

September–December 2025



Day by Day with God

Rooting women's lives in the Bible

FEATURING SANDRA WHEATLEY, EMMA SCRIVENER AND NAOMI AIDOO

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Ministries



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Day by Day with God

Edited by **Jackie Harris**

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Welcome



I've been thinking a lot about Jesus' invitation to spend time with him. I particularly like the translation of Jesus' words in Matthew 11:29 in *The Message*: 'Walk with me and work with me... Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.' In a world where life seems set on maximum speed, the promise of rest, quiet and rejuvenation is particularly inviting. It is our prayer that these notes will help you to respond to that invitation and to discover more of the person of Jesus and the life God intended for us.

Our aim is always to balance Old and New Testament content and to include seasonal material and favourite passages. Some studies enable us to spend time with a particular passage or narrative, while others explore a theme. What they all have in common is encouragement to respond to what we read and practical ideas as to how we can do that.

This issue begins with an invitation to look up and focus on the majesty of God. However chaotic things seem, we are reminded that God is mightier than anyone or anything else, and we can trust him. Then there's practical and gentle guidance as we look at the Bible's teachings on forgiveness and the difficulties we sometimes face in putting it into action.

In October, we look at Paul's first missionary journey, consider the wisdom of Ecclesiastes and what we can learn about living a life that counts, and draw inspiration from the woman of valour in Proverbs 31.

The promise of rest takes us into November as we consider how to manage stress in our lives and the importance of keeping in step with Jesus. There's practical teaching on mediation and reconciliation through the letter to Philemon, and then encouragement to remember and focus on the goodness of God.

Waiting is our theme as we move into Advent and then how we can shine for Jesus and look forward to his eternal light. We continue to focus on Jesus as we're encouraged to spend the Christmas season at his feet, simply adoring, treasuring and pondering God's gift of his Son to us.

'Walk with me and work with me.' May these words inspire us in the busy months ahead to keep in step with Jesus, and may we know his presence and experience his peace in our lives.

Jackie

Jackie Harris, Editor

Waiting well



Claire Musters writes...

Advent is a time of waiting and of hope. Let's explore together what that means, and how it relates to our day-to-day lives.

Traditionally, as the first of the Advent candles is lit, the focus is on hope and the reminder that Jesus is coming. So, as we begin Advent, I am going to draw our attention to the hope that we have in Jesus, to pause and rejoice, but also to ponder how that hope enables us to wait well not only at Christmastime, but throughout the year – and whatever our circumstances.

We are going to dig into scripture and study characters who learned to wait while trusting in God. Many are from the Old Testament, people who hadn't met Jesus but were faithfully hanging on to a promise from old. How wonderful to be able to read their stories today through the lens of the coming of Jesus. They have so much to teach us in our own times of waiting – particularly through struggle, disappointment and pain.

It is important to take time to celebrate all that Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection means for us as we go about our daily lives. How incredible that we can know his joy, peace, comfort, wisdom and care every single day! How marvellous that we are able to recognise that: 'The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness' (Lamentations 3:22–23, ESV).

We can also be strengthened by knowing that Jesus experienced what it means to be human while he walked on earth, so he can empathise with us in our more difficult seasons (see Hebrews 4:15). We can learn from the way he lived his life through times of joy but also of despair. When we face times of excruciating waiting, knowing that both he and other biblical characters trod a similar path before us is so helpful – and encouraging.

So, let's delve into scripture and learn together what it means to hold on to our living hope this Advent.

Our living hope

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. (vv. 3-4, NIV)

As we begin Advent, we tend to focus our attention on Jesus' coming. Images of the nativity come to mind – of Jesus as a helpless baby. Sometimes we romanticise this, glossing over the fact that the conditions of his birth were not exactly ideal. We also perhaps fail to appreciate what it means that Jesus fully embraced humanity. As someone commented in our church book club last night, he didn't come out of the womb already walking and talking, but was totally dependent on his mother and father for all his needs and would have communicated those needs the same way other infants do – by crying (despite what our Christmas carols tell us). He took time to learn how to talk, eat, walk and grow in his understanding. Luke tells us that Jesus grew physically, relationally and spiritually (2:52).

While it's good to pause and ponder that Jesus was indeed a helpless baby and spent more than 30 years in preparation for his ministry, the fact is his coming at Christmas ushered in a new hope for us all. Those who believe Jesus came as the Son of God, was crucified and rose from the dead can know a new birth as children of God (1 John 3:1-2). If you have never given your life to God, I urge you to take time this Advent to read through Jesus' story (through one of the gospels) and ask God to reveal himself to you.

