

WHEN GOD CAME NEAR

Four Songs. One Savior. One Story.

Christmas Booklet

2026

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS BOOKLET 2026

GII HOK IM TONG

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WHEN GOD CAME NEAR

Four Songs. One Savior. One Story.

Christmas is not merely the story of a baby born in Bethlehem two thousand years ago. Christmas is the story of God drawing near to humanity: to fulfil His promise, reveal His grace, bring salvation, and give a hope that the world cannot give.

In Luke 1–2, the coming of Christ is accompanied by four songs of great theological and spiritual richness. Mary sings her praise because, through His grace, God overturns the way people look at life. Zechariah praises God for His faithfulness in fulfilling the promise of salvation. The angels proclaim the glory of God and peace through the birth of the Savior. Simeon finally declares that God's salvation has come before his eyes in the person of a Child.

These four songs are not four separate stories. Together they are one testimony to Jesus Christ, the center of redemptive history. Each song invites a different but complementary response: to see life through grace, to trust God's promise, to worship Christ with joy, and to find hope and peace in His salvation.

A Journey of Faith, Reflection, and Worship

This Advent booklet is designed to help each person and family prepare their hearts to welcome Christmas. Through the four songs in Luke 1–2, we are invited not only to remember the birth of Jesus, but also to understand the work of God, who came near to fulfill His promise of salvation.

Use this booklet as a spiritual journey through the four weeks of Advent, following the guide below:

1. Read the Word

Begin each week by reading the Bible passage on which the devotional is based. Read slowly, and notice what is revealed about God's character, His work of salvation, and the person of Jesus Christ. Let God's Word shape the way we understand Christmas.

2. Reflect on the Message

Read the devotional with an open heart. Do not look merely for information or new knowledge; give God's Word room to rebuke, strengthen, and renew your life. Notice the main message of each song and connect it with your daily walk of faith.

3. Discuss Together

Set aside time with your family to talk through the reflection questions provided. Give every family member the opportunity to share their thoughts, experiences, struggles, and responses of faith. Make this a moment to listen to one another, encourage one another, and grow together in Christ.

4. Live It Out

A devotional does not end with understanding; it must lead to a real response. Decide on one step of obedience that you can take, both personally and as a family. Let the grace, promise, joy, and hope we have in Christ be seen in our words, attitudes, decisions, and actions.

5. Pray Together

Close each time of reflection with the prayer provided. Pray earnestly, entrust your family's struggles and needs to the Lord, and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit so that the truth of His Word becomes ever more real in your life.

ADVENT WEEK 1

November 29 - December 5, 2026



Magnify The Lord: When Grace Changes Your Perspective

Luke 1:46-55

Have you ever been in a situation where something in your life did not go according to plan, and you began to question whether God is truly at work? We tend to judge God's goodness by what we have, the successes we achieve, and the problems we manage to overcome. When things go well, it is easy to give thanks. But when the road of life becomes uncertain, we begin to find it hard to see His goodness. Mary teaches a different perspective. When she received the news that she would conceive the Messiah, she was not entering an easy situation. Her pregnancy before she and Joseph had begun living together as husband and wife could give rise to misunderstanding, social rejection, and a bleak future. Yet Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord." The word "magnifies" translates the Greek word megalynō, which means to enlarge or to declare greatness. Mary was not making God greater than He had been before. She was acknowledging and proclaiming the greatness of God, who had been at work in her life. Mary's perspective was determined not primarily by the size of her problems, but by the greatness of the God she trusted.

Notice that Mary's song does not stop at her personal experience. She moves from what God has done for her to what God has done for His people. God shows His power, scatters the proud, brings down the mighty, lifts the lowly, and fills the hungry with good things. These words remind us of Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2:1–10 and show

that God acts in ways contrary to the world's standards of greatness. Yet the Magnificat is not simply a declaration that the poor will certainly become rich or that every injustice will immediately end. Mary is praising a God who is faithful to His covenant, who does not allow human pride and power to have the last word in history. The climax of her song is in verses 54–55: God remembers His mercy and His promise to Abraham. The birth of Jesus means that God's promise of redemption is moving toward its fulfillment. In Christ, God's grace comes not as a gift for those who consider themselves worthy, but as a work of salvation that springs from God's faithfulness.

