

# ADVENT DEVOTIONAL 2021

written by members of the  
Spiritual Impact Team



# ADVENT

## WEEK ONE

### WAITING WITH HOPE - THAT'S WHAT ADVENT IS ALL ABOUT

When I was a little girl we always had an advent calendar in our house in December. My sister and I would take turns opening the doors on the calendar each day as Christmas approached. As a child it helped me wait for Christmas day because I could see the progress as each door was opened. But my parents also taught me about who we were waiting for—Jesus! I knew that it wasn't about waiting to open presents (although my childish heart was very excited about that.) I knew that we were waiting to celebrate that special day when Jesus came to earth. The baby was born in a manger. He is Emmanuel, God with us! As I have walked through life, the waiting and the longing for Jesus has become deeper in my heart with each passing Advent season. The music of Christmas has been a part of that process, including one song in particular.

The song Emmanuel starts with these words:

“O come O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel that mourns in lowly exile here until the Son of God appears. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.”

Just as the chosen people of Israel longed for the coming of their Messiah, so we, too, long for Jesus to come. We long for his presence. We long for his healing touch. We long for his peace and his joy in our hearts. This song, set in a minor key, reflects that longing. It has gripped my heart and become one of my favorite Christmas songs in recent years. It is not a happy, bouncy Christmas ditty; it is a somber, sobering reminder that makes me emotional each time I hear it. It is a reminder of waiting, of trusting, of knowing that God has a plan for all things. And a reminder that he is with me: he is my Emmanuel.

For those of us who know Jesus, the Messiah, as our Savior, we are waiting for his return. For others who are still considering who Jesus is, and maybe this is you, I hope this will be the Christmas for saying yes to him and inviting him to come into your life and rescue you. Think about this as you listen to this song. Ask him to be your Savior, to be with you this advent season and always.

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us.”  
Matthew 1:23 (KJV) Note: There are two spellings of the word Emmanuel, one beginning with E and the other beginning with I, and both are correct. One links to Hebrew roots and the other to Greek roots.

Question: What does advent mean to you? What advent traditions and music are most special to you?

Prayer Power: Dear Lord, thank you for giving me a heart that longs for your coming. Fill my heart with your hope, your peace, your love and your joy this advent season. You are my Emmanuel. Thank you for being with me always. Amen.

Jeannie Blocher

Jeannie and her husband Roy Blocher founded Body & Soul® in 1981 and she currently serves as the Director of Spiritual Impact, leading a dedicated team of Instructors in creating spiritual resources for the ministry. Jeannie loves spending time with family, which now includes 9 grandchildren, spread over three states. She loves encouraging both family and Body & Soul® friends to grow in faith & fitness!



## WHEN HOPE CAME DOWN

“So this is how it was. A silent night like any other. When heaven sent the one. The one that we will call our Savior. And redemption began in a stable in Bethlehem. All of the angels lifted up their voices and filled the night with Hallelujah's. God is with us now.”

Imagine the moment of the birth of Jesus. Imagine Mary and Joseph seeing all that was promised and foretold, finally coming to fruition. God had been with our forefathers. He was with Abraham when he called him to a foreign land. He was with Moses and the Israelites as he called them away from slavery in Egypt. He was with his people through the fire and the smoke that led them through the desert for 40 years. He provided for them during the famine in Joseph's day. He was there with them, but he was not there in the flesh... until that day when Jesus was born. With Mary's laboring and with that first cry from the lungs of baby Jesus, God was physically with us! God with us... Emmanuel... what an amazing gift!

For 33 years Jesus walked on the face of the earth. He built relationships, he loved extravagantly, and he displayed grace and mercy toward sinful man. Ultimately, he paid the biggest sacrifice to cover our sins with his righteousness so that we might know a restored relationship between God and man. That gift lives on! Jesus promised that when he left earth, the Holy Spirit would come to live with us. And as believers, his spirit actually lives in us. And Jesus calls us to be his hands and his feet. So, during this busy season, build relationships. Love extravagantly. Display grace and mercy toward others. And when God gives you opportunity, share the reason for the hope that is within you!

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,” 1 Peter 3:15

Question: Consider the hope that we have as believers, knowing that God is with us and his spirit actually lives in us. How can you share the hope that is in you with someone today?

Prayer Power: Dear Lord, it gives us great peace knowing that you lived in human flesh as we do and you sympathize with all the struggles that we face. Yet you were without sin. Help us win the battles that we face. Help us to turn to you knowing that your spirit guides, strengthens and comforts us. Amen.

