



# JOURNEY TO THE KING

FOUR WOMEN TO ACCOMPANY  
YOU THIS ADVENT SEASON

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# W E L C O M E

For over fifteen centuries Christians have celebrated the season of Advent. For many believers today, this is an ancient practice that is completely new. Today's cultural Christmas focus often overruns us with busyness and commercialism leaving us weary. Adopting the spiritual practice of observing Advent has been a great blessing for our family over the last twenty years, and I pray that it will bless you this year.

Marked by the four Sundays preceding Christmas, Advent invites us to quiet reflection and prayer. As the world outside our homes has turned dark with winter, it is a season to remember the Light of the World has come to us. The word *advent* means "coming" and its meaning is two-fold for the believer. Advent remembers the coming of Jesus, through the incarnation and His birth in Bethlehem, and Advent reminds us that we are a people waiting for Jesus to come again. Christ has come, and Christ will come again, that is Advent.

So how do we "celebrate" or observe Advent? One way is to start or end the day by quieting our movement, centering our focus on scripture, and turning our heart toward God. This devotion series is designed to be your guide this December. Over the next four weeks, you will spend one week with one of four women whose lives intersected with Jesus. These women's lives held struggles that we can relate to today. They experienced disappointment, loss, loneliness, confusion, and worry. The way they responded to encountering Jesus lights our own paths with examples of faithfulness, endurance, love, hope, and trust.

Through our readings and reflections, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, Elizabeth, and Anna join us this Advent. As the calendar moves toward Christmas day, it's my prayer that these women will be your companions as you move closer to the Lord. Whether your December calendar feels overextended or disappointing, whether your bank account feels abundant or strained, whether your home is full or lonely this month, may the truth of the season of Advent bolster and bring joy to your heart. Christ has come! Christ will come again! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Come, Lord Jesus, do not delay!



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# HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL:

Each week begins with an introduction to the woman we will journey with that week. There are five daily devotions in the first three weeks and two in the last. (Since Advent is marked by the four Sundays before Christmas, the fourth Sunday of Advent this year happens to fall on Dec 24th!) Each devotion has a scripture reading, reflection, and a question to consider. The daily devotions are designed to take about ten minutes to complete.

## Tips & Ideas:

- Print out the four weekly introduction and devotion sheets and place them where you keep your Bible. If you enjoy journaling you may find it helpful to have a journal to record your daily reflection responses. Over the years my spiritual journals have been a great source of comfort and strength as I look back at God's revelation and comfort to me. If you have never kept a journal before I encourage you to give it a try.
- Decide on a time to do your devotions daily. Try to stick with that time, but give yourself grace! It's a busy season, and we are not entering Advent with religious legalism, but with grace and joy!
- Traditionally four candles have been part of celebrating Advent. During the first week one is lit, on the second two are lit, and so on. As the light gets brighter from additional candles each week, it is a visual reminder that we are getting closer to the day we celebrate the Light of the World coming to us at Christmas.
- Invite a friend or family member to join you. This can provide both accountability and another person to share your experience and reflections. Commit to praying for one another this season.
- Be expectant! Christ has come, and Christ will come again, but the Holy Spirit is with you today. Carry joyful expectation that you will encounter God and receive any comfort, joy, or peace your heart may be longing for this December.



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# WEEK 1: MARY MAGDALENE HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

We don't know the year of her birth or the name of her parents, but contemporary to the time of Jesus's birth there was a little girl named Mary who lived in Magdala. We know nothing of her childhood, but we do know that by the time she was an adult much had gone wrong in her life, and she carried incredible challenges.

We start our Journey to the King with a woman who desperately needs an encounter with Jesus. Maybe you can relate? I know I can. As we enter what is supposed to be the happiest time of the year, a variety of demons can appear threatening to overwhelm us. Loneliness, depression, loss, disappointment, conflict, insecurity, failure, pain, regret, illness, broken relationships, anxiety... we each have our own list.

When Mary Magdalene meets Jesus she is described as having seven demons. What exactly were those demons? We don't know. In Jewish writing the number seven represents completion. In other words, Mary's life was completely overrun by demons. Can you imagine the hopelessness she must have felt?

