ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

Promised

He Kept His Word



A 27-DAY READING GUIDE & PRAYER JOURNAL

NOVEMBER 29 TO DECEMBER 25, 2026

VOLUME I

MARKED

FAITH THAT LEAVES EVIDENCE

MARKED

This guide belongs to

FAITH THAT LEAVES EVIDENCE

A NOTE FROM *Lala*



Beautiful Woman of God,

I'm so glad you're here.

Advent means coming. For the next four weeks, I want us to slow down and walk through the promises God spoke long before the manger, and then watch Him keep every single one. Each day you will read the promise, see it fulfilled, sit with a short devotional, answer a few questions, and write your prayer.

You do not have to do this perfectly. Saturdays are Selah days, set apart to pause, catch up, and breathe. If you miss a day, pick up with today. Whatever this season holds for you, joy or grief, fullness or waiting, my prayer is that these pages remind you that the God who kept His word then is keeping it in your life right now.

I'm honored to walk this Advent journey with you.

With love,

Lala



How to Use *This Guide*

1. Read the Promise (Old Testament), then the Fulfillment (New Testament), read the devotional, answer the questions, and write your prayer.

2. Saturdays are Selah days, set apart to pause, catch up and reflect on what God has shown you that week.

3. Each week has a Weekly Truth to memorize.

READING PLAN

27 DAYS IN HIS STORY



WEEK 1 HOPE	☐ DAY 1	Sun Nov 29	Genesis 3:8-15 | Galatians 4:4-5
	☐ DAY 2	Mon Nov 30	Genesis 12:1-3 | Galatians 3:8, 16
	☐ DAY 3	Tue Dec 1	Genesis 49:8-10 | Revelation 5:5
	☐ DAY 4	Wed Dec 2	2 Samuel 7:8-16 | Luke 1:30-33
	☐ DAY 5	Thu Dec 3	Isaiah 7:10-14 | Matthew 1:22-23
	☐ DAY 6	Fri Dec 4	Micah 5:2-5 | Matthew 2:1-6
	☐ DAY 7	Sat Dec 5	SELAH
WEEK 2 PEACE	☐ DAY 8	Sun Dec 6	Isaiah 9:1-7 | Matthew 4:12-17
	☐ DAY 9	Mon Dec 7	Isaiah 11:1-10 | Romans 15:12-13
	☐ DAY 10	Tue Dec 8	Isaiah 40:1-11 | Mark 1:1-8
	☐ DAY 11	Wed Dec 9	Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6 | Luke 1:5-17
	☐ DAY 12	Thu Dec 10	Luke 1:57-80
	☐ DAY 13	Fri Dec 11	Isaiah 53:1-5 | Colossians 1:19-20
	☐ DAY 14	Sat Dec 12	SELAH
WEEK 3 JOY	☐ DAY 15	Sun Dec 13	Luke 1:26-38
	☐ DAY 16	Mon Dec 14	Luke 1:39-45
	☐ DAY 17	Tue Dec 15	1 Samuel 2:1-10 | Luke 1:46-56
	☐ DAY 18	Wed Dec 16	Matthew 1:18-25
	☐ DAY 19	Thu Dec 17	Matthew 1:1-17
	☐ DAY 20	Fri Dec 18	Zephaniah 3:14-20
	☐ DAY 21	Sat Dec 19	SELAH
WEEK 4 LOVE	☐ DAY 22	Sun Dec 20	Luke 2:1-7
	☐ DAY 23	Mon Dec 21	Luke 2:8-20
	☐ DAY 24	Tue Dec 22	Luke 2:21-38
	☐ DAY 25	Wed Dec 23	Matthew 2:1-12
	☐ DAY 26	Thu Dec 24	Christmas Eve: John 1:1-14 | 1 John 4:9-10
	☐ DAY 27	Fri Dec 25	Christmas Day: John 3:16-17 | Revelation 21:3-5

WEEK 1



HOPE

The Promise Was Spoken

WEEKLY TRUTH

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

HEBREWS 10:23 KJV

HOPE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
Genesis 3:8-15	Galatians 4:4-5

He Came Looking

Before there was a manger, there was a garden. God made Adam and Eve and placed them in a world with no shame and no distance between them and Him. Then they believed a lie, ate what God told them not to eat, and everything changed. The first thing they did was hide.

Read verse 8 again. In the cool of the day, God came walking. He already knew what they had done. He did not send a storm or stay away. He called out, "Where art thou?" That was not a question for information. It was an invitation to come out.

Then, before He spoke a single consequence over Adam and Eve, God turned to the serpent and made a promise. One day the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. The serpent would bruise His heel, but the woman's offspring would win. Bible teachers call this the first gospel, the very first promise of a Savior, spoken on the worst day in human history.

Where was God? Right there in the garden, walking toward the people who had just broken His heart.

Thousands of years passed. Generations lived and died waiting. Then Paul writes in Galatians, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." The seed had arrived. Jesus came to redeem us and adopt us as sons and daughters.

Maybe you know what it is to hide. Behind busyness, behind a smile, behind shame you have never said out loud. Hear me: your hiding place has never been hidden from His love. The same God who walked into that garden is still walking toward you, still calling your name. Advent begins here, with a God who did not wait for us to find our way back. He came looking. Come out of hiding today. He already knows, and He still came.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What does this reveal about God's character?