Christmas invites us to change the question we so often ask. Rather than asking only "Why isn't my life going the way I want?" we can learn to ask "How can I see God's faithfulness in the midst of this situation?" This does not mean denying sorrow or treating suffering as something light that we can simply enjoy. Mary herself faced a path full of risk and would later hear that a sword would pierce her own soul (Luke 2:35). Faith does not require us to pretend that everything is fine; faith teaches us to keep looking to God when things are not yet fine. In our families, we can practice this by replacing the habit of complaining with speaking of grace, by learning to give thanks without closing our eyes to hardship, and by using the blessings we have to care for those in need. We are also called to be

humble, for those who truly understand grace have no reason to boast. When grace changes our perspective, we no longer make our circumstances the ultimate measure of God's goodness; we learn to read our circumstances through God's faithfulness, revealed in Christ.

Family Discussion

- In what situations do you find it easiest to forget God's goodness? What makes it hard for you to see His grace when things do not turn out as you hoped?
- Mary praised God not only for what He did for her, but also for His faithfulness to His people. How can your family use the blessings you have received to bless others?
- If you truly believe that salvation is a gift of grace, what change should be visible in the way you respond to success, failure, and people who are different from you?

Family Prayer

Gracious Father, we thank You that You are a God who sees our lowliness and does not forget Your promise. Forgive us when we measure Your love by our success, our comfort, and the fulfillment of our desires. Open our eyes to see Your greatness, even when we are walking through a difficult season. Teach us to have the humility of Mary, who acknowledged that everything comes from Your grace. Shape our family to be one that not only receives blessings but also channels them to others. May Christ be the center of how we view life, so that our joy does not depend entirely on circumstances but is rooted in Your salvation and faithfulness. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

ADVENT WEEK II

December 6-12, 2026

Trust the Promise: When God Seems Silent But Never Fails

Luke 1:67-79



There are seasons when we have prayed for so long, yet nothing has changed. We wait for restoration, an answer, a new opportunity, or God's help, while time keeps passing. In such times, God's silence can feel like His absence. The story of Zechariah helps us understand that waiting does not always mean God has forgotten His people. Zechariah was a priest who, together with Elizabeth, had long waited for a child. When the angel Gabriel told them that they would have a son who would prepare the way for the Lord, Zechariah found it hard to believe. He was struck mute until the promise began to be fulfilled. When John was finally born and Zechariah could speak again, his response was more than the joy of a father. Luke 1:67 says that Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. His song, known as the Benedictus, from the Latin word meaning "blessed," views John's birth within the far greater horizon of God's work of salvation. Zechariah was not only thankful that his family had received a son; he praised God because the redemption He had promised was coming.

This song moves from God's work for His people to John's task as the forerunner of the Messiah. God raises up a "horn of salvation" from the house of David, an image of the strength and saving victory He has promised. He does this to fulfill the covenant with Abraham and to show His mercy to His people. Zechariah then speaks of John, who will prepare the way for the Lord, proclaim salvation through the forgiveness of sins,

and point to the light that comes from on high. This image of light is crucial: people sit in darkness and the shadow of death, but God comes to guide their feet into the way of peace. The center of this song is not humanity's ability to save itself, but God's initiative in fulfilling His promise. That fulfillment takes place through Jesus Christ, the descendant of David and the Savior who brings forgiveness of sins. For this reason, faith in God's promise is not a conviction that every personal desire will certainly be granted at the time we set. Faith is the trust that God is faithful to His redemptive purpose and that His promises reach their fullness in Christ.

We often measure God's faithfulness by the speed of His answers. But the Bible teaches us to distinguish between God's promises and our own desires. God has not promised that all our problems will be solved before Christmas, that all our prayers will be answered on our schedule, or that the lives of believers will be free from suffering. He has promised salvation in Christ and calls us to live in hope as we await the fullness of His kingdom. When our families go through seasons of waiting, we can learn to pray without giving up, to return to the Word that strengthens our faith, and to keep carrying out the responsibilities the Lord has entrusted to us. We can also remember that waiting is no reason to stop loving, serving, or doing what is right. John prepared the way for the Lord; he was not the center of salvation himself. In the same way,

our lives are not about making ourselves the center of the story, but about pointing to Christ through our daily faithfulness. God may not work according to our schedule, but the coming of Christ shows that He has not abandoned His plan of salvation.

Family Discussion

- Has your family ever gone through a long season of waiting? How did that experience affect the way you pray and trust God?
- What is the difference between trusting God's promises and assuming that God must fulfill all your desires?
- John was called to prepare the way for the Lord. In what ways can your family help others come to know Christ through your words, character, and everyday actions?