The wonder of Mary Magdalene's story is not just that Jesus healed her, but that He kept her close for the rest of His life. He was not repelled by her troubles, but instead allowed her to use her means to support His ministry. This week we will read about Mary Magdalene's life, about Jesus' ministry of healing, of prophecy from old that declared who He would be, and of her honored place in Jesus's resurrection story. As we start our Advent journey, let's walk with Mary Magdalene as our companion, learning from her about the Savior who brings hope to us all.



# MARY MAGDALENE: HOPE

## DAY ONE:

**Reading:** Luke 8:1-3

This reading is the first mention of Mary Magdalene. We do not know the details of her healing, but we know that she would spend the rest of Jesus's life traveling with Him and caring for His needs. These simple verses remind us that we can bring our whole selves to God, our broken places, and our strengths. Mary came to Jesus for healing, then stayed with Him using her resources for His ministry. What a beautiful picture for us! The one who may have appeared hopeless to the world was found valuable to Jesus. As we enter Advent, may we come freely and wholly to God, bringing both our broken bits and our strengths. Let us consider what we need today from God, and what we can use to serve His kingdom this Advent. No matter the condition of your life today, Jesus desires for you to be near to Him.



### Questions to Consider:

What burdens, cares, and worries do you need to bring to Jesus today? What resources or strengths could you use this season to build His kingdom? (For example: including someone who might be alone for a holiday meal, donating to a local food bank, volunteering at your church during holiday services...)

## DAY TWO:

**Reading:** Luke 4:38-44

In today's reading, Jesus heals many people suffering from a variety of ailments and even demons like Mary Magdalene. While the people wanted Him to stay with them, He told them He must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to other towns. At Advent, we remember that the Kingdom of God is eternal, and our true home. Christ the King came to mend the broken, heal the sick, and give eternal life. These are gifts He desires for all His children.

### Questions to Consider:

Yesterday we considered our burdens, today take time to consider the burdens of those around you. Take time to journal or pray for friends and family members who may be carrying difficult burdens this season. Just as Mary Magdalene used her own means to support Jesus' ministry, are there any ways you can support those you prayed for today practically, spiritually, or emotionally?

# MARY MAGDALENE: HOPE

## DAY THREE:

**Reading:** Isaiah 9:2-7

Our first Old Testament reading comes from the book of Isaiah. This beautiful prophecy tells of a future King who will come to reign on David's throne forever. This ruler is Jesus. Jesus brings light to every dark situation. Jesus has shattered the yokes that burden us through His gift of eternal life. He is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

**Question to Consider:**

For each of the four names listed in verse 6 think of a way Jesus has been that for you in the past. What hope can these verses give us in difficult times?



## DAY THREE:

**Reading:** Mark 15:40-47

While we are often taught that Jesus's friends abandoned Him on the cross, that is not the whole picture. Mary Magdalene, and other female followers, stayed by Jesus through His death. She shows us a picture of abiding faith in Jesus. She had traveled with Him, cared for His needs, learned at His feet, and now would not leave Him. As we march into December, challenges, busyness, or even just fun activities can distract us from Jesus. Mary Magdalene's abiding faith makes her a wonderful role model and companion for us this Advent.

**Question to Consider:**

Take time to pray today for abiding faith and strength to keep your eyes daily on Jesus this Advent.

## DAY FOUR:

**Reading:** John 20:1-18.

Of all humanity, it is Mary Magdalene that Jesus proclaims His resurrection. He calls her by name. To the woman formerly possessed by darkness, Jesus gives the honor to proclaim first to the world that Jesus has overcome death and darkness forever. Reading the resurrection story might seem like an Easter reading, not an Advent one, but without the resurrection, there would be no Advent. There would be nothing for us to be prepared for. Jesus came once, but without the resurrection, He could not return. Because of the resurrection, we journey toward our King, who reigns today and will come again!

Jesus calls us by name too, calling us deeper into Advent. Calling us to remember that Christ has Risen, and Christ will come again!