2. How does this truth invite a response in my own life today?

MY PRAYER

HOPE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
Genesis 12:1-3	Galatians 3:8, 16

A Blessing for Every Family

Abram was seventy-five years old and settled in Haran when God spoke: leave your country, your family and your father's house, and go to a land I will show you. No address. No map. Just a promise. God said He would make Abram a great nation, bless him, make his name great, and "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Think about how strange that sounded. Abram had no children. His wife Sarai was barren. Yet God promised a blessing big enough to reach every family on earth. And verse 4 says simply, "So Abram departed." He obeyed before he understood.

Paul tells us in Galatians that this moment was the gospel preached ahead of time. God already planned to bring the nations to Himself through faith. Then Paul points to one word: seed, not seeds. The promise was always pointing to one Person, and that Person is Christ.

Where was God? Calling an ordinary man out of an ordinary life, and setting in motion a plan that would one day reach you.

That means the blessing God spoke over Abram has your name in it. Whatever your family history holds, the divorce, the addiction, the silence at the holiday table, the cycles you are praying will stop with you, God's promise was always big enough to include your family. Jesus is the Seed through whom every family can be blessed.

Some of you are standing where Abram stood. God is asking you to move, to let go, to trust Him with a future you cannot see yet. You do not need the full map. You need the One who made the promise. Obedience often comes before understanding, and that is not weakness. That is faith. Take the next step He is showing you, even if it is the only step you can see.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What does this promise mean for you today?

2. Where do you need to hold on to hope right now?

MY PRAYER

HOPE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
Genesis 49:8-10	Revelation 5:5

The Lion of Judah

At the end of his life, Jacob gathered his twelve sons and spoke over each one. When he came to Judah, he said something remarkable: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah... until Shiloh come." A sceptre is a king's staff. Jacob was prophesying that kings would come from Judah's line until the true King arrived, the One to whom it all belonged.

Here is what makes this beautiful. Judah was not the obvious choice. He was the brother who suggested selling Joseph into slavery. In Genesis 38 he treated his daughter-in-law Tamar unjustly, and his failure was exposed in front of everyone. Yet Judah changed. Years later he offered his own life in place of his younger brother Benjamin. God took a man with a messy story and chose his family for the throne.

Fast forward to Revelation 5. John sees a scroll in God's hand, sealed with seven seals, and no one in heaven or on earth is worthy to open it. John weeps. Then an elder says, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed." John turns to see the Lion, and he sees a Lamb that had been slain. Jesus is both. The conquering King and the sacrifice who gave His life.

Where was God? Working through a broken family line for generations, keeping a promise no one could see.

Some of you have written yourself off because of what you have done. You think your past disqualifies you. Look at Judah. Look at the family Jesus chose to be born into. God is not looking for perfect people. He is looking for surrendered ones. If you are weeping today because it feels like no one can open what is sealed in your life, hear the elder's words: weep not. The Lion has already prevailed.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. How does this passage shape your view of hope today?

2. Where do you need to trust God's promised plan this week?

MY PRAYER

HOPE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
2 Samuel 7:8-16	Luke 1:30-33

A House That Lasts

King David finally had rest from his enemies. He was living in a house of cedar, and it bothered him that the ark of God was still in a tent. So David wanted to build God a house. It was a good desire. But God sent the prophet Nathan with a surprising answer: you will not build Me a house. I will build you one. God reminded David where he came from: "I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep." Then God promised to make David's name great, to give His people a settled place, and to raise up a son from David's line whose throne would be established forever. Not for a season. Forever.

Now watch what happened next. David's descendants did not live up to the promise. Many of the kings who followed him led the people into idolatry. The kingdom split, Jerusalem fell, and the people were carried into exile. For hundreds of years no king from David's line sat on a throne. If you had lived then, you would have said the promise was dead.

Then an angel appeared to a young woman in Nazareth. Gabriel told Mary that her Son would be called the Son of the Highest, that God would give Him the throne of His father David, and "of his kingdom there shall be no end." A thousand years later, God was still keeping His word.

Where was God? Holding a promise through every failed king and every year of exile.

Maybe you are looking at something God promised you and it looks finished. The relationship, the calling, the healing. Delay is not denial. God does not need your circumstances to cooperate for His word to stand. And notice this: the best thing David wanted to do for God was smaller than what God wanted to do for David. Let Him build what you could never build yourself.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What does this passage show me about God?

2. How does this truth change the way I live today?

MY PRAYER

HOPE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
Isaiah 7:10-14	Matthew 1:22-23

God With Us

King Ahaz of Judah was afraid. Two kings had joined forces against him, and Isaiah says his heart and the hearts of his people shook like trees in the wind. God sent Isaiah to tell him not to fear, and even offered him a sign: "ask it either in the depth, or in the height above." Anything. Ahaz refused. He sounded spiritual, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD," but really he had already decided to trust Assyria instead of God.

So God gave a sign anyway: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." That name means God with us.

Centuries later, Joseph is trying to understand how his fiancée is with child. An angel explains, and Matthew pauses the story to tell us this happened so that Isaiah's words would be fulfilled. The sign God gave a frightened king pointed to a baby in Bethlehem. Immanuel had come.

Where was God? Speaking to a king who would not listen, and promising to come so close that He would take on flesh.

Notice something. Ahaz pulled back from God in his fear. He refused what God was offering. And God did not pull back from him. God answered his fear with a promise of His presence.

Some of us handle fear the way Ahaz did. We make our own plans, stop praying, and lean on whatever feels safer than trusting God. Maybe that is where you are this week. Here is the good news: your fear does not cancel God's faithfulness. The name of Jesus is not "God who waits until you get it together." His name is Immanuel. God with us. With you in the doctor's office, in the empty house, in the hard conversation. You are not facing this alone.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What stands out to you in these passages today?

