



{EXTRA}ORDINARY CHRISTMAS

ADVENT EXPLORATION GUIDE





As Advent arrives—with extra joy, color, dazzle,
and wonder—our aim this year is to see how God
meets us in our ordinary, seemingly mundane,
even pain-filled and stress-filled moments.
It's often in these very ordinary places that
he works in his extraordinary ways.



WEEKONE

Leading up to Sunday, Dec 6

**Watch this week for extra surprises,
extra ordinary people, & extraordinary grace.**

Gospel focus: **Matthew 1:1-17**

Opening up

Are you ready for Christmas?

Are you a make-a-list-to-get-ready kind of person or a wing-it style of Christmas planner?

What are some of the reasons people typically miss the true meaning of Christmas?



[Watch this video! "What is Advent?"](#)

How does this stir and move you?

Read Matthew 1:1.

What is Matthew proclaiming about Jesus with this opening verse, and why was it so significant?

Read 2 Samuel 7:16, Isaiah 9:6-7 & Genesis 22:17-18.

What's the connection between these verses and the arrival of Jesus centuries later?

Matthew is emphasizing: ***It's Jesus! HE's the promised King!***

What should be our heartfelt response? What often blocks people from making such a personal, heartfelt response to the King?

Read Matthew 1:2-17.

What astounds you about some of the people in the kingly family tree?

Which “broken ornaments” (mixed up, sinful, messed up people) in these verses stand out to you? What do you remember about them based on other Bible stories?

Read Matthew 9:9-13. *What's amazing here?*

Why is it hard for some people to grasp that God accepts them & loves them, even in their broken, struggling, sinful, heart-broken condition?

Christ accepts us just as we are, and when we surrender to Him as our King, he works to remake us, renew us, and transform us into new people.

How does this give you fresh hope? Explain a personal situation where this supplies you with solid hope, trust, and greater confidence for living right now.

Prayer Reflection:

Think of friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers you want to pray for, that they might experience Christ's great hope, grace, and love this Christmas.

WEEK TWO

Leading up to Sunday, Dec 13

***Watch this week for extra courage required,
extra miraculous movement, and extraordinary salvation.***

Gospel focus: **Matthew 1:18-21**

Opening Up

Do you put up a "real tree" or an "artificial tree?" Why?

Recall a story of going "on a mission" for the ideal Christmas tree, either real or artificial.

King Jesus came with purpose, mission & passionate love to save us!

It's SO important to discover in a brand-new way this heart of Christmas. We can go deeper and wider, beyond the lights, shopping, parties, and programs. All these are fun and add meaning. But most of us long for that deeper sense of wonder, amazement, and a real encounter with God's love. Let's explore in Matthew 1 the true purpose and wonder of Christmas.



[Watch this video! "Advent 1- Hope"](#)

How does this stir and move you?

First, marvel at God's amazing miracle to bring us King Jesus!

Read together Matthew 1:18. *What's shocking and significant about this report? What emotions would Joseph and Mary feel?*

Read Luke 1:34-35.

What additional information do we discover from Mary's perspective? Why is this info significant? What's the big deal, the news that this will happen through the Holy Spirit?

Read Matthew 1:19 and Deuteronomy 22:23-24. At this point, Joseph's life takes a surprising turn. Can you imagine trying to process this? *How would you feel if you were in Joseph's shoes?*

Look at Matthew 1:20.

What does the angel's message mean?

Read John 5:18.

What if Jesus had not been conceived by the virgin, Mary, through the Holy Spirit?

How can we more appropriately wonder and marvel in the mystery and joy of such a miracle? How can this prompt us to worship and adore Him more?

Second, grasp Jesus' amazing mission and the real purpose of Christmas.

Read Matthew 1:21.

What's the meaning behind the baby's name? What does this tell you about the mission and life purpose for Mary's baby boy?

Read 1 Peter 2:24.

Why do we need "saved" from our sins? What does this mean for you personally this Christmas season?

Prayer Reflection:

Reflect on praises and also requests.

Think specifically about several other people.