Family Prayer

Faithful God, we praise You because You have not forgotten Your covenant. Forgive us when waiting makes us doubt Your goodness, or when we assume that You must work according to the time we set. Teach us to distinguish between Your sure promises and our limited desires. Thank You that through Jesus Christ You have come bringing forgiveness of sins and the light of salvation to those who sit in darkness. Strengthen the members of our family who are waiting for an answer, for restoration, or for a way forward. Give us patience to wait, wisdom to take the right steps, and courage to keep doing Your will. Use our lives to prepare the way for others, so that they may come to know the Savior. In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.

ADVENT WEEK III

December 13 - 19, 2026

Glorify the Savior: When Wonder Becomes Worship

Luke 2:8-20



That night, the shepherds were doing the routine work they usually did: watching over their flocks in the fields. They were not in a palace, not attending a gathering of religious leaders, and not waiting for some extraordinary spiritual experience. Yet it was to them that the news of the Savior's birth was first announced. Suddenly, an angel stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. Their response was fear. This is not strange, for in the Bible an encounter with the glory of God often makes people aware of their limitations, frailty, helplessness, and even their sinfulness. But the first message the angel delivered was not condemnation; it was an invitation not to be afraid. He brought good news of great joy for all people. The reason was clear: **a Savior has been born, who is Christ the Lord.** Notice these three titles. "Savior" declares that people need a deliverance they cannot achieve for themselves. "Christ" points to the Messiah whom God promised. "Lord" affirms His authority and position. The sign given to the shepherds appeared strikingly simple: a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. The glory of God was present through a humility that did not match human expectations.

Then a great company of the heavenly host praised God with the cry known as the **Gloria: glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.** This song brings together two realities that

must not be separated: the glory of God and peace for humanity. The peace proclaimed is not merely a calm state of mind, nor a promise that all conflict would end the moment Jesus was born. This peace is rooted in God's act of reconciling humanity to Himself through Christ. Sin has damaged humanity's relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation; therefore, true peace cannot be built merely on a comfortable atmosphere or on human effort to avoid quarrels. God Himself took the initiative to bring salvation. After the angels left, the shepherds hurried to find the baby. They found Mary, Joseph, and the Child lying in the manger, and told them what had been said to them. Afterward, they returned, glorifying and praising God. They went back to the same work, but no longer with the same outlook. An encounter with Christ turns fear into testimony and wonder into worship.

We can celebrate Christmas very lavishly and yet miss the very center of Christmas. We can enjoy the songs, the decorations, the food, and the family gatherings, yet not truly worship Christ. The shepherds teach us an important pattern of response: they heard the good news, went to see Christ, shared their testimony, and then praised God. Worship is not merely an emotional experience during an hour or so of attending a service; worship is a life response to who Christ is and what He has done. If Christ is truly the Savior, we do not need to build our identity

on achievement or human approval. If He is truly Lord, we cannot limit His authority to Sundays or Christmas events. If He brings peace through His salvation, we are called to be peacemakers in our families, our church, and our society. The peace in view does not mean covering up wounds or tolerating injustice, but facing everything with truth, love, forgiveness, and humility. We do not worship because life is always easy; we worship because the Savior has come and is worthy of our praise.

Family Discussion

- What is the difference between celebrating Christmas as a tradition and celebrating Christmas as a response of worship to Christ?
- The shepherds returned to their work while glorifying God. How can we carry an attitude of worship into our work, school, home, and everyday relationships?
- In which family relationships do we most need the peace of Christ? What concrete step can we take to face that issue with love and truth?

Family Prayer

Glorious God, we praise You. In Your love, You sent Jesus Christ, the Savior, into a world in need of redemption. Forgive us when the celebration of Christmas draws more of our attention than the One we are celebrating. Teach us to see Your glory in the humility of Christ and to find a joy that does not depend on luxury or comfort. Fill our homes with the peace that comes from being reconciled to You. Help us to resolve conflict with love, speak with truth, forgive sincerely, and care for those who are often overlooked. Like the shepherds, may we not only receive the good news, but also bear witness to Christ through our lives. To You be glory, now and forever. In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.