2. How does this truth shape your perspective right now?

MY PRAYER

HOPE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
Micah 5:2-5	Matthew 2:1-6

Little Bethlehem

Micah lived when Israel's leaders were corrupt and the nation was headed for judgment. In the middle of his warnings, he named the exact town where God's Ruler would be born: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth." Bethlehem was small and overlooked. But this Ruler's goings forth were "from of old, from everlasting." The One born there would have no beginning.

About seven hundred years later, wise men arrive in Jerusalem asking where the King of the Jews has been born. Herod is troubled and calls the chief priests and scribes. They answer immediately, quoting Micah word for word: in Bethlehem of Judea.

Here is what breaks my heart. They knew the answer. They had the scripture memorized. Bethlehem was about six miles away. And not one of them went to see Him. The foreigners who traveled for months worshipped. The religious experts stayed home.

Where was God? Choosing a little town, and revealing Himself to people who were actually looking for Him.

That is a word for us. You can know the Bible and still not come to Jesus. You can grow up in church, know the songs and the verses, and keep Him at a distance. Advent is an invitation to make the trip. Not to know more about Him, but to come to Him.

And if you feel small, overlooked, or like the least likely place for God to do something, remember Bethlehem. God loves to start His greatest work in little places. Micah ends with this promise about the Ruler who would come: "this man shall be the peace." Not just someone who brings peace. He is the peace. Let Him be that for you this week.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What does this passage teach you about God?

2. How does this truth give you hope today?

MY PRAYER



DAY 7

SELAH

Pause. Remember. Breathe.

WEEK 1 READINGS

- ☐ DAY 1 Genesis 3:8-15 | Galatians 4:4-5
- ☐ DAY 2 Genesis 12:1-3 | Galatians 3:8, 16
- ☐ DAY 3 Genesis 49:8-10 | Revelation 5:5
- ☐ DAY 4 2 Samuel 7:8-16 | Luke 1:30-33
- ☐ DAY 5 Isaiah 7:10-14 | Matthew 1:22-23
- ☐ DAY 6 Micah 5:2-5 | Matthew 2:1-6

JOURNAL

What is on your heart today?

A NOTE FOR TODAY

Selah means pause. It appears throughout the Psalms as an invitation to stop and let what was just said sink in. Use today to catch up on any reading you missed, sit with what God has shown you this week, and simply rest. You are not behind. You are being still.

WEEK 2



PEACE

The Prince of Peace

WEEKLY TRUTH

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

JOHN 14:27 KJV

PEACE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
Isaiah 9:1-7	Matthew 4:12-17

Peace Has a Name

The land of Zebulun and Naphtali, up north in Galilee, was the first part of Israel crushed when Assyria invaded. It was humiliated, occupied and dark. Isaiah spoke straight to that land: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." Then he explained how: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." And he gave that child names no human king could carry: Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of His government and peace there would be no end.

Matthew tells us that when Jesus began His ministry, He did not start in Jerusalem, the religious capital. He went to Galilee, to Capernaum, in that same region of Zebulun and Naphtali. Matthew quotes Isaiah: "The people which sat in darkness saw great light." The first place to fall into darkness was the first place to see the light.

Where was God? Going first to the place that had been hurt the most.

Notice the difference between walking in darkness and sitting in darkness. Isaiah says walked. Matthew says sat. Some of you have been in a dark season so long you stopped moving. You sat down in it. The grief, the depression, the disappointment became the place you live.

Jesus comes to the sitting ones. He does not wait for you to find your way out. He comes to Galilee, to Capernaum, to you.

This week our theme is peace, and I need you to know that peace is not just a feeling we try to hold on to. Peace has a name. His name is Jesus, the Prince of Peace. When everything around you is loud and uncertain, you can still have Him. And His peace has no end.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What does this passage teach me about God's peace?

2. Where do I most need to receive His peace today?

MY PRAYER

PEACE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
Isaiah 11:1-10	Romans 15:12-13

Life From the Stump

Isaiah uses a picture every gardener understands: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." Jesse was King David's father. By Isaiah's time, the royal family that came from Jesse looked like a great tree that had been chopped down. Judgment was coming, and soon nothing would be left but a stump.

But God said life would come out of that stump. A shoot would rise, and the Spirit of the LORD would rest on Him: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and the fear of the LORD. He would judge the poor with righteousness. Then Isaiah describes the kingdom this King brings: the wolf dwelling with the lamb, the leopard lying down with the young goat, a little child leading them. A world where nothing hurts or destroys.

Paul quotes this promise in Romans 15 to show that Jesus, the root of Jesse, came for the Gentiles too, for people from every nation. Then Paul turns it into a prayer: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

Where was God? Hiding new life inside something everyone else thought was dead.

Some of you are looking at a stump right now. A marriage that ended. A dream that got cut down. A relationship with a family member that feels finished. Everyone around you sees what is gone. God sees what is still alive in the roots.

I am not telling you everything will grow back the way it was. Sometimes God grows something new. But what looks cut down in your life is not finished in His hands. Pray Paul's prayer over yourself today. Ask the God of hope to fill you, and believe that He still brings life out of stumps.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What does today's reading teach you about God's peace?

2. How might you live differently in light of this truth?

MY PRAYER

PEACE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
Isaiah 40:1-11	Mark 1:1-8

Comfort Ye

Isaiah 40 marks a turn in the book. For thirty-nine chapters there were warnings of judgment and exile. Then God speaks these tender words: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people... Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." In Hebrew it means speak to her heart. Her warfare is accomplished. Her iniquity is pardoned.

