

A 25-DAY ADVENT *Countdown*

from Tracie Peterson, Karen Witemeyer,
and Misty M. Beller

We are delighted to share this Advent journey with you as we explore together the profound mystery of God's love made manifest in the birth of Jesus Christ. We've woven our individual reflections around the timeless truths found in Scripture, and our prayer is that these reflections will prepare your heart for the joy of Christmas by reminding you that in every season—whether wilderness or celebration—God is drawing near, and His light shines brightest in our darkest moments.



1

For to us a child is born

—ISAIAH 9:6

How incredible that the infinite God of the universe chose to come to this world not as a man, but as a child. An infant. A babe incapable of speech and completely dependent on human parents. Jesus relinquished his power to relate to his creation.

—KAREN WITEMEYER

2

To us a son is given

—ISAIAH 9:6

In the stillness of Advent, we're reminded that hope takes on flesh. This child, born into our waiting world, carries the weight of peace, justice, and joy; in Him, our deepest longings find their answer.

—MISTY M. BELLER

3

And the government will be on his shoulders

—ISAIAH 9:6

At a time when there seems to be so much unrest in the world, it's comforting to know that all rests on Jesus. He has always been there for us. Just let your worries rest on His shoulders.

—TRACIE PETERSON

4

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor

—ISAIAH 9:6

Wonderful Counselor. Jesus stands ready to listen to your troubles, to carry your griefs, and to offer guidance and wisdom as you journey through life.

—KAREN WITEMEYER

5

And he will be called . . . Mighty God

—ISAIAH 9:6

Isaiah's words remind us that the child to come is no ordinary king—He is the Mighty God, powerful and eternal. As we wait in hope, we find strength in knowing that God's power is not distant, but born into our world to bring light, peace, and salvation.

—MISTY M. BELLER

6

And he will be called . . . Everlasting Father

—ISAIAH 9:6

What an amazing thought. We have an Everlasting Father who will never quit on us. He will never give us up or cast us aside. He is everlasting—ever loving.

—TRACIE PETERSON

7

And he will be called . . . Prince of Peace

—ISAIAH 9:6

Prince of Peace. He calms storms with a word. He mediates between God and man.

He soothes away anger, guilt, and worry with love, grace, and authority.

No trouble is so large that his peace cannot triumph.

—KAREN WITEMEYER

8

*The Word became flesh and
made his dwelling among us.*

—JOHN 1:14

The eternal Word chose to dwell among us—not in majesty, but in vulnerability. In Christ, God comes close, taking on our humanity so that we might share in His divine life.

—MISTY M. BELLER

9

“ . . . you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

—MATTHEW 1:21

The precious name of Jesus calms me in the roughest storm. At the name of Jesus, I cease to worry and fear. What a joyous and comforting name.

—TRACIE PETERSON

10

“ . . . they will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God with us’).”

—MATTHEW 1:23

How amazing and humbling that a holy, perfect, glory-filled God would desire to live among a sinful, imperfect, rebellious people. God wants to be with us!

—KAREN WITEMEYER

11

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.”

—ISAIAH 9:2

In the midst of our darkest moments, God breaks through with the promise of hope. Advent reminds us that light is already dawning, even before we fully see it.

—MISTY M. BELLER

12

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.”

—LUKE 2:10

Angels were always startling when they first appeared and they admonished people to not be afraid. This announcement was no different. The hope of mankind had come to earth and yet Jesus hadn't come in the manner people expected. Often we disregard things when they don't look like we think they should. Instead, we need to trust that God is able to deliver on His promises, no matter what manner He chooses. He is faithful.

—TRACIE PETERSON

13

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered.

“May your word to me be fulfilled.”

—LUKE 1:38

Mary faced ostracism, divorce, and even stoning for becoming pregnant out of wedlock, yet she had faith that God's word would not fail. That the Lord would protect not only her but the child in her womb. Her submissive spirit and trusting soul made her the perfect choice for the mother of Jesus. May we emulate her servant heart.

—KAREN WITEMEYER

14

“But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.”

—MICAH 5:2

God often chooses the small and unexpected places to fulfill His greatest purposes. Through this example, we learn to watch for glory hidden in humility.

—MISTY M. BELLER

15

And all who heard it were amazed about the things which were told them by the shepherds.

