

# Advent Week 1

## *The Problem and the Promise*

# WEEK 1

## Personal Study

Genesis 3:15 (ESV)

*"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

Genesis 6:5–6 (ESV)

*The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.*

Isaiah 9:1–7 (ESV)

*But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.*

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.*

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

## ***Focus***

Have you ever needed to be rescued? Have you ever considered the depths of your sin? If there were a videotape of all of your hidden thoughts, desires and actions would you feel comfortable playing it for others?

### ***Advent Beginnings***

Many of us think of Christmas beginning in a stable with a baby. But the story actually begins in a Garden, and spreads thoroughly to the earliest days of humanity.

When God created the world, everything was ordered in perfection. Because everyone and everything submitted to original design there was no need but one, for God Himself. There was no fear or confusion, competing desires, sorrow, sadness, relational distance or death. But all of the goodness was tied to obedience. They were commanded to not do one thing...eat from the fruit of that one tree.

### ***The Problem***

In one instance, everything good became violated and spoiled when they disobeyed and ate in search of a greater goodness. They wanted to be autonomous gods themselves.

Peace shattered. Desires twisted. Creation thrown into chaos. The perfect order thrown into disarray. Perfection defiled by a selfish reach for ultimate independence.

The only thing that could have separated humanity from God, happened: We chose a different god...ourselves. And the punishment was death. And death would have been a mercy, for who would want to live in such a world anyway?

But into the darkness God spoke again. He would not leave us alone. He would rescue us from darkness and remake creation.  
But when?

## ***The Promise***

The Promise was spoken so that all could hear. Throughout the Old Testament, for centuries, God spoke of it again and again over his covenant people. He gave them signs to look for so they could wait with anticipation. He would be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15), from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10), in the kingly line of David (Isa. 9:6,7). He would come from the town of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2) and grow to be a man of sorrows, despised and rejected, and justify many through his suffering (Isa. 53). The chances of one person fulfilling just 8 Old Testament prophecies would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000, which is essentially statistically impossible. Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled over 320 OT Prophecies!

God didn't just tell His people to wait. He gave them words, signs and visions to wait in faith for the promise to be delivered. God was not going to do this Rescue right away. Many people would have to live and die waiting. God asked His people to covenant together around the Promise, to speak of it from one generation to the next while enduring cycles of war, rebellion and captivity. The Promise became the glue that held a suffering people together in purpose.

We can all identify with feelings of hopelessness and the lamenting desires for quick resolution. In our world today we are told many times a day of the things that are not right, and reminded that we can fix them if we act quickly and decisively. Often our answers do the opposite of what we had hoped. We burden others, judge unrighteously, create division and sever relationships.

We act because we love, but we can't fix the real problem that causes all the problems.

*We are the problem.* It is only "out there" because it is "in here." Heavy and inescapable, the weight of our sin entangled with our desires and motivations leave all answers and systems twisted with our angry, selfish and rebellious hearts. The reason we can begin to focus our celebration in Advent is because our story doesn't end in the Garden. Our story, and all of creation's story, will end in His redemption.

## **Reflection**

Consider how the people of Israel were delivered from captivity in Egypt (Ex. 7-14). Can you think of any other way a weaponless, poor servant class of herders and farmers could have won their freedom from the greatest power on earth that was benefiting from their subjugation?

How is sin an even greater master for all born of a woman from the seed of man? What is our only hope to be delivered from such a powerful master?

Think about all the generations of enslaved people who died in Egypt before being delivered. How do you think they survived in the face of such a harsh and hopeless situation? How did they encourage themselves? How were they tempted to give in and release their hope for a better day?

Only God knows the reasons He allows or causes suffering in our lives. He is always doing something beyond our comprehension. In what ways are we being faithful to our hope, and in what ways are we giving in to temptation while forgetting our hope?

## **Closing Response**

What is one hope you have for your family and community as you begin this Advent season? Don't have one? Dig deeper and think of one.

Now pray for your own heart. Repent of the ways you have transferred your hope to quicker solutions, or have lost hope in God's Promise to make all things new.



