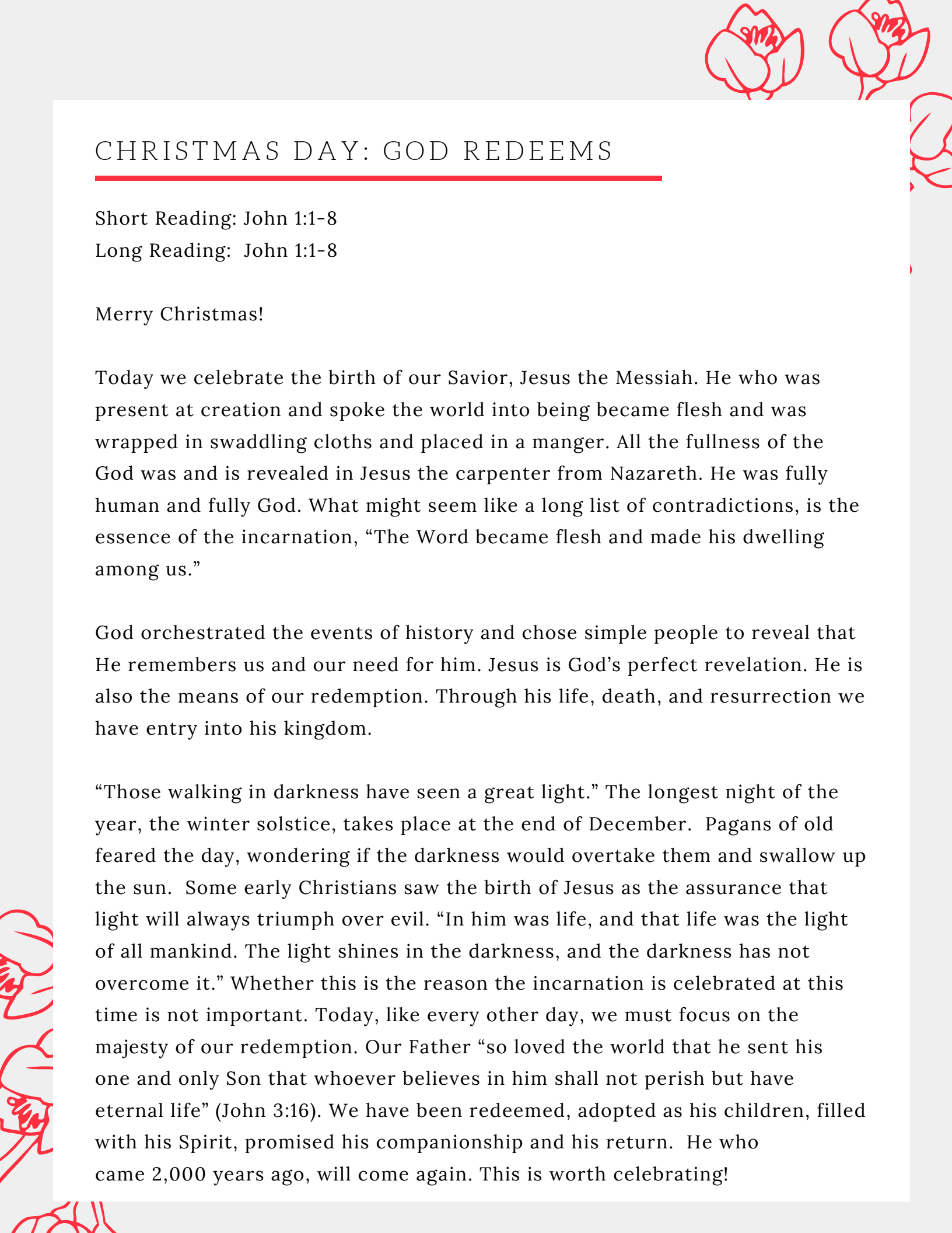
**Light:** Light the first candle “God remembers,” the second candle “God chooses,” the third candle “God orchestrates,” and the forth candle “God reveals.”

**Pray:** Thank God for revealing himself to you. Pray for his revelation to come to family, friends, and nations who do not yet know him.

**Suggested Carol:** Angels We Have Heard on High. As you sing this song, think of the shepherds and how God elevated these simple men by sending this great revelation to him.







## CHRISTMAS DAY: GOD REDEEMS

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Short Reading: John 1:1-8

Long Reading: John 1:1-8

Merry Christmas!

Today we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus the Messiah. He who was present at creation and spoke the world into being became flesh and was wrapped in swaddling cloths and placed in a manger. All the fullness of the God was and is revealed in Jesus the carpenter from Nazareth. He was fully human and fully God. What might seem like a long list of contradictions, is the essence of the incarnation, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”

God orchestrated the events of history and chose simple people to reveal that He remembers us and our need for him. Jesus is God’s perfect revelation. He is also the means of our redemption. Through his life, death, and resurrection we have entry into his kingdom.

“Those walking in darkness have seen a great light.” The longest night of the year, the winter solstice, takes place at the end of December. Pagans of old feared the day, wondering if the darkness would overtake them and swallow up the sun. Some early Christians saw the birth of Jesus as the assurance that light will always triumph over evil. “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.” Whether this is the reason the incarnation is celebrated at this time is not important. Today, like every other day, we must focus on the majesty of our redemption. Our Father “so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). We have been redeemed, adopted as his children, filled with his Spirit, promised his companionship and his return. He who came 2,000 years ago, will come again. This is worth celebrating!




**Your Story:** Share your own story of redemption. What does the incarnation mean to you?

**Light:** Light the first candle “God remembers,” the second candle “God chooses,” the third candle “God orchestrates,” and the forth candle “God reveals,” And the center candle “God redeems”

**Pray:** Thank the Father for sending his Son. Thank Jesus for dying for your redemption. Thank the Spirit for convicting you of sin, revealing Jesus, and bringing forth your adoption.

**Suggested Carol:** Hark the Herald Angel Sing. As you sing this song think about how God and sinners have been reconciled through the redemptive work of Christ and REJOICE!



We pray this booklet has blessed  
you and increased your  
fellowship with our Father this  
Advent season. Please feel free to  
share it with friends and family.  
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when sharing portions or quotes.

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