Sherry Libby



Sherry's motto is “Strive for progress, not perfection”. She is blessed to be a Group Fitness Instructor with a certification from the American Council on Exercise. Sherry teaches Cardio Strength classes for Body & Soul@Fitness. She does this while juggling the crazy life of being the wife of an airline pilot and the mom of three busy kids. She loves singing on worship team at her local church and enjoys being a part of the Women's Ministry Council as well.

# HOPE WAS BORN THIS NIGHT



We need HOPE! We want HOPE! We look for HOPE!  
More than 2,000 years ago, the people were looking for hope and peace! In their song, Hope Was Born This Night, Sidewalk Prophets sing, "Out upon the snowy fields, there's a silent peace that heals. And it echoes the grace of our Savior's embrace, because hope was born this night."

Peace, grace and hope all came to earth that night in the form of a baby boy. The biblical definition of hope is the confident expectation of what God has promised and its strength is in His faithfulness. God promised his people that he would save and rescue them! They were waiting with great expectation and anticipation for HOPE to come. And "Hope was born that night!" Our loving, merciful Savior brought hope to a hopeless world because he is HOPE and the source of all HOPE!

Question: What are you confidently expecting from God this Christmas?

"I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.  
Romans 15:13 NLT

Prayer Power: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for being our Hope and bringing Hope to this dark world. Thank you for willingly coming to this earth, knowing how you would save us! Help us, Holy Spirit, to remember that our Hope is in you, and you alone! We love you LORD! Amen

Rita Rabideau

Rita Rabideau is a busy wife and mother of 3 adult children and 1 daughter in law and lives in Edison, New Jersey. She has been teaching cardio strength for 15 years and is the Area Director for NJ/PA/NY. She loves teaching fitness classes, traveling, reading and spending time with her family and friends.

# ADVENT

## WEEK TWO

### NOEL, PEACE, SHALOM

*"The first Noël the angels did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,  
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep on a cold winter's night that was so deep.  
Noël, Noël, Noël, Noël, Born is the King of Israel!"*

The song The First Noël, is believed to date from the 13th or 14th century, and has been a dearly loved Christmas Carol throughout the years. "Noël, Noël!" One known definition for the word Noel is "divine peace." The Hebrew word for peace is Shalom—meaning "nothing missing, nothing broken; complete wholeness." According to Strong's Concordance, "Shalom comes from the root verb shalam, meaning, 'to be complete, perfect, and full.' Thus, Shalom is much more than the absence of war and conflict; it is the wholeness that the entire human race seeks."

I love this Christmas Hymn because it reflects the heart of God towards humankind, by sending His one and only son, Jesus, to a broken world to reconcile us with the Father. He, Jesus, is the Prince of Peace; and the Scriptures teach us that, "...we have been justified by faith," which brings us "divine peace" with God. (Romans 5:1 NKJV) "Noël, Noël!" The "peace" that the world offers is temporary—and does not resolve the inner conflict that separates us from a loving relationship with God. The "peace" that comes through a relationship with Jesus is God's gift to restore a dark, broken world unto Himself.

*"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."*  
Isaiah 9:6-7 (NKJV)

Question: As we reflect on the Prince of Peace during Advent, how can we invite him to bring his peace into our lives today and in the days ahead?

Prayer Power: My Christmas blessing to you: "The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you [His] peace. Shalom! (from Numbers 6:24-26 NKJV)

Abby Dixon



Abby has been teaching Body & Soul® classes for over three decades and has a passion to help students safely reach their fitness goals and encourage each person to grow in faith. She is an ACE Gold Certified Health and Fitness Coach with certifications in Group Fitness, Personal Training, and Medical Exercise. Abby is also a Cancer Exercise Specialist (CES), with CETI. Approved to teach all five (5) Body & Soul® programs, Abby is also a Post Rehab Conditioning Specialist, Member of ACSM, IDEA, and Wellcoaches®. Abby's words to live by: "Movement is Medicine!™"

# GLORY TO GOD

*"God chose not to glory, in wealth, power or fame. But with the simple and the small He came."*

The stable wasn't the place anyone expected Him to arrive. Shepherds were not the first audience one would think of when picking the invited for the presentation of the King of kings, but it was all part of God's plan that was ordained before the foundations of the world.

The shepherds must have been overwhelmed by the presence of the heavenly hosts singing in the night sky. I imagine what that must have been like and I am overwhelmed by the way God allows the unextraordinary ones to be used in His story. What a gift and what a lesson for us. God did not announce the birth of Christ to kings and princes but to lowly, dirty and unremarkable people. Really, that's all of us. We are the shepherds and God announces to all of us at Christmas that Christ has come. We can run into our Bethlehem moment and see the babe in the manger and know He is the One who has come for us. He died for us. He lives again for us. He reigns for us and wants to be in relationship with us.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. Luke 2: 20 (ESV)

Question: Will you run to see Him and bow before Him?