Pray for them, for a personal encounter with Christ's presence and mission during this Christmas season.

WEEKTHREE

Leading up to Sunday, Dec 20 & Christmas Eve

***Watch this week for extra follow-through opportunities,
extra obedience, and extraordinary promise of His presence.***

***And on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day,
watch for extra opportunities to seek,
even amid the extra disturbances.***

***Watch for extraordinary joy and
adoration in your life toward King Jesus!***

Gospel focus: **Matthew 1:22-2:12**

Opening up

Recall the last time you took a risk, big or small. What happened?

Read Matthew 1:22-23.

*God WITH us. What does this mean and how does this reality bless you,
help you, or inspire you in this season?*



[Watch this video! "Come Thou Long Expected Jesus"](#)

How does this stir and move you?

Will you choose to risk it and join Jesus' mission?

*Look at the risk Joseph took. **Read Matthew 1:24-25.***

Risky ideas

- *Welcome Jesus into your own personal world.
In heartfelt prayer, invite him into your life.*
- *Welcome Jesus into your Christmas plans. Try thinking about
everything you do in the next set of days with Jesus in mind.*
- *Welcome others to encounter Christ. Try sharing with a friend
who needs hope, the real reason for this season.*

Which of these risky ideas above could be most helpful and healthy for you during this season? Why?

What Christmas-time event, gathering, or task creates your biggest tension, stress, and an overall challenge to choose joy? Describe it and why.

Read Matthew 2:1-2.

What do you notice to be unique about the timing?

See Galatians 4:4 –We see God's timing. He's never late!

How does this encourage you?

Based on what's said in Matthew 2:1-2, as well as other historical facts, what is unique about the role the wise men (Magi) played?

Look at vs. 3-4. Here's a surprising discovery: **King Herod's crafty nature.** *What stands out to you about Herod? What else have you learned about Herod, and why do you think it says that "everyone in Jerusalem" was also troubled?*

Look at Matthew 2:5-6.

*What's surprising about the attitude of the Jewish religious leaders? They reply by echoing the ancient prophecy in **Micah 5:2 & 4.***

Catch the rest of the story. **Verses 7-8.**

What is Herod really up to?

Read Matthew 2:9-10...

The story shows us **two possible choices/responses** to King Jesus.

A Hum-Bug Response.

Two expressions of hum-bug are possible:
Hostility or apathy.

How can you avoid being hostile in your heart toward Christ? What does it take in order to move out of being hostile to King Jesus?

How can you avoid apathy? What's it take to cultivate honest "seeking?"

A Seeking, Joy-filled Response. Look at vs. 10 again.

The prophet Isaiah foretold this, for these Magi and many others.

Look up Isaiah 60:1-3. *What do you find amazing and encouraging in this prophecy?*

And read Jeremiah 29:13.

*How will you and your family seek joy in Christ Jesus the King this week?
Share ideas for cultivating real joy.*

Praise and Prayer:

Set aside some time to gather as family, to adore King Jesus.



Bonus video! (approx. 30 min)

["The Christmas Experience: Gold, Frankincense, Myrrh"](#)

How does this stir and move you?

WEEKFOUR

Days following Christmas and leading up to Sunday, Dec 27

Watch this week for any extra-fearful threats to your peace, but also God's extra protection in the face of such fear. Watch for reminders of extraordinary fulfillment of his prophetic promises.

Gospel Focus: **Matthew 2:13-23**

What do the days after Christmas typically feel like for you and your family? Is there ever let-down, discouragement, stress, and fear associated with these days?



[Watch this video! "Advent 2- Peace"](#)

How does this stir and move you?

Read the events that transpire for the "holy family" right after the wise men depart. **See Matthew 2:13-23.** *Put yourself in their situation. How would this have felt?*

How did God care for and protect them? Why was such care and protection so significant? What was their response?

Where and why are you in need of the Lord's extra care, protection, and strength in these post-Christmas days and heading into 2021?

How can you respond in faith-filled, follow-his-lead ways right now? What will that look like for you and your family?



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