Then Isaiah hears a voice crying in the wilderness: prepare ye the way of the LORD. Every valley lifted up, every mountain made low, the crooked made straight. God was coming, and a road was being made ready.

Next, Isaiah reminds us how fragile we are. All flesh is grass. It withers, and the flower fades, "but the word of our God shall stand for ever." People change. Circumstances change. His word does not.

The passage ends with one of the most gentle pictures of God in scripture: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

Mark opens his gospel by quoting this very passage, and then John the Baptist walks onto the scene in the wilderness, calling people to repent and prepare. John is the voice. The One he points to is the Shepherd Himself, Jesus.

Where was God? Speaking comfort to people who had just walked through the consequences of their own choices.

That matters. God did not comfort Israel only after they were perfect. He comforted them after exile, after failure, after loss. If you are in a season of consequences, He has not stopped speaking to your heart. Let Him carry you close today. And ask Him what needs to be made straight in your life to prepare room for Him this Christmas. Comfort and preparation go together.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What does today's passage teach you about God's character?

2. How can this truth bring peace to your circumstances today?

MY PRAYER

PEACE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6	Luke 1:5-17

When Heaven Was Quiet

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. In it, God promised to send His messenger to prepare the way, and said He would send Elijah the prophet to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers. Then the Old Testament ends. For about four hundred years, no new prophet spoke in Israel. Heaven was quiet.

Luke opens his gospel inside that silence. Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous, faithful and old, and they had no children. In their culture, people often assumed barrenness meant God was displeased with you. They carried that shame for years, and they kept serving.

One day Zechariah was chosen to burn incense in the temple, an honor that might come once in a lifetime. While he was inside, the angel Gabriel appeared and said, "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son." That son would be John, who would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, turning the hearts of the fathers to the children. Malachi's promise was being kept, word for word.

Where was God? Still listening to a prayer an old priest had probably stopped praying.

God's silence is not God's absence. Four hundred years of quiet did not mean He forgot His word. Years of unanswered prayer did not mean He forgot Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Maybe you stopped praying for something because it hurt too much to keep asking. The child. The spouse. The healing. The family member who walked away. God may still be holding that prayer. And notice that His promise is about restoring families, turning hearts back toward each other. If your family is broken, bring it back to Him today.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. How does today's passage deepen your trust in God's promises?

2. Where do you need to receive God's peace today?

MY PRAYER

PEACE

TODAY'S READING

Luke 1:57-80

Silence Turned to Song

When Gabriel told Zechariah he would have a son, Zechariah asked, "Whereby shall I know this?" He wanted proof. Because he did not believe, he was unable to speak until the promise came to pass. For about nine months he could not say a word.

Then Elizabeth gave birth, and her neighbors and family rejoiced with her. On the eighth day they came to name the baby and assumed he would be called Zacharias after his father. Elizabeth said no, he shall be called John. They turned to Zechariah, who asked for a writing table and wrote, "His name is John." Immediately his mouth was opened and he praised God.

The first words out of his mouth after nine months were not complaints. They were worship. His song celebrates God visiting and redeeming His people, raising up salvation in the house of David, and remembering His holy covenant with Abraham. Then he speaks over his baby boy: "thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest." He ends by describing Jesus as "the dayspring from on high," the sunrise, coming "to give light to them that sit in darkness... to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Where was God? Using a season of silence to turn doubt into worship. Zechariah obeyed before his voice came back. He wrote the name God gave, even though it broke tradition and family expectation. Obedience opened his mouth.

Maybe you are in a quiet season. Something you said, something you doubted, or just life has left you without words. Do not waste the silence. Let God do His work in it. And when He opens your mouth again, let the first thing out be praise. The sunrise is coming.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What does today's reading teach you about God's heart?

2. How can you live in the peace Jesus has given you today?

MY PRAYER

PEACE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
Isaiah 53:1-5	Colossians 1:19-20

The Price of Peace

Isaiah 53 was written about seven hundred years before Jesus was born, and it reads like an eyewitness account of the cross. Isaiah describes a Servant who grows up like a tender plant out of dry ground, with nothing in His appearance that would make people desire Him. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

Then Isaiah tells us why He suffered: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Read that slowly. The punishment that brought us peace was placed on Him. We were the ones who went astray. He was the one who paid.

Paul explains it in Colossians. All the fulness of God dwelt in Jesus, and through Him God reconciled all things to Himself, "having made peace through the blood of his cross."

Where was God? On the cross, carrying the weight of everything we had done. It may feel strange to read about the cross during Advent, but the manger and the cross belong together. The baby was born to die. Real peace was never going to be cheap. Peace with God cost Jesus everything.

This matters in your everyday life. Some of us are trying to earn peace with God by being good enough, or trying to find peace by fixing everything around us. But the chastisement of your peace was already placed on Him. You do not have to carry your shame anymore. And because He was acquainted with grief, He understands yours. He is not a distant Savior. He is a man of sorrows who knows exactly what you feel. Bring your grief to Him today. He already carried it.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What stands out to you in this passage?

2. How does this truth invite you to live differently today?

MY PRAYER



SELAH

Pause. Remember. Breathe.

WEEK 2 READINGS

- ☐ DAY 8 Isaiah 9:1-7 | Matthew 4:12-17
- ☐ DAY 9 Isaiah 11:1-10 | Romans 15:12-13
- ☐ DAY 10 Isaiah 40:1-11 | Mark 1:1-8
- ☐ DAY 11 Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6 | Luke 1:5-17
- ☐ DAY 12 Luke 1:57-80
- ☐ DAY 13 Isaiah 53:1-5 | Colossians 1:19-20

JOURNAL

What is on your heart today?