If you are already a Christian, take courage in the fact that you have an inheritance awaiting you that can 'never perish, spoil or fade' (v. 4). Whatever you might be facing right now, this living hope in Jesus is certainly something to rejoice in.

Lord, help me to take time today to pause and remember the living hope that you have brought to me. Amen.

Submitting to God's timing

Afterwards, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. He said to his men, 'The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord.' (vv. 5-6, NIV)

This might appear to be an unusual passage to choose for Advent, but this part of David's story offers us both a challenge and an encouragement as we focus on learning to wait well.

While he was still a shepherd, David was chosen by God for leadership when he was anointed by Samuel and told he would one day be king (1 Samuel 16). However, after that time, the current king, Saul, became jealous and tried to kill him, so David had to flee to the hills and hide in caves. During his enforced exile, David was learning lessons of leadership and character. In 1 Samuel 22:1-2 we read that all who were 'in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their commander'. We are told that 400 men were with him.

How frustrating it must have been to draw a following but still be on the run. How easy it could have been to try to take things into his own hands, particularly when those around him were telling him that God had delivered Saul into his hands (v. 4). In his heart David knew that wasn't true, and when he cut the piece of cloth from Saul's clothing, he instantly regretted it.

When we receive a promise from God, but don't see it come to pass quickly, do we try to hurry things along? Waiting can be so frustrating, but often God is at work, preparing us.

It is also worth considering which voices we are listening to in our time of waiting. Those around us will no doubt have their own opinions, but it is only God's that matters. Too often, we can be lured by opinions that flatter us or align with our own thoughts.

Lord, help me to honestly evaluate my attitude towards my circumstances. I'm sorry if I have tried to rush beyond the pace you have set for my life. Help me to humbly allow you to work on my character today. Amen.

CLAIRE MUSTERS

Being honest before God

Hannah replied, ‘I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief.’ (vv. 15–16, NIV)

At this time of year, any struggles or heartache we are going through can pierce even deeper amid all the cultural jollity that surrounds us in the run up to Christmas. I am reassured by biblical stories like Hannah’s, where we see characters unashamed to pour out their angst honestly before God.

Stories like this one have freed me to do the same amid deep emotional pain over the last few years. Caring for my mum while she went to be with Jesus, closely followed by the lockdowns because of the Covid pandemic and then a mental health crash in one of our children meant that I felt swept away by one wave of pain after another. Looking on helplessly day after day while being unable to take the struggles away from my loved ones was gut-wrenchingly hard. Pouring out my pain before God was the only thing that kept me going. However, that was a choice and at times that too felt too hard, and I hid away even from him.

One of the hardest things we face when we are grieving is being misunderstood. I can relate to that too, having experienced others’ misunderstanding about what is happening in our family. Poor Hannah was mistakenly thought to be drunk by Eli the priest, but she responded honestly, as we can.

Let us draw close to God today and not allow any ill-treatment from others to cause our hearts to harden. Like Hannah, we know whether we have become bitter or if our hearts remain soft before God. However painful it is right now, let’s keep our eyes fixed on God.

Lord, thank you that you invite me to be honest before you. Help me to always keep the lines of communication open with you, however I am feeling. Amen.

Do not conform

All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, ‘If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness!’ (v. 2, NIV)

God had done an incredible miracle delivering the Israelites from their captivity in Egypt by parting the Red Sea. Having travelled in the desert as far as the Desert of Paran, God had instructed Moses to send some men to check Canaan out. On their return, all the spies indicated that the land was rich in resources, but all but two were overcome by the size of the inhabitants (see Numbers 13). In response, the Israelites all grumbled, wishing themselves back in Egypt again, just as they had done over the lack of variety in their diet when God miraculously provided manna and quail (see Numbers 11).

It has been said that God took the Israelites out of Egypt, but then had to painstakingly take Egypt out of their hearts. This causes me to wonder how much we too are affected by the culture around us, and how we view the circumstances and ‘giants’ we face in our own lives. Do we crumble in fear or, like Joshua and Caleb, do we speak out words of faith, reminding ourselves and those around us that ‘the Lord is with us’ (14:9).

In Romans 12:2 we are told: ‘Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.’ It is so important to be intentional about what we fill our minds with, to think about the company we keep and to guard what comes out of our mouths. The Israelites focused on their current problems, totally ignoring the incredible ways God had provided for them in the recent past. By cultivating a heart of gratitude and regularly remembering God’s love and care, we can ensure we do not become like them.