Prayer Power: Lord, you came for us. Help us to accept your gift of Christmas. May we marvel at your coming just like the shepherds did and give all Glory to God. Amen.

Tracie Durham



Additional video called "the Shepherd" done by the Chosen group: <https://youtu.be/paOjgZZDads>

Tracie Durham is a Body & Soul Instructor in Central Arkansas. She is a home school momma to three amazing kiddos and wife to a fire chief. Tracie loves to think deeply about the things of Jesus and write and reflect on His Word. Her hope is that this post blesses you and brings honor and glory to God.

# ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH



*"Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King."*

Leading fitness classes to Christian contemporary music is such a blessing! But, getting to add in contemporary Christian CHRISTMAS music during the Advent and Christmas seasons is the icing on the cake! Christmas, the most wonderful time of the year, is truly something to 'come and see.'

From day one, God invited people to 'come and see' his spectacular answer to creation's groaning for salvation. On that first Christmas night long ago, God sent angels to invite lowly shepherds who were watching their flocks in the fields to 'come to Bethlehem and see' the newborn Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Messiah, shined brightly into a dark, sin-stained world and offered hope.

God still calls us to 'come and see.' While it may not be to Bethlehem, it is to meet Him in His Word. John tells us in chapter 20, verse 31 that 'these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.' (ESV)

During Advent and Christmas, many hearts are primed to be invited to 'come and see', to hear, and believe, and have 'life in His name!'

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord." (angel). . . "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." (shepherds) Luke 2:11,15b (ESV)

Question: How can you invite others to 'come and see' this Advent season?

Prayer Power: Lord, open my heart to invite others to 'come and see' and provide opportunities for me to do so. By your Spirit, help them see, and believe and have life in Your name. Amen.

Shawn Maassel

Shawn began taking Body & Soul classes as a student in 1990 after her first child was born. Years later, after a move and transition to full-time church work, she became a Body & Soul® instructor in order to bring the ministry and classes to her new church. She has been leading classes since 2003 in Huntingtown, Maryland and enjoys being part of Body & Soul's Spiritual Impact Team. Shawn and her husband have three grown children and one grandson across the country.

# ADVENT

## WEEK THREE

### JOY TO THE WORLD (UNSPEAKABLE JOY)

*"Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy! Repeat, repeat the sounding joy!"*

When the angel first appeared to the shepherds, he brought them a message of good news and great joy. What was the good news? A Savior was born! The long-awaited Messiah had come! Why would this message bring great joy? The message was for ALL people! The shepherds ran to see for themselves. When they returned, they were full of joy! They had seen the precious baby, the one who would bring salvation to the world! The shepherds didn't keep the message to themselves; it was too exciting! Their hearts were full of such praise!

I remember the joy that filled my heart the moment I placed my faith in Jesus. I couldn't keep it to myself! I had to tell someone! Just as the angel delivered good news to the shepherds, we have the opportunity to deliver the same message. We can share the good news, the gospel, with ALL people! There is joy in salvation! There is joy in having a relationship with God! The gospel message is something we can share, not just at Christmastime, but all year through! Let the joy of the good news be spread!

"And so the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10-11 NASB

Question: Do you know someone who needs to hear the joyous gospel message?

Prayer Power: Father, let us always remember the joy of our salvation. Please give us courage to share the good news of Jesus with all people! Amen.

Patty Davis



Patty Davis is a Body & Soul® instructor in Sherwood, Arkansas. She's a wife and mom, and loves to travel, read, and write. Patty is grateful for the ministry opportunities and community Body & Soul®.



# A BABY WILL COME



*"The advent of life, let hope arise. We've our Savior and Christ. The Baby has come."*

Hope. What a powerful gift of God. Although darkness and despair surround us, invade us, close in around us, we believe there is and there will be life and that life is the light of men. Jesus. Emmanuel. The radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature walking among us. Living within us.

Because the King came near, we can hope for what we do not see and wait for it with patience. We rejoice even in our sufferings because suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

In Christ, suffering produces hope. Strange truth. Upside down Kingdom.

Hope will not put us to shame, because, one day, God will wipe away every tear from every eye, and death will be no more, neither will there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things will have passed away. And, behold, all things will be made new.

Until that glorious day, I am inspired to press into the broken places and see with fresh eyes how the Lord is inviting and empowering me to partner with Him in exposing darkness, righting wrongs, and witnessing souls restored to Him. The Baby came, not to condemn the world, but to save it, and He will have the last word.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (ESV)

Question: What promises of God bring you hope in difficult times?