A NOTE FOR TODAY

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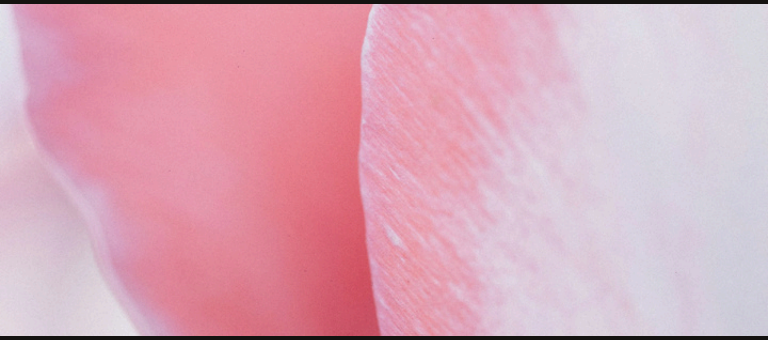
WEEK 3



JOY

Good News of Great Joy

WEEKLY TRUTH

Neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

NEHEMIAH 8:10 KJV

JOY

TODAY'S READING

Luke 1:26-38

Be It Unto Me

Six months after Gabriel visited Zechariah in the temple, he was sent somewhere very different: Nazareth, a small town in Galilee that people looked down on. He went to a young woman named Mary, engaged to Joseph, a descendant of David.

"Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee." Mary was troubled and wondered what kind of greeting this was. Gabriel told her not to fear. She would conceive and bear a Son and call His name Jesus. He would be great, the Son of the Highest, and He would reign over the house of Jacob forever.

Mary asked a real question: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" Notice the difference between her question and Zechariah's. He asked for proof. She asked how. Gabriel explained that the Holy Ghost would come upon her, and told her that her elderly cousin Elizabeth was also with child. "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

Then Mary said one of the most powerful sentences in the Bible: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

Think about what that yes could cost her. An unmarried, pregnant young woman in a small town. Her reputation, her engagement, maybe her safety. She said yes anyway.

Where was God? Choosing an ordinary young woman in an overlooked town, and trusting her with His Son.

This week our theme is joy, and Mary teaches us that joy does not always come before surrender. Often it comes right after. Her song of joy comes after this yes, not before it.

What is God asking you to say yes to? It might not make sense. It might cost you something. You might not have every answer. But you have His word, and with God nothing is impossible. Pray Mary's prayer today: be it unto me according to Your word.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What part of today's passage speaks most to you, and why?

2. How can you choose joy in your current season?

MY PRAYER

JOY

TODAY'S READING

Luke 1:39-45

Sisters in the Promise

After Gabriel left, Mary got up and went with haste into the hill country to see her cousin Elizabeth. It was a journey of several days. Think about why she went. She was carrying something too big to carry alone, and Elizabeth was the one person who would understand.

When Mary walked in and greeted her, the baby in Elizabeth's womb leaped, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. Before Mary could explain anything, Elizabeth cried out, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." She called Mary "the mother of my Lord." Then she said, "blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."

Elizabeth was older, a priest's wife, and she had waited decades for her own miracle. She could have felt overshadowed, since Mary's child would be greater than hers. Instead, she celebrated. Even unborn John recognized Jesus and leaped for joy.

Where was God? In the room where two women met, confirming His word through a sister's voice.

God never meant for you to carry your promise alone. Mary did not need a crowd. She needed one woman who believed with her.

Some of us have been isolated so long we have forgotten what it feels like to be seen. Maybe you are single in a season when everyone else seems paired up. Maybe you are walking through divorce, or a diagnosis, or a calling no one understands. Find your Elizabeth. And be one. Who in your life needs someone to speak blessing over what God is doing in her, without jealousy or comparison? Joy multiplies when it is shared. Reach out to her today.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What stands out to you in today's reading?

2. How does this truth invite you to live differently today?

MY PRAYER

JOY

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
1 Samuel 2:1-10	Luke 1:46-56

Two Songs

Hannah was one of two wives of a man named Elkanah. The other wife, Peninnah, had children, and Hannah had none. Year after year Peninnah provoked her until she wept and would not eat. Hannah finally poured out her soul before the LORD at the house of God, so desperately that the priest thought she was drunk. God heard her and gave her a son, Samuel.

When Hannah brought Samuel to dedicate him to the Lord, she prayed and sang: "My heart rejoiceth in the LORD." She praised a God who breaks the bows of the mighty, who brings low and lifts up, who "raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes."

About a thousand years later, Mary stood in Elizabeth's house and sang: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Listen to how closely she echoes Hannah: "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things." Mary knew Hannah's song. It was in her bones, and when her own miracle came, it came out as worship.

Where was God? Hearing a weeping woman at the house of God, and then a young girl in the hill country, and lifting them both.

Two women, centuries apart, praising the same faithful God. Both had been overlooked. Both had reasons for shame. Both sang about a God who turns things upside down for the lowly.

That God has not changed. If you feel low, provoked, empty or unseen right now, He sees you. And notice that the scripture you put in your heart today becomes the song you sing tomorrow. Mary had Hannah's words ready. Keep reading. Keep storing His word. One day it will come out of you as praise.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What does this passage teach you about God?