### ***Songs for Advent Week 1***

- [O Come, O Come Emmanuel](#)
- [Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus](#)



*All resources with this icon can be found by going to the web page.*

# WEEK 1

## *Family Discipleship Time*

*Set aside 30 minutes one night this week to read scriptures together and reflect upon and discuss the material together. If you have an Advent Candle, please designate someone to light the 1st candle before beginning.*

### **Scripture Reading**

**(Have someone read out loud)**

Before they left the garden, God whispered a promise to Adam and Eve: "It will not always be so! I will come to rescue you! And when I do, I'm going to do battle against the snake. I'll get rid of the sin and the dark and the sadness you let in here. I'm coming back for you!" And he would. One day, God himself would come. **THE JESUS STORYBOOK BIBLE**

Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
and his name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

### **Focus**

Briefly talk about the feeling of needing to be rescued. When might one need to be saved? This is a great time to speak of silent fears. Who would we call in an emergency? Who are the people who show up to save other people? What are they like?

### ***Story Telling (Read the commentary below to your family)***

In the very beginning there was God, and He created a perfect world for his favorite creation: humans. We were made in the image of God and were asked to rule over the earth with great love and creativity, and with purpose. Adam and Eve decided that they could do a better job without God, and disobeyed His only command. When they did the entire world became less beautiful and poisoned with selfishness and distrust.

The punishment for Adam and Eve was that they had to be separated from God because He could not be in the presence of rebellion, so He cast them out instead of ravishing them. He was also protecting them from a life of eternal separation by minimizing their years on earth. This punishment has been placed on all humans, born on this earth.

**Ask:** Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever created something beautiful that took all your time, love and effort, and someone just destroyed it for no good reason? How did that make you feel?

For God so loved His creation that He had already planned to rescue the creation from this rebellion. But that rescue didn't come right away. God did little things along the way to remind people that He loved them, but He didn't send the Rescuer for thousands and thousands of years. No one knew when the Rescuer would come, and so they had to keep waiting and hoping and praying. The verse that we read from Isaiah was an example of what God told His people why they were in horrible situations. He kept saying, "Someday, all will be made right again."

God knows how hard it is for His humans to wait. The Bible even says that all creation waits with longing...even fish and animals and mountains wait for Him.

**Ask:** What is something you have had to wait for? Why is it so hard to wait? What does it feel like when you have to wait for something you really, really need?

Sometimes God's people waited faithfully and patiently. Sometimes they waited with tears and frustration. Sometimes they doubted that God even remembered His promise, and simply stopped waiting, and decided to do whatever they wanted to do.

But God kept whispering that one day, when they least expected it, He would send The Hero who would destroy the power of sin in their lives and heal the world from its effects.

**Ask:** How do you feel when you are told, "No," or "Not yet?" Do you wonder if you are being loved or listened to; or do you trust that you are being loved, and you just can't understand right now?

Advent is all about waiting without understanding. We know that God sent His Son to rescue us, but millions of people lived and died without knowing that. Advent reminds us that we can trust God to be God, and to be good, even when we don't understand His timing.

***Listen to a Song together:***



[Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus](#)

***Prayer***

Discuss what you should pray about, and which family member should pray.



*All resources with this icon can be found by going to the web page.*



## Family Activities

### (Short-term Hope)

Parents, right now discuss with your children ideas for a fun activity you can do this week!

- make Christmas cookies together
- walk the streets of downtown Rock Hill or Fort Mill
- choose a favorite Christmas movie to watch
- pull out all the Christmas decorations

Make sure they have something soon to look forward to!

### (Long-term Hope)

Parents, tell your children that you have also chosen to prepare a celebration with them at some event in the future. Keep giving hints daily or weekly that you are so excited about this event, but they can't know any details, time or date. Let this longer expectation remind them of how God's people must have felt waiting on the Messiah to come.



#### **Some Ideas:**

- [McAdenville Christmas Town Lights](#)
- [The Nutcracker Charlotte](#)
- [The Polar Express Train Ride](#)
- [Magic of Christmas](#)
- [Christmas Lights at Daniel Stowe](#)
- [Christmas at the Billy Graham Library](#)
- [Carowinds Winterfest](#)



*All resources with this icon can be found by going to the web page.*