Prayer Power: Lord, help us keep our eyes on You as we run the race set out for us. Give us the grace to believe what we cannot see--to have faith in a future hope where all wrong things are set right.

Brandi Schroeder

Brandi is a youth pastor's wife and the mom of four amazing young men. She spent nearly a decade co-teaching a Body & Soul® class with her dear friends, Jana and Tracie before returning to a full-time career. Recently, she has begun leading an evening class with a small but dedicated group of women. She seeks to inspire women to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with the Lord.

# ADVENT

## WEEK FOUR

### MARY, DID YOU KNOW?

*"Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?  
When you kiss your little baby, you've kissed the face of GOD."*

Every. Single. Time... I hear this song, the Holy Spirit touches my heart and I am... Overwhelmed. Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, allows us - you and me - to get so close to Him, we can kiss Him. Imagine.

Close your eyes. You are holding a precious baby, feeling the warmth of his breath, the softness of his cheek, and the cuteness of his giggle. Imagine you are Mary. You experience all of the motherly love for a baby that a mama can have while at the same time, you understand that as you hold this little baby, you are holding your LORD who has come to deliver YOU.

"Deliver you" from what? Sin and death. This sin has separated us from the presence of God. God delivered us from spiritual death - which is eternal separation from Him - by His Son, Jesus, paying the price for OUR sin through his death on the cross. By ourselves, we shouldn't be allowed to kiss the face of God or even be in His presence because we are sinners. But Jesus changed all of that. We are so close to God, we can feel His presence and kiss His face, all because of Jesus. XOXO

"Jesus said to him...He who has seen Me has seen the Father." John 14:9a (NKJV)

Question: If you had the opportunity to slowly and reverently walk up, peer into the manger where baby Jesus lay, and kiss his soft cheek, what thoughts and feelings would you have toward him?

Prayer Power: Dear Father God, thank you for allowing your Son to be born in the form of a sweet little baby, whose face was kissed, as it is to kiss you. We are humbled and grateful for Jesus' gift of payment for our sins with his life, so that we may be ever so close to you for eternity. In your name we pray, Amen.

Dr. Liz Berbano



Liz joined Body & Soul® Fitness when she transitioned out of the army 15 years ago. The exercise of mind, body, and spirit as well as words to the songs help her continue to grow and passionately serve him as Assistant Regional Director in northern VA, mentored by beautiful leaders in the Body & Soul® family. Exercise. Bible. Music. Connection.

This is Body & Soul®.

# WE THREE KINGS

*"Born a King on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown Him again."*

When my kids were 1, 3, and 5, I noticed that they were able to sing quite a few jingles from commercials. I thought if they can learn this stuff in a 10 - 30 second commercial, then I wanted to provide a "commercial" for God. That year we began to have our commercial each night of the Advent season. It included a reading from scripture, singing a couple of Christmas songs, and praying together.

A song the kids liked to sing was We Three Kings. One night as we sang the "Oh oh" that goes between the verse and the chorus, my middle one put his hand over one eye and swung his other bent arm back and forth. "Sam, what are you doing?" I said. "I'm a pirate. It sounds like a pirate song." He replied. Then he explained that his hand over his eye was his eye patch and that pirates always said "Yo ho." From that night on, it was known as the Pirate Christmas Song.

We tried to start a conversation about the gifts we might give to God. Leave it to small children to come up with innocent but awesome answers. They decided we could give Him our laughter since he gave us such a funny song. We could give Him our strong arms since we might have to do some work for Him. We could give him our swords in case there was something God wanted us to protect. And even with one eye we still see what He wanted us to see and where He wanted us to go.

"For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing," 2 Corinthians 2:15 (ESV)  
"...Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."  
Matthew 18:3

During the holidays we celebrate the most awesome gift ever given to us, let us be like children who are in awe of everything, see things simply, and laugh brightly in the presence of God because we are so happy about all He has done.

Questions:

1. What are the gifts you have that you can bring to Jesus this season - and the rest of the year?
2. What is one small thing you might do this holiday season, on a daily basis, that will help prepare your heart for the celebration of Jesus' birth?

Prayer Power: Father, let us be like children in your presence. Let our minds and hearts be uncluttered with our adult wisdom so we can see you with the simplicity and innocence of a child. Let us trust and enjoy all that you have blessed us with. Amen.

Janine Henning



Janine lives in California and has been an instructor for 30 years. Her kids have grown up with Body & Soul® and are now 37, 39 and 41. She has taught all programs of B&S except Dance Blast™.