



With Us

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

HOPE:
With Us
FROM THE BEGINNING

| WEEK ONE |

Scripture

Open your Bible and read today's verse with your family.

John 1:1-5

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

Hebrews 1:1-4

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."

Content

Read today's devotion aloud with your family, Small Group, or simply during your personal time with the Lord.

Babies aren't the most helpful travel companions. Sure, they're pretty cute and snuggly. But you wouldn't ask a baby to give you directions, pack your bags, drive you to the airport, or plan your itinerary. That's just not what babies are for.

This line of thinking may seem silly, but it matters, because we so often think of Jesus purely as a baby at Christmas. We picture Him tiny, helpless and lovingly held in His young mother's arms. Yet it's vital we know that Jesus was not newly created that first Christmas morning. Yes, God sent Him in human form as a helpless babe, but Scripture reveals Jesus Himself has always existed—a hope-filled fact that makes Him the best travel guide and companion we could have through the mountains and valleys of this life.

John 1:1-2 tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” Why is Jesus called “the Word”? As we also read in Hebrews, Jesus is the exact representation of our glorious God. When “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,” as John 1:14 describes His birth, God was speaking to us through His Son. Jesus is God's loving declaration - “This is who I am! This is who I have been from the very beginning and always will be!”

How amazing to also know that Jesus, the Word who is God, was with God at the beginning. When the heavens and the earth were created, Jesus was there! Not only was He there, but John 1:3 tells us, “All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” The One who made all things and holds all things together was also there when everything fell apart. He saw the devastation

when Adam and Eve sinned, and He was the one God later sent for our salvation. Jesus came to our sin-broken world as a baby and grew into a man whose death made the way for us to be in right relationship with God. Now, His Spirit can dwell in us as believers, and someday we will dwell with Jesus face-to-face for all eternity.

Is it okay to treasure Him as a baby in a manger at Christmas? Absolutely! But may we remember that He is also infinitely more! He is “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Revelation 22:13). He is our unchanging Good Shepherd who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is Immanuel, **God with us**—the One who became like us and fully understands us. He is our Eternal King—the One who has promised never to leave or forsake us. When we feel lost in this life, we can look to Jesus. He knows the way home, He is our way home, and He will see us all the way home! He is our hope, and the hope we have in Him will never run out.

Conversation Starters

Use these questions to start conversation with your family, small group, or simply to further your own understanding and application of today's scripture and devotion.

Imagine you are going on an important trip or even a fun vacation, but you can't use maps, GPS, the internet, or even a compass to get there; you just have to figure it out on your own. How would you feel? How well do you think it would go?

Think about people who do not know Jesus. What kind of hope do they have apart from Christ, the Word made flesh, of returning to a place of being in right relationship with God or dwelling with Him eternally in heaven? If we know this hope, what are some ways we can share it intentionally this Christmas?

Jesus knows both the glories of heaven and the hard realities of living here on earth. How does this make Him the perfect One for us to rely on and turn to in our journey through life?

Connections

Use the following activities and ideas throughout the coming week to further connect the lessons from today's scripture and devotion as well as deepen connections with family, friends, and community.

1. Take a prayer walk around your neighborhood or a prayer drive with family or friends around your city this Christmas season. Pray for the people who do not yet know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Ask God to give you opportunities to share that hope with others.
2. Make a paper chain to countdown the days until Christmas and prepare your heart to celebrate the Advent season. Write a scripture reference on each one. Read that passage when you take off a link from the chain each day.
3. Do you sometimes struggle to hold on to the hope that is in Jesus Christ? If there are certain times and places where fear, loneliness, or anxiety creep in, put HOPE in those places! Write on note cards, post-it notes, or pieces of paper truths that remind you of the hope you read about today! Place them in your room, on your bathroom mirror, in your car, in your locker, on your work desk, etc. You may even want to make a project out of it, taking time to creatively decorate them with markers, stickers, etc. Here are some ideas of phrases you can use:
 - God is with me. I am not alone.
 - Jesus is my hope.
 - Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.
 - God is in control.


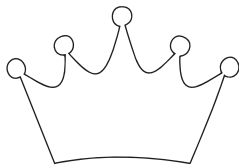
Memory Verse

Use the memory verse to lock in the biblical truth of today's lesson throughout the week.

"In him was life, and the life was the light of men." - John 1:4



*His name shall
be called*



*Wonderful
Counselor,*



*Mighty God,
Everlasting
Father,*



Prince of Peace.

ISAIAH 9:6



CHURCH AT THE MILL