**Question to consider:**

The arc of Mary Magdalene's story this week teaches us that Jesus came for the broken, He healed them, included them, and invited them into His family as honored members. Jesus brings hope to the hopeless and bestows honor on the faithful. Take a few minutes to synthesize what you have learned from Mary Magdalene this week.

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## WEEK 2: MARY MOTHER OF JESUS

### PEACE

This week our companion for our Advent journey is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Who could be a better companion and guide than the first person to know that Jesus was coming! During Advent, we remember the first coming of Jesus, through his incarnation and birth in Bethlehem. This week as we study Jesus's life through the lens of his mother, let us remember that God did not need a woman's womb to save His children. The wonder of Christmas, of Christ's incarnation, is that He chose it. This is a thought too wonderful to understand! God chose His daughter Mary and invited her uniquely into His salvation story. As surely as Jesus came to Mary, and for Mary, He comes to us, and for us this Advent.

Mary is ever present in the Gospel accounts, bearing, raising, and caring for Jesus as a child, then traveling with His ministry at times, and seen staying near Him through His death. Her unwavering faith and love is on display at Pentecost when she is gathered with other believers in prayer.

One reason Mary has been so inspirational for the last 2,000 years is that she was an average woman, in a worldly sense, less than average. She had no power, no standing, no wealth, and no education. She was not a woman with an Instagram following, or a public platform or position. She was simply a woman of faith, who wanted the will of God in her life. As we spend this week with Mary, may we desire to be the same.



# MARY: PEACE IN UNDERSTANDING



## DAY ONE:

**Reading:** Luke 1: 26-38

The announcement Israel had waited centuries for, came to a teenage girl named Mary. As remarkable as Gabriel's announcement was to her, the miracle of this passage is that it all came to pass. As Gabriel says in verse 37, "For no word from God will ever fail."

**Question to consider:**

Consider Gabriel's words, "For no word from God will ever fail." Have you seen this to be true in your own life, or the lives of those around you?

## DAY TWO:

**Reading:** Luke 1:46-55

You may have noticed that we skipped over some verses between yesterday and today's reading. Don't worry, we will read them next week when we consider Mary's cousin Elizabeth.

Today's reading is Mary's Song, called the Magnificat. Mary sings praise to God who has done great things for her. While she may still not have understood the full picture of all she would experience and see through her Son, she does not delay in praising God for what He has done for her. She is not shy about saying she is favored ( she is!), or that she will be remembered and blessed (she is!). Mary bravely and boldly praises God and claims her place in His story.

**Question to consider:**

God has done great things in your life. He has! (You may say I don't know you, but I know Jesus came for your salvation! How great is that) Take some time to write your own song or Magnificat. You do not need to be a poet or songwriter, to write some honest thoughts about God's goodness.

## DAY THREE:

**Reading:** Psalm 98

The psalmist calls us to sing a new song to the Lord, a song for all He has done for us, a joyful song of God's love, and salvation. During Advent, we remember how our salvation came, through the incarnation, when God took on flesh and lived fully human and fully God. As we consider this we should do as the psalmist says, and sing for joy!

**Question to consider:**

Today spend some time listening to your favorite praise music or Christian carols.

# MARY: PEACE IN UNDERSTANDING



## DAY FOUR:

**Reading:** John 19: 25-27

Mary never left her son, her Savior. In His last caring act before His death, Jesus makes provision for His mother. This is a short reading today, do not miss the powerful tenderness of Jesus toward Mary, and His disciple John, as He commends them to one another.

### Questions to consider:

As Mary and John were commended to one another's care, Jesus calls us to love and care for one another while we await His return. Look back at your notes, or consider your thoughts from Day 2 of last week, who in your life needs your tangible, emotional, or spiritual support today? Let us follow John's example of caring for one another.

## DAY FIVE:

**Reading:** Acts 1:12-14, 2: 1-4

The arch of Mary's story we have read this week ends today in reading about Pentecost. Her faith story illustrates Advent. Mary physically ushered in His first coming, and after His resurrection, she began to wait upon His second coming through prayer and gathering with other believers. Today in our reading we see Mary receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the promised counselor and comforter who was promised to all believers as we wait for Jesus' return.