—LUKE 2:18

Just imagine hearing about the birth of Jesus by these shepherds. The long awaited Messiah, the King you've been looking for has come at last. The thrill that must have coursed through people as they began to accept that God had finally sent their Deliverer. I think of the song O Holy Night and the words, "A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices. . . ." Jesus is our thrill of hope. Rejoice!

—TRACIE PETERSON

16

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem ... Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

—MATTHEW 2:1-2

From the beginning, God has invited gentiles into his plan of salvation. He has planted in the human heart the urge to seek the true King and to worship him, regardless of one's cultural background. He raises "stars" of truth to guide each of us. We simply must have eyes to see, hearts to trust, and feet to follow where he leads.

—KAREN WITEMEYER

17

“A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”

—ISAIAH 40:3

Preparation in Advent is not about perfection, but making room in barren places for God's arrival. Even in wilderness seasons, God is drawing near.

—MISTY M. BELLER

18

And the word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

—JOHN 1:14

Jesus became flesh to give mankind a way of reconciliation with the Father. Even as a baby, Jesus was the very glory of the Father and the hope of all mankind. Those with Him saw his glory. Some marveled at this while others covered in fear. Some were drawn to the light of Christ's truth and grace, while others fled that light. May we always be drawn to the shekinah glory of Jesus!

—TRACIE PETERSON

19

*“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler who will
shepherd my people Israel.”*

—MATTHEW 2:6

Our God loves humility. He came as a baby. He slept in a manger. He even rules in humility, as a shepherd serving the sheep. As Philippians 2:7-8 says, “. . . he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” May we follow his example.

—KAREN WITEMEYER

20

*“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of
Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”*

—ISAIAH II:1

God promised to bring life where there seemed only death or ruin.
Advent is a season of watching for that new growth in unlikely places.

—MISTY M. BELLER

21

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.

—2 CORINTHIANS 9:15

My mother always emphasized being thankful for whatever gift I was given. She encouraged me to make my thanks known whether in person or in a letter. She reminded me that someone had taken special time and consideration on my behalf and thank you was such a simple thing to do in response. May we be full of thanks to God for the indescribable gift of His Son Jesus.

—TRACIE PETERSON

22

The star they had seen . . . stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

—MATTHEW 2:9-10

God often asks us to follow without sharing the destination. The road might take us to unfamiliar places, try our patience, and place us in danger. Yet the reward for following is rich. You see, we, too, will see Jesus at the end of our journey. What a joy that will be!

—KAREN WITEMEYER

23

“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.”

—MALACHI 4:2

The coming of Christ is like the dawn after the longest night—bringing not just light, but healing and restoration. Advent reminds us to wait for His rising with reverent expectation.

—MISTY M. BELLER

24

Who is the one who overcomes the world, but the one who believes Jesus is the Son of God?

—I JOHN 5:5

How hard it must have been to believe that Jesus, this baby born in a manger was the Son of God. And yet, it was this lowly babe who offered us a way to the Father. The free gift of salvation is ours by believing in Jesus and making Him Lord of our hearts. Don't reject this precious gift.

—TRACIE PETERSON

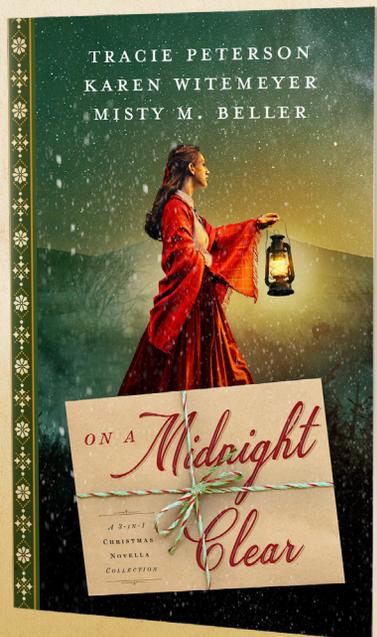
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*They bowed down and worshiped him.
Then they opened their treasures and presented
him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.*

— MATTHEW 2:11

Jesus gifted himself to the world. What will we gift to him? Whether we are a Joanna who gives from her wealth or a two-mite widow who gives from her poverty, our Lord can take our gifts and multiply them like loaves and fishes to feed a hungry world.

— KAREN WITEMEYER



*Merry
Christmas*