Lord, I am sorry when I focus my attention entirely on today’s problems or allow myself to be squeezed into my culture’s mould. Help me to listen to your promptings today to guard my heart and mind. Amen.

CLAIRE MUSTERS

Persistence in prayer

‘Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days.’ (10:12-13, NIV)

Daniel was in exile in Babylon. He had been studying the scriptures and began to mourn when he understood ‘that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years’ (Daniel 9:2). Through a series of perplexing visions and his prayers, he was struggling to understand what was going on and pleading to God for his people. It is so interesting that Daniel was told that his words were heard and acted upon as soon as he began to pray.

When I am praying, if I don’t hear or see anything, I can begin to feel despondent, that God isn’t listening, which is foolish as I know the truth! What reassurance to read, in the midst of what is a strange book, that Daniel’s prayers were heard immediately.

I also find it fascinating that Daniel is told that the angel who had been sent to him had been held up by opposition (10:13). Now I know that there is so much within the supernatural realm that we simply don’t understand, but I see this as a call to persist in prayer. James tells us that ‘the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective’ (5:16). He is talking specifically about healing, but our prayers have a wider influence in this universe – probably more than we realise.

Jesus told his disciples the story of the persistent widow ‘to show them that they should always pray and not give up’ (Luke 18:1) and Paul encourages the early church to ‘pray continually’ (1 Thessalonians 5:17). If you have a person or situation that you are praying about, can I encourage you today to not give up.

Take some time to meditate on 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 – ‘Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.’

Keeping our hearts focused

She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (vv. 37–38, NIV)

When Mary and Joseph took Jesus to be dedicated at the temple, they encountered two faithful followers who had been eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Messiah – for years. Simeon knew ‘he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah’ (v. 26). As soon as he saw Jesus, he took him into his arms and worshipped God. What an incredible moment – for him, Jesus and his parents!

Anna was a prophet who had sadly lost her husband after only seven years of marriage, and yet she remained focused on worship, prayer and fasting. She had the privilege of telling people who Jesus was as soon as she saw and recognised him. I am challenged to ask: how do I live when I’m expectantly waiting for something? Do I still reveal that I value God’s presence above all else? What about you?

There have been times in my life when I have simply had no energy because everything has been so difficult and I have given up on spiritual disciplines, even though I know their worth. There are times when we need to show ourselves grace, but it is also vital to recognise when we are falling into a trap. I know that prayer and worship lift me beyond my circumstances to connect more deeply with God, and I’ve recently learned afresh the power of fasting. Jesus spoke about fasting as if it was a natural part of life: in Matthew 6:16, he says ‘when’ you fast, not ‘if’. I often fast from one meal rather than every meal, and you can fast from things other than food if for any reason abstaining from food isn’t wise or recommended. If this is not something you have done before, can I suggest you try it during Advent?

Lord, help me today to be focused on you, just as Anna and Simeon were. Amen.

Embracing all – for us

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. (vv. 51-52, NIV)

As we conclude this set of Advent notes, we return to thinking about what it meant for Jesus to come among us. I believe Luke gives us a window into what it must have been like for Jesus, coming as a vulnerable baby, growing and learning as a child, before becoming a man and beginning his ministry.

Our passage focuses on that in-between time. We are not told how Jesus knew his unique identity, but it is obvious that he knew who his Father was by this point. He was drawn to the temple, where he amazed everyone with his understanding and knowledge. However, when he was reunited with his parents, we are told that he followed them, was obedient and continued his time of learning and growing.

Jesus' life was characterised by waiting – in the womb as he waited to be born, as a child while he learned and grew physically, and then as a man, waiting until his ministry started. In our reading today, we see him in the temple, asking lots of questions, presumably wrestling with lots of thoughts, feelings and emotions as he got to grips with the scriptures. I imagine he wrestled too during his years of ministry, knowing what lay ahead for him (see Matthew 26:36-46).

How did he deal with all the waiting in his life? I think there are three things that are helpful for us to learn too: he submitted to his Father's will (Matthew 26:39), he made time to rest in his Father's presence (Mark 1:35) and he did only what he saw his Father doing (John 5:19-20). Ultimately, he rested in the joy he had knowing that his sacrifice was for the salvation of humanity (Hebrews 12:2). May we rejoice afresh today in Jesus – and rest in him.

Spend a moment thanking Jesus that he was willing to come to earth, despite knowing where his journey would lead him. Now ask him to help you walk in step with him today.

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