### Question to consider:

Take time to consider the story of Mary that we read this week. God chose this teenage girl without power or position, to bear and rear His Son. Throughout scripture, she exemplifies faithfulness and love for Jesus. What lessons do you want to remember from this week?

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## WEEK 2: ELIZABETH

### JOY SHARED

This week Mary's cousin Elizabeth joins our Advent journey. We will consider Elizabeth's role and character as a mentor, comforter, confirmer, hostess, caregiver, and prophet in Mary's life. A gifted, wise, and faithful woman, Elizabeth is a powerful companion for us in the third week of Advent.

Elizabeth was significantly older than Mary. She is described in Luke 1:6 as a righteous woman, who followed all God's decrees blamelessly. What a commendation. Yet Elizabeth's life had not been perfect. We know that she had a deep longing that had gone unfulfilled, she wanted to be a mother.

Elizabeth had spent her married life under the burden of barrenness, a deep personal hurt, and public shame to women in her time. We see through her story that the very thing that brought her shame, God uses to allow her to play a special role in the incarnation of Christ. Her son John, will go ahead of Jesus, fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah, and preparing people for Jesus' ministry. Through the prophecies of Elizabeth, her husband Zechariah, and Isaiah we will take a closer look at the character and ministry of our coming King.

With just a little over a week until Christmas, Elizabeth is a wonderful companion for any woman who might be feeling disappointed with unanswered prayers, or weary of waiting.



# ELIZABETH: JOY SHARED

## DAY ONE:

**Reading:** Luke 1: 5-25

In today's reading, we learn about how Zechariah was visited by the angel Gabriel and told that he and Elizabeth would have a son. Pay special attention to Elizabeth's response in verse 25.

### Questions to consider:

Elizabeth's long season of barrenness is turned into a testimony of God's goodness to her. Have there been difficult situations in your life that the Lord has given you a testimony through? If you are in a long season of challenge, how can Elizabeth's story encourage you?



## DAY TWO:

**Reading:** Luke 1:39-45

Gabriel uses Elizabeth's pregnancy to give Mary a sign of confirmation about her own miraculous pregnancy. In today's reading, we see the cousins united, and the Holy Spirit fills Elizabeth with words of praise and prophecy about who Mary's child will be. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, is the first person to publicly say that Mary is carrying the Messiah.

### Question to consider:

I always find Mary and Elizabeth's relationship so beautiful. God was so good to give them each to one another in this season. Consider ways the Lord has gifted you through faithful relationships over the years. Ask the Lord to show you, anyone, He wishes you to encourage today in the spirit of Elizabeth.

## DAY THREE:

**Reading:** Luke 1:57-66

Finally, the time had come that Elizabeth had waited her whole married life for, she was a mother. In today's reading we see her neighbors rejoice with her, and her husband finally able to speak again as he joins Elizabeth in naming their son John.

### Question to consider:

Elizabeth's neighbors hear that the Lord has shown her mercy, and share in her joy. Sharing in the joy of the Lord's blessing on others is one way to worship Him. Consider how God has blessed a friend or family member this year, praise God for His goodness, and take a moment to reach out and let them know you share in their joy!

# ELIZABETH: JOY SHARED



## DAY FOUR:

**Reading:** Luke 1:67-80

After John's birth, Zechariah speaks again and offers a song of praise and prophecy. Like his wife Elizabeth, he is filled with the Holy Spirit. The first half of his song speaks about God's coming redemption. The second half speaks about who his son John will be.

### **Question to consider:**

Reread the passage and list, or underline in your Bible, the descriptive words given for who Jesus will be and what He will do for us.

## DAY FIVE:

**Reading:** Isaiah 11:1-9

This week our readings have shown both Elizabeth and her husband prophesying about the coming Messiah. Our Old Testament reading comes from the prophet Isaiah, who spoke of the coming Savior centuries earlier.

### **Question to consider:**

Just like yesterday, consider the descriptions given about who Jesus will be and what He will do for us. Take a moment to reflect on what you have learned about Jesus through Elizabeth and in our readings this week.