ADVENT WEEK IV

December 20 - 24, 2026

See the Savior: When Hope Becomes Enough

Luke 2:25-35



There is a difference between having many of the things we want and having something that truly becomes the foundation of our hope. We can achieve much in life and still feel restless, because there is always something unfulfilled. We can plan the future well, yet never fully control what will happen. Simeon shows us a different kind of hope. Luke describes him as a righteous and devout man who was waiting for the consolation of Israel. He lived in the hope of the fulfillment of God's promise, and the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah. When Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the temple, the Holy Spirit led Simeon to be there. Simeon then took the Child in his arms and praised God. His song is known as the Nunc Dimittis, taken from a Latin phrase meaning "now, let [Your servant] depart." He said that now he could depart in peace, because his eyes had seen God's salvation. Simeon was not saying that all of Israel's problems had been solved that day, or that its future would be free of difficulty. He was declaring that God's promise had entered history through the presence of the Messiah. He could face his future in peace because his hope no longer depended on the uncertainty of circumstances, but on the faithfulness of God that he had witnessed in Christ.

What is especially important is that Simeon called Jesus the salvation that God has prepared in the presence of all peoples: a light

for the Gentiles and the glory of Israel. God's salvation is not intended for only one ethnic group or nation. In Jesus, God's promise to Israel moves toward a blessing that reaches the nations. Yet Simeon also did not portray the Messiah's journey as a story of victory without suffering. He told Mary that the Child would cause the falling and rising of many, would be a sign that is opposed, and that a sword would pierce her own soul. In other words, salvation comes through a Messiah who will face rejection and suffering. The baby Simeon held was the Jesus who would one day walk to the cross. For this reason, the peace Simeon declared is not shallow optimism, but a hope rooted in God's plan of redemption. Christmas must not be separated from the cross and the resurrection. Christ came not merely to inspire us or to make human life a little more comfortable, but to save His people from their sins. Through His death and resurrection, He conquered the power of sin and death. This is the foundation of Christian hope: not that we are able to ensure that everything goes according to plan, but that God's salvation has been revealed in Christ and His promise will be fulfilled.

The hope that Simeon shows challenges the way we live our daily lives. Often, we measure the future by what we do not yet have: circumstances that have not changed, prayers that have not been answered, or problems that have not been resolved. Without realizing it, we make the fulfillment of our desires a condition

for experiencing peace. We think we can only be at rest when our family is doing well, our work is going smoothly, our health is preserved, our relationships are restored, and all our plans succeed. But Simeon's story reminds us that the foundation of our hope is not the certainty that every circumstance will go as we wish, but the certainty that God has given His salvation in Christ. This does not mean that we stop praying, striving, or working for change. Precisely because we have hope in Christ, we can face the realities of life with courage, without being enslaved by anxiety. When we experience loss, we can still grieve without losing hope. When we face uncertainty, we can still step forward without needing to know all the answers. When prayers go unanswered, we can still believe that God never fails to keep His promises. In our families and communities, we are called to be people who not only encourage one another with the promise that things will soon get better but also remind one another that Christ remains the foundation of our hope even when circumstances have not changed. For hope becomes enough not when all our desires are fulfilled, but when Christ becomes the deepest foundation of our lives. **We may not yet have received everything we hope for, but in Christ we have received the salvation that is the foundation of our hope.**

Family Discussion

- What most often makes you feel restless or find it hard to experience peace? Do you sometimes make having control over your circumstances a condition for feeling at ease?
- Simeon found peace because he saw God's salvation in Jesus. What is the difference between a peace that depends on circumstances and a peace rooted in Christ?
- If your family truly believes that Jesus has conquered sin and death, how should that hope affect the way you face loss, failure, suffering, and an uncertain future?

Family Prayer

Faithful Father, thank You that You have revealed Your salvation through Jesus Christ. We confess that our hearts are often restless because we base our peace on things we cannot control. We fear the future, regret past failures, and find it hard to give thanks when circumstances do not match our hopes. Teach us, like Simeon, to see Your salvation and to rest in Your promise. We surrender every unresolved matter, every prayer whose answer we are still waiting for, and every burden we carry into the future. This does not mean that we stop striving, but that we no longer treat our success as the foundation of our salvation and peace. Strengthen our faith in Christ, who died and rose again, and sustain our family until Your promise is fulfilled. In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.