2. How might this truth shape the way you live today?

MY PRAYER

JOY

TODAY'S READING

Matthew 1:18-25

A Just Man

Matthew tells the Christmas story from Joseph's side. Before Joseph and Mary came together, she was found with child. In that culture, engagement was legally binding, so this looked like betrayal. Joseph knew the child was not his. Matthew says Joseph was "a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example." He had every right to expose her. Instead, he planned to put her away privately to protect her from shame. Even while hurting, he chose mercy.
Then, while he thought on these things, an angel appeared to him in a dream: "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." The angel told him to name the baby Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sins."
Joseph woke up and did exactly what he was told. He took Mary as his wife. He named the child Jesus. Scripture does not record a single word Joseph spoke, only what he did.
Where was God? Speaking into Joseph's confusion and pain, right in the middle of his decision.
Think about what Joseph's obedience cost him. People would whisper. They would count months. His reputation in a small town might never fully recover. But he chose God's plan over his own name.
Some of you are facing a decision where obedience will cost you something. Your pride, your comfort, how others see you. Joseph shows us that obedience is often quiet, costly and holy. You do not have to announce it. You just have to do it.
And if you are hurting from what looks like betrayal, notice that Joseph's first instinct was still mercy. You can be wounded and still choose kindness. God honors a heart like that, and sometimes He shows you the bigger story after you choose it.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What stands out to you in today's reading?

2. How might this truth change the way you live today?

MY PRAYER

JOY

TODAY'S READING

Matthew 1:1-17

Grace in the Family Tree

Most of us skip genealogies. Long lists of names feel like something to get through. But Matthew opens his gospel this way on purpose. He wants us to know that Jesus is the son of Abraham, the promised blessing for all families, and the son of David, the promised King. Every name is a link in a chain of promises God kept.

Look closer, and you will find something surprising. Ancient genealogies usually listed only men. Matthew includes four women, and they are not the ones you might expect.

Tamar, who was wronged by Judah's family and took a desperate step to secure her future. Rahab, a Canaanite woman with a past, who hid Israel's spies and was saved when Jericho fell. Ruth, a Moabite widow, an outsider who chose to follow God. And "her that had been the wife of Urias," Bathsheba, whose story began with David's sin and deep grief.

Scandal, foreign roots, pain and shame. And God wrote each of them into the family line of His Son. Then the list ends with Mary, whose pregnancy people whispered about too.

Where was God? Weaving grace through every generation, including the chapters people would rather leave out.

I love this. Jesus did not come from a polished family. He came through real women with real stories, and He did not hide them. He put their names in the first chapter of the New Testament.

Your story, with all its broken places, is not too messy for God to use. What was done to you, what you did, where you came from. None of it disqualifies you. Grace is written into the family tree. Turn to The Women in His Line at the back of this guide and read about these four women. Then thank God that He is not ashamed to call you His.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What stands out to you in today's reading?

2. How does this passage shape your understanding of God's love?

MY PRAYER

JOY

TODAY'S READING

Zephaniah 3:14-20

He Sings Over You

Zephaniah's book is mostly hard reading. He warns of the day of the LORD, of judgment on Judah for its idolatry and pride, and judgment on the nations. Chapter after chapter, the news is heavy.

Then, in the last section, everything changes. "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart." Why? Because the LORD has taken away your judgments and cast out your enemy. "The king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more."

Then comes one of the most tender verses in the whole Bible: "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

God does not only tolerate His people. He rejoices over them. He sings.

Zephaniah keeps going. God promises to gather those who are sorrowful, to save her that halteth, to gather her that was driven out, and to give them praise and fame in every land where they had been put to shame. "At that time will I bring you again."

Where was God? On the other side of judgment, waiting to gather His people and sing over them.

This is fulfilled in Jesus, the King in the midst of His people, Immanuel, God with us. And this is His heart toward you.

Some of you have only ever pictured God frowning at you. Disappointed. Tired of you. Beautiful woman of God, that is not who He is. He rejoices over you with joy. Before you ever sing to Him, He is already singing over you. If you have been carrying shame, hear His promise to turn it into praise. Let that be your joy this week. You are wanted.

JOURNAL

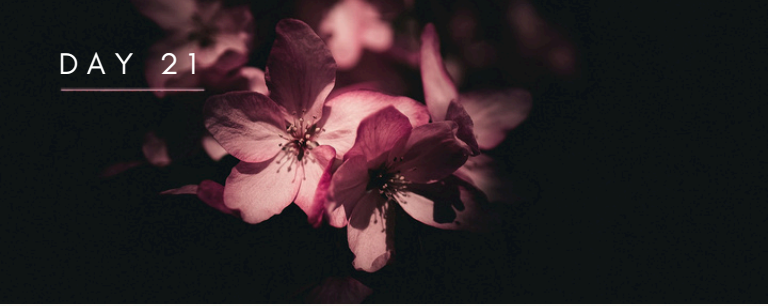
WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What stands out to you in today's reading?

2. How does this truth invite you to live differently today?

MY PRAYER



DAY 21

SELAH

Pause. Remember. Breathe.

WEEK 3 READINGS

- [ ] DAY 15 Luke 1:26-38
- [ ] DAY 16 Luke 1:39-45
- [ ] DAY 17 1 Samuel 2:1-10 | Luke 1:46-56
- [ ] DAY 18 Matthew 1:18-25
- [ ] DAY 19 Matthew 1:1-17
- [ ] DAY 20 Zephaniah 3:14-20

JOURNAL

What is on your heart today?