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## WEEK 2: ANNA

### LOVE PROCLAIMED

As we enter the last days of Advent, we meet Anna the prophetess. The book of Luke tells us that Anna had spent the majority of her life fasting and praying in the temple after being widowed at a young age. This faithful woman was known in the temple courts and had a following of people who would listen to her teaching. Anna is the first to publicly proclaim, to teach, that Jesus was the Messiah who had come to redeem Israel.

In our last two devotions, we will read the beautiful Nativity account in the book of Luke, and meet Anna on our last devotion together. Christmas Eve and day can be busy and full of responsibilities, activities, and celebrations. Offer yourself grace, and know these devotions will be waiting for you in the days after Christmas as time allows.



# ANNA: LOVE PROCLAIMED



## DAY ONE:

**Reading:** Luke 2: 1- 21

From our first devotion meeting a healed Mary Magdalene, to Elizabeth's strong prophecy of who Jesus would be, we arrive today at the Nativity where God breaks through the Heavens and takes on flesh to live amongst us. Today on Christmas Eve, we remember the birth of our Savior. A Savior who came for Mary Magdalene, Mary, Elizabeth, you and I, and all of His creation.

### Questions to consider:

Amidst the bustle of the day, take a few silent moments to ponder the first coming of Christ. Christ came to live amongst us. Praise be to God!

## DAY TWO:

**Reading:** Luke 2:22-38

Merry Christmas. The Advent season officially ended yesterday, but in one last reading, let us consider the prophetess Anna and her response to encountering the baby Jesus in the temple. Anna had lived for decades in the temple devoting her life to prayer and fasting. She was a woman waiting and watching for the coming of Jesus.

### Question to consider:

We have spent the season of Advent remembering Jesus's coming, and His promise to come again. Much like Anna, we are women waiting for our King. We are not called to live in the temple courts, but Scripture does encourage us to pray without ceasing. Consider ways this Advent season has helped you focus on Jesus, and what you would like to do in the coming New Year to remain in the posture of Advent, in expectation that Christ is coming again.



# THANK YOU

Thank you for spending Advent with Life on Pilgrimage. Through at-home resources such as Journey to the King, and modern pilgrimages abroad, I hope to encourage you in your spiritual journey with God.

If you would like to learn more about this ministry please check out our website at [LifeonPilgrimage.com](http://LifeonPilgrimage.com) and follow us on IG @LifeOnPilgrimage.

On our website, you can learn more about upcoming modern pilgrimages to Italy and France. Each pilgrimage is a 7-day small group pilgrimage designed to refresh your soul and deepen your walk with the Lord. From visiting early churches in Rome to ancient monasteries in France, each trip offers unique experiences, expert guides, and daily Bible-based teaching.

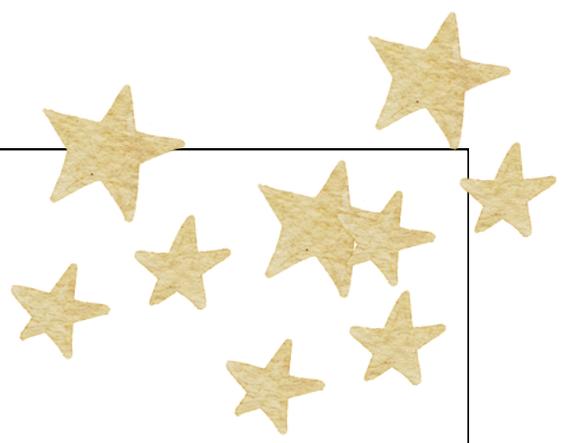
You can also bring Life on Pilgrimage to your church for a one-day event or weekend women's retreat. For more information email me at [wendyandersonschulz@gmail.com](mailto:wendyandersonschulz@gmail.com)

I pray this devotion has been a blessing to you. May you experience the peace and joy of our Savior this Christmas and New Year.



Wendy Anderson Schulz  
Founder, Life on Pilgrimage





The people in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
on those living in the  
land of deep darkness a  
light has dawned

Isaiah 9:2