RELEASE

December 27, 2026

Letting Go of What Must Be Left Behind

Hebrews 12:1-2



Not everything we carry from the past deserves to be carried into the future. The author of Hebrews calls us to lay aside every weight and sin that hinders the journey of faith. There are things we must let go of: bitterness, regret, guilt that keeps haunting us, disappointment, and habits that draw us away from the Lord. We cannot run with perseverance if we keep clinging to burdens that ought to be left behind. The journey of faith requires the courage to let go of the past and fix our eyes on Jesus.

Obedience Project

- Identify one emotional or spiritual burden that has been hindering your growth in faith.
- Write down what you need to let go of: bitterness, regret, anger, sin, or fear.
- Take one concrete step to leave it behind. If it involves sin, practice concrete repentance. If it involves bitterness, begin praying for the person who hurt you.
- Set aside time to pray and surrender that burden to the Lord.

SURRENDER

December 28, 2026

Entrusting What Is Unfinished

Proverbs 3:5-6; Philippians 1:6



One of the greatest human struggles is the desire to control everything. We want to know how the future will unfold, when our prayers will be answered, when our problems will be resolved, and when our circumstances will change. But faith is not the ability to know the whole road ahead of us; it is the courage to trust the God who knows our whole journey. Philippians 1:6 gives the assurance that God, who began a good work in His people, will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. We may not yet see its completion, but we can trust the faithfulness of the One who is doing the work.

Obedience Project

- Write down three things that are still unfinished and weigh most heavily on your mind.
- Distinguish what is your responsibility from what is beyond your control.
- Take one responsible action on the things you can work on.
- For the things you cannot control, pray about them specifically and surrender them to the Lord. Do not keep trying to control what must be entrusted to Him.

RESTORE

December 29, 2026

Restoring What Needs to Be Repaired

Colossians 3:12-14; Romans 12:18



Not everything that is unfinished has to do with circumstances or achievements. There are broken relationships, hurtful words, promises not kept, and wrongs that have never been acknowledged. The gospel not only reconciles us to God but also shapes us into people who bring reconciliation. Paul reminds the church to put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness. Restoring relationships is not always easy and does not always succeed right away, but we are called to take the initiative to do our part. We cannot force reconciliation, but we can begin with repentance, humility, and love.

Obedience Project

- Identify one relationship that needs attention or restoration.
- Consider whether there are any words, attitudes, or actions of yours that need to be acknowledged and answered for.
- Take the initiative to apologize, reach out, listen, or repair something you once broke.
- If someone has hurt you, begin to pray for them and learn to let go of the desire for revenge. Set healthy boundaries if the relationship involves abuse or harmful behavior.

REMEMBER

December 30, 2026

Remembering What God Has Done

Deuteronomy 8:2-10; Psalm 103:1-5



One of the dangers in the journey of faith is focusing so much on what we have not yet received that we forget what God has already done. In Deuteronomy 8, Moses reminds Israel to remember their whole journey through the wilderness. They were to remember how God sustained them, provided for them, and shaped them. To remember is not merely to look back on the past, but to reread the journey of our lives through God's faithfulness. Even in difficult seasons, there is provision, strength, help, and grace that we may not have noticed. A heart that remembers the work of God will have reason to give thanks and courage to trust Him again.

Obedience Project

- Write down at least five things that show the Lord's provision and goodness in your life.
- Recall one struggle you once faced and how the Lord helped you through it.
- Offer specific thanks to the Lord in prayer.
- Share one testimony of the Lord's faithfulness with a family member or with someone who is going through a struggle.

RENEW

December 31, 2026

Stepping Into the Future by Faith

Isaiah 43:18-19; Philippians 3:13-14



The God who works in our lives is not a God who works only in the past. Through Isaiah, the Lord declares that He is doing a new thing and making a way in the wilderness. This does not mean that we must forget all our history or ignore the lessons of the past. Rather, we must not make our past experiences the limit of what God can do. Paul also describes the life of faith as a journey that keeps moving toward the goal in Christ. We are not called to live in regret over what has passed or in fear of what is to come. We are called to keep growing, obeying, and stepping forward in God's calling. Our future is not simply an empty space that we must control, but a journey to be walked together with the Lord.

Obedience Project

- Write down one area of your spiritual life in which you want to grow: prayer, Bible reading, ministry, family, or character.
- Decide on one concrete, realistic spiritual habit to practice consistently.
- Write down one step of obedience that you have been putting off and set a date for when you will begin.
- Share that commitment with one person who can support you and pray for your growth in faith.



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