A NOTE FOR TODAY

Selah means pause. It appears throughout the Psalms as an invitation to stop and let what was just said sink in. Use today to catch up on any reading you missed, sit with what God has shown you this week, and simply rest. You are not behind. You are being still.

WEEK 4



LOVE

The Word Became Flesh

WEEKLY TRUTH

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

ROMANS 5:8 KJV

LOVE

TODAY'S READING

Luke 2:1-7

No Room

Luke begins the birth of Jesus with world politics. Caesar Augustus, the most powerful man on earth, issued a decree that everyone should be taxed, and every person had to go to their own city. So Joseph took Mary, great with child, on a journey of about ninety miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David.

Do you see it? An emperor in Rome thought he was counting his subjects. But God was moving a young couple to the exact town Micah named seven hundred years earlier. The most powerful man in the world became a tool in God's hand to keep a promise.

While they were in Bethlehem, Mary brought forth her firstborn Son. She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, a feeding trough for animals, "because there was no room for them in the inn."

The King of kings arrived without a crib, without a room, without anyone important noticing. Heaven's Son was laid where the animals ate.

Where was God? Working through a government decree, a long road and a crowded town, and then lying in a manger.

This is our week of love, and this is what love looks like. Jesus did not come in power and comfort. He came low, so that no one would be too low for Him to reach.

Take two things from this today. First, nothing in your life is too ordinary or too out of control for God to use. The job change, the move, the decision someone else made over your head. God can use it to bring you to the right place.

Second, ask yourself honestly: is there room for Him? Christmas week gets crowded. Make room for Jesus in your schedule, your heart and your home. Do not let Him be the One left outside.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What stands out to you from today's reading?

2. How does this truth invite a response in your own life?

MY PRAYER

LOVE

TODAY'S READING

Luke 2:8-20

Good Tidings

That same night, in the fields outside Bethlehem, shepherds were keeping watch over their flock. Shepherds were near the bottom of society. Their work was dirty, and they were often looked down on. They were not invited to important events. Yet God sent heaven's first birth announcement to them.
An angel appeared, the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Then a multitude of angels filled the sky: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."
When the angels left, the shepherds did not debate. "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem." They came with haste and found Mary, Joseph and the baby lying in a manger, exactly as they were told. Then they made it known everywhere, and all who heard wondered. The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God.
But Luke adds one quiet line: "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."
Where was God? On a hillside at night, choosing ordinary working people to hear the greatest news ever told.
Notice the two responses. The shepherds ran and told. Mary sat and pondered. Both were right.
Some of you are in a run and tell season. God has done something, and you need to testify. Somebody needs to hear your story this Christmas. Others are in a ponder season. You need to slow down and hold what God is doing without rushing to explain it. Ask Him which season you are in. Either way, the good news is for you. "Unto you is born... a Saviour." That means you, by name.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What does it mean to you that God's love came near in a person?

2. How does the truth of Jesus' coming shape the way you live today?

MY PRAYER

LOVE

TODAY'S READING

Luke 2:21-38

Worth the Wait

Mary and Joseph followed the law carefully. On the eighth day, the baby was circumcised and named Jesus, just as the angel said. Later they brought Him to the temple in Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord, with an offering of turtledoves or young pigeons, the offering for families who could not afford a lamb. The Lamb of God was brought by poor parents.

In the temple was a man named Simeon, just and devout, "waiting for the consolation of Israel." The Holy Ghost had revealed to him that he would not die before he saw the Lord's Christ. That day the Spirit led him into the temple. He took the baby in his arms and blessed God: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace... For mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Then he told Mary something hard: a sword would pierce through her own soul also.

Then came Anna, a prophetess about eighty-four years old. She had been married only seven years before becoming a widow, and she spent the years since in the temple, serving God with fastings and prayers night and day. She came in at that very moment, gave thanks, and spoke of Jesus to everyone looking for redemption.

Where was God? Rewarding two faithful people who had waited most of their lives.

Simeon and Anna did not know when the promise would come. They just kept showing up. Anna's life did not turn out the way she likely planned. She lost her husband young. But she did not let grief end her worship. She turned her waiting into prayer.

Your waiting is not wasted. If you are single and waiting, widowed and waiting, praying for a prodigal and waiting, God sees every faithful year. Keep showing up. Keep praying. Your eyes will see His salvation.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. How does the reality of God's great love in Jesus reshape the way you see your story?

2. What is one way you can live out this love today?

MY PRAYER

LOVE

TODAY'S READING

Matthew 2:1-12

Another Way

Sometime after Jesus was born, wise men from the east arrived in Jerusalem. They were likely scholars who studied the stars, outsiders with no Jewish heritage, and they had traveled a long way. Their question was simple: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

Their question shook King Herod, a ruthless man who would not tolerate a rival. He gathered the chief priests, learned the Christ would be born in Bethlehem, and privately sent the wise men there, pretending he wanted to worship too.

The star went before them until it stood over where the young child was. Matthew says, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." They came into the house, saw the child with Mary His mother, fell down and worshipped Him, and opened their treasures: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold for a King. Frankincense for worship. Myrrh, a spice used in burial, pointing ahead to His death.

Then God warned them in a dream not to return to Herod, "and they departed into their own country another way."

Where was God? Leading seekers from far away with a star, and protecting them from danger with a dream.

Jesus came for people near and far. The wise men were outsiders, and they found Him while the insiders stayed home. If you feel like you do not belong, like you came from too far away, the star is still shining for you.

And notice what happened after they worshipped. They went home a different way. No one who truly meets Jesus leaves the way they came. Real worship changes your direction. As this year comes to a close, ask Him: what road do I need to stop taking?

