



ADVENT

a devotional guide from **The Heights Church**

“A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes — and is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside, is not a bad picture of Advent.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

About this Guide

At The Heights, one of our values is going to the Word every day for a Word from God. The Scriptures in the following devotionals are taken from the church's daily Bible reading plan. If you'd like to read the full reading plan each day, you can see the plan here: www.theheightsdenver.com/bible

For each day's reading, we added an Advent-focused devotional, a prayer, and reflection questions. You can go through this guide individually, or with your roommates, friends, or family.

December 4

Hope Through Repentance

by Meredith Sell

The king of Nineveh hopes in the goodness of God. While Jonah comes to the city against his will and proclaims God's judgment over the Ninevites (v. 4), the king of Nineveh responds by declaring a fast. He commands his people to fast and mourn and leave their sin and violence behind, in the desperate hope that God will see their change of heart and similarly alter course.

Did Nineveh know before this that it was in sin? We don't know, and it doesn't matter. What matters is what Nineveh does when it's confronted with the promise of God's judgment. The king, the people, the city put their hope in God.

Their hope is well-placed. As we see in Ezekiel 33:11, God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather he wants the wicked to "turn from his way and live." The world is in desperate need of God's grace, and God is hungry to grant it.

In Advent, as we look ahead to the second coming of Christ, it can be chilling to think of the judgment that will accompany Christ's return. But the invitation and hope from this passage is that God is eager to respond to our repentance, and we know from 2 Peter 3:4-9 that he's putting off his return because he is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." In our waiting, his kindness holds steady. In our repentance, his grace overflows.

Read

Jonah 3:9-10

9 Who knows? God may turn and relent; he may turn from his burning anger so that we will not perish.

10 God saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it.

Pray

Heavenly Father, thank you for your incredible mercy and grace. As we reflect on the story of Nineveh, help us to understand the depth of your love and desire for all to turn to you. In this season of Advent, teach us to live with repentant hearts, placing our hope in your goodness and eagerly awaiting Christ's return. Thank you for your patience and kindness that invite us into new life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect

1. How does the king of Nineveh's response to God's judgment inspire you to seek repentance in your own life?

2. In what ways does God's patience, as described in 2 Peter 3:9, shape your understanding of his grace and kindness?

December 5

Desperate for Deliverance

by Meredith Sell

David, the writer of this Psalm, is overwhelmed by evils from out there and sins from within himself. Verse 12 speaks of “innumerable evils” that surround him and his own iniquities that “have taken hold” of him. He’s so overwhelmed by these things that it is a struggle for him to look up and hope in God.

Perhaps that’s why so much of this Psalm recounts God’s faithfulness to him: how God heard David’s cries (v. 1), delivered him and set him on a steady path (v. 2), gave him a new song of praise to sing (v. 3). David spends the previous verses reminding himself of the goodness and faithfulness of God — as well as his own integrity about his relationship with God, which he describes not as moral perfection, but as an openness to others about God’s righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, lovingkindness, and truth (v. 10).

After recounting all of these things, preaching to his heart, David calls on God to do what he has done before: “Don’t withhold your tender mercies from me, O Lord: let your lovingkindness and your truth continually preserve me” (v. 11). He’s honest with God about how overwhelmed he is by evil within and evil without, and he begs God to deliver him quickly. He does this while recognizing his neediness — in fact, his awareness of his neediness is why he cries out at all. He’s helpless on his own. As much as verses 8-10 can be read as David’s own spiritual bravado, this Psalm comes from a deep awareness of his desperate need for God to intervene in his life.

We are just as needy, and whether we realize it or not, we are just as desperate. Yet, like David, we can say, “The Lord thinks upon me” (v. 17).

Read

Psalm 40:12-13

*12 For troubles without number have surrounded me;
my iniquities have overtaken me; I am unable to see.*

*They are more than the hairs of my head,
and my courage leaves me.*

*13 Lord, be pleased to rescue me;
hurry to help me, Lord.*

Pray

Heavenly Father, like David, we are overwhelmed by the struggles of life—by evils around us and the sins within us. Help us to remember your faithfulness and tender mercies, and remind our hearts that you think upon us. In our neediness, may we turn to you with trust and humility, knowing that you are always ready to deliver us. Preserve us in your lovingkindness and truth, and help us to walk faithfully in your ways. Amen.

Reflect

1. How can recalling God's past faithfulness in your life help you navigate overwhelming situations or personal struggles?

2. In what areas of your life do you need to cry out to God for help, acknowledging your neediness and his power to deliver?

December 11

God's Vision for Restoration

by Meredith Sell

After three chapters of Micah pronouncing God's judgment over the people of Samaria and Jerusalem, Micah 4 gives a stunning picture of hope. With certainty, Micah shares God's promise that there will be a time when "the house of the Lord shall be established" and "people will flow unto it" (v. 1). This is the same moment we read of in Revelation 21, where the heavenly city descends to earth and the "tabernacle of God is with men" (Rev. 21:3). One day, God will join heaven and earth together and the nations will "go up to the mountain of the Lord" so they can learn the ways of God and "walk in his paths" (v. 2).

This new reality comes with God's judgment and rebuke of the nations, but verse three shows us that this justice benefits us. It's because he confronts the nations that they convert their weapons to productive agricultural tools and no longer "learn war." To show that Micah isn't just ad-libbing pseudo-prophecy here, this promise has the stamp of God's signet ring on it: "for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken it" (v. 4).

Perhaps the greatest bit of hope in this passage is the fact that all of this is God's idea, and he's going to do it no matter what. Nothing in this passage is dependent on God's chosen people or the church or you and me getting our acts together or mustering up immense faith. God is going to renew the earth, bring heaven and earth together, judge the nations, bring about peace like we've never known, answer the groans of creation — and he's going to do these things because he wants to. He's already decided. The question is, will we join him?

Read

Micah 4:3b-4

1 In the last days the mountain of the Lord's house will be established at the top of the mountains and will be raised above the hills. Peoples will stream to it, 2 and many nations will come and say, "Come, let's go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us about his ways so we may walk in his paths." For instruction will go out of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 3 He will settle disputes among many peoples and provide arbitration for strong nations that are far away. They will beat their swords into plows and their spears into pruning knives. Nation will not take up the sword against nation, and they will never again train for war. 4 But each person will sit under his grapevine and under his fig tree with no one to frighten him. For the mouth of the Lord of Armies has spoken.

Pray

Heavenly Father, thank you for the hope you provide through your promises. As we reflect on Micah's vision of peace and restoration, help us to trust in your perfect plan. Open our hearts to join you in your work, transforming our lives and the world around us. May we be instruments of your peace, eager to learn your ways and walk in your paths. Strengthen our faith as we await the fulfillment of your kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect

- 1. How can you actively participate in God's vision for peace and restoration in your community today?*
- 2. In what areas of your life do you need to trust more fully in God's promises, especially during times of uncertainty or struggle?*

But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger."

Luke 2:10-12