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What stands out to you from today's reading?

2. How does this truth invite a response in your own life?

MY PRAYER

LOVE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
John 1:1-14	1 John 4:9-10

The Word Became Flesh

Matthew and Luke begin the story of Jesus in Bethlehem. John goes back further, before Bethlehem, before Abraham, before creation itself. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word is Jesus. He was not created at Christmas. He always existed. "All things were made by him." The hands that would be wrapped in swaddling clothes had formed the stars. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

John is honest about what happened when He came. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." But to all who did receive Him, He gave power to become the sons of God.

Then comes the miracle of this night: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The word dwelt means He pitched His tent. The eternal God moved into the neighborhood. "And we beheld his glory... full of grace and truth."

First John tells us why: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us."

Where was God? Not watching from a distance, but wrapped in flesh, lying in a manger, close enough to touch.

Every promise we have read this season, the seed of the woman, the blessing for every family, the Lion of Judah, the throne of David, Immanuel, the light in Galilee, came together in one baby.

Tonight, before the gifts and the rush, sit with this: God did not love you from far away. He came close. He came to you. Receive Him again tonight.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. What does it mean to you that God's love came near in a person?

2. How does the truth of Jesus' coming shape the way you live today?

MY PRAYER

LOVE

TODAY'S READING

THE PROMISE	THE FULFILLMENT
John 3:16-17	Revelation 21:3-5

He Kept His Word

Merry Christmas, beautiful woman of God.

Twenty-seven days ago we started in a garden, with two people hiding and a God who came looking. We have walked through promise after promise. Today we land on two passages that tell us what it was all for.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Then verse 17, which we often forget: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Jesus did not come to condemn you. He came to save you.

Then John lifts our eyes to the end of the story. In Revelation 21 he hears a great voice out of heaven: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them." The God who came near in Bethlehem will one day live with His people forever. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Then He that sat upon the throne says, "Behold, I make all things new."

Where was God? In the garden, in Bethlehem, on the cross, and in the future, keeping every word He ever spoke.

The promise God made in Genesis 3 is fully kept in Revelation 21. The serpent is defeated. The curse is undone. God is with us, and we are with Him.

So whatever you are carrying into this Christmas, grief over an empty seat, a broken relationship, a prayer still unanswered, hear this: He kept His word then, and He will keep His word to you. He is making all things new, including you. That is the promise. And He always keeps it.

JOURNAL

WHERE WAS GOD?

RESPOND

1. How does the reality of God's great love in Jesus reshape the way you see your story?

2. What is one way you can live out this love today?

MY PRAYER

The *Promise Kept*

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES AND THEIR FULFILLMENT



THE PROPHECY	THE FULFILLMENT
The Messiah would be born of a woman. GENESIS 3:15	Jesus was born of a woman. GALATIANS 4:4
The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. MICAH 5:2	Jesus was born in Bethlehem. MATTHEW 2:1
The Messiah would be born of a virgin. ISAIAH 7:14	Jesus was born of a virgin. MATTHEW 1:22-23
The Messiah would be called Immanuel (God with us). ISAIAH 7:14	Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. MATTHEW 1:23
The Messiah would be a descendant of David. 2 SAMUEL 7:12-16	Jesus is a descendant of David. MATTHEW 1:1; LUKE 3:23-31
The Messiah would be preceded by a messenger. ISAIAH 40:3	John the Baptist prepared the way. MATTHEW 3:1-3
The Messiah would suffer and be rejected. ISAIAH 53:3-5	Jesus suffered and was rejected. MATTHEW 27:26-31
The Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced. PSALM 22:16	Jesus' hands and feet were pierced. JOHN 19:16-18, 37
The Messiah would rise from the dead. PSALM 16:10	Jesus rose from the dead. MATTHEW 28:5-7
The Messiah would bring salvation to the nations. ISAIAH 49:6	Jesus brings salvation to the nations. ACTS 13:47

Who's Who in the *Christmas Story*

LIVES THAT POINT TO JESUS



MARY	Her willing obedience brought the Savior into the world.
JOSEPH	His faithful obedience protected and provided for Jesus.
ELIZABETH	Her joy in God's promise reminds us to believe what He says.
ZECHARIAH	His restored voice declared God's faithfulness.
JOHN THE BAPTIST	He prepared the way and pointed others to the coming Messiah.
SIMEON	His patient faith recognized the Savior when he saw Him.
ANNA	Her devoted worship and testimony revealed Jesus to others.
THE SHEPHERDS	They received the good news with wonder and went to tell it.
THE WISE MEN	Their seeking and worship show that Jesus is for all nations.



The Women *in His Line*

FOUR WOMEN. A FAITHFUL GOD.

Tamar

She pursued justice and secured a future when the odds were against her.

Rahab

She showed courage and faith, welcoming God's people in a time of fear.

Ruth

She chose loyalty and love, leaving behind what was familiar to follow God.

Bathsheba

Her story reminds us that God can redeem even our deepest wounds and write them into His purpose.

NOTES

SPACE TO REFLECT, RESPOND, AND PRAY

MARKED

Blessing

NUMBERS 6:24-26

The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:
The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

NUMBERS 6:24-26 KJV

MARKED

Join Us

MARKED Bible Study

Thursdays at 8:00 PM ET

MARKED Morning Prayer

Tuesdays at 6:00 AM ET

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Notes

Space to reflect, respond, and pray



MARKED

FAITH THAT LEAVES EVIDENCE

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