



SHADES STUDENTS – ADVENT DEVOTIONALS

December 2020

AD-What? | What in the world is “Advent”?

We're glad you asked! Advent is all about expectation. You probably know more about expectation than you think. When you eagerly hope for the end of the school year, you have an expectation of its arrival. Maybe you are waiting expectantly and hopefully that one day soon COVID-19 will end and you can have a normal life again (we know we sure are!!!). See – you DO know about expectation.

The truth is, we are all hoping for something. But Advent is about more than our own hopes and dreams. It's about eagerly looking towards the return of Jesus again as we celebrate his first arrival in Christmas. It's about reminding ourselves He is coming back and we want to anticipate His arrival.

YOLO!!! | Why would I want to spend time thinking about Jesus coming back?

“You Only Live Once!” That's what the world tells us, right? If we only live once, why think on the future? You have to live in the moment, baby!!! Why spend time thinking about something that we have no idea when it might happen?

Just because you expect the end of the school semester doesn't mean you don't think about homework – right? In fact, it means we usually focus harder, study harder, and work harder. Why? Because our expectation of final grades, tests, and projects motivates us to finish well.

Advent isn't about trying to predict when Jesus may come back, or even if He will. We know from the Bible that Jesus is coming again – the question is, do we live our lives like we know He's coming? When we take time to remember Jesus' coming and anticipate His second coming, our perspective on life changes. All of a sudden, we realize there's an end in sight. Jesus is coming back again – and I want to be ready. How about you? Yeah, me too!!!

Really??? More Homework??? | What is in this devotional book?

NOBODY likes extra homework. If you do, let us know and we'll pray for you. It's not our goal to give you more homework! Our goal in writing this devotional is to help you, maybe for the first time, to EXPECT Jesus. To read, answer some simple questions, and ask God to remind you that your life is short – but when He comes again, His kingdom will go on forever.

So, what's the goal? To remind you that no matter how “2020” things get, there is one truth for those who follow Jesus that surpasses all the others: our Savior is coming again – and we want you to be ready and eager for that day to come.

Come Lord Jesus, Come.

Devotional #1 – No Secret Identity Needed

Passage: Matthew 1:18-22; Revelation 21:1-4

Main Idea: Jesus came to earth to save people from their sins – and He will return one day to defeat sin once and for all.

Read Matthew 1:18-22

All good Superheroes have a secret identity. Batman is secretly the rich and famous Bruce Wayne. Spiderman is secretly the nervous, teenage kid named Peter Parker. Iron Man is secretly the eccentric and incredibly smart Tony Stark. The funny thing about these secret identities is you would never expect them. Who would associate the rich, the self-obsessed, or a young teenage boy as the kind of people who would risk their lives to rescue others from certain evil?

Jesus, however, had no secret identity. In fact, from the very start of His worldly life, Jesus' purpose as a hero was revealed. He had come to save his people from their sins. There was no hiding from the pressure of what He had come to do, no secret personal agenda for why He became a man. Matthew 1:21 tells us that he would "save his people from their sins."

When we celebrate the arrival of Jesus at Christmas, we celebrate not just Him, but His single purpose: to save his people from their sins. And just as we celebrate His single purpose in becoming a little baby, so we celebrate the single purpose for which He will return: to set everything right again.

Read Revelation 21:1-4

Just as He had come to save to people from their sins, Jesus will come again. When He comes again, He will complete His mission. He will destroy forever the hurt, pain, heartache, and brokenness caused by sin. He will wipe away the tears in our eyes, the scars on our hearts, and He will make everything new.

When we anticipate the second coming of Jesus at Advent, we look forward to the day when He will heal our hurts, our mistakes and our heartache. We wait anxiously for the moment when He heals us and our world once and for all for a single purpose: that we would be with Him, and He would be our God forever.

So What?

All of us have pain, scars, and hurt that have come from our own sin or the sins of others against us. People have hurt us, and we have hurt others. But when we celebrate Advent, we look forward to that day when Jesus will heal our pain and make us new.

Take a moment and write down those things that you long for Jesus to heal. Maybe it's pain from your parent's divorce. Maybe it's abuse you've experienced. Maybe its hurtful words or bullying you've experienced at school. Then, pray and ask Jesus to come soon with His healing hand and heal your hurt once and for all. Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Devotional #2 – Let's Party!!!

Passage: Luke 2:8-20

Main Idea: Jesus' coming brought with it an incredible joy and celebration – and His return will be marked by victory and joyful celebration forever.

Take a moment and think about the happiest you have ever felt. Describe that moment in a few sentences below.

Read Luke 2:8-20

Take a moment and describe the joy exhibited by the shepherds in this passage below. How is it similar or different to the moment you described above?

The shepherds and angels in Luke 2 were completely overwhelmed with joy and celebration. They were literally throwing a party in the fields outside of Bethlehem!!! What prompted this incredible and glorious display of joy? It was the coming of Jesus.

You see, the coming of Jesus meant that God had come to be with his people. That He had invaded time and space to walk as we walk, to talk as we talk, and to make right all that we had done wrong. In the person of Jesus Christ our greatest worries, fears, and sins are turned on their heads. In Him, our sadness, hurt and pain turn to joy, celebration and worship. Why? Because he has paid for our sins and offered us the joy of knowing God!

And on that day when Jesus returns again, we too will have a big ol' party. He will be with us, and we will be with Him. Our joy will be complete – and nothing else will compare to being with Jesus Christ.

So What?

What is it that brings you happiness? Is it sports or a hobby? Is it academic excellence or when the popular kid at school follows you on Instagram? Take a moment and ask God to remind you of the joy you will one day experience when Jesus returns. Ask God to help you to find your greatest joy in looking forward to the moment when He returns again to be with us.

Devotional #3 – The Original GOAT

Passage: Isaiah 9:2-7

Main Idea: Jesus' coming fulfilled the promise made in Isaiah to provide a Prince of Peace – and His return will establish a kingdom of peace and justice forever.

Read Isaiah 9:2-7

We love to debate about who or what is the greatest. Michael Jordan or LeBron James? Instagram or snapchat? Taylor Swift or One Direction (I have no idea if this is a thing. It's my attempt at being cool...)? The fact of the matter is, we love to compare greatness with greatness. That's because we love greatness! We love to see someone ordinary do extraordinary things that captivate millions of people.

What if I told you that of all the GOATS out there, Jesus is the GOAT of GOATS? That seems to be exactly what Isaiah had in mind when he wrote Isaiah 9:2-7. Here Jesus is pictured as the greatest of the great. In this passage he is called:

- Light in the darkness
- Wonderful Counselor
- Mighty God
- Everlasting Father
- Prince of Peace
- Eternal King
- Righteous + Just

Now that's a GOAT if I've ever seen one. Yet, Jesus' status as GOAT is different than others today we would call by that title. How is He different? Any other GOAT we might name excelled in their skills simply to be the best. They wanted to prove that they truly were the GOAT. Yet, these words were written about Jesus even before He was born as a man.

Instead of proving Himself as the GOAT, Jesus sought not to make much of Himself, but to save and rescue us. His greatness wasn't in proving He was better, but in giving us the opportunity to be better. He was great from the beginning, but His desire is to share His greatness with us.

Here Isaiah promises that one will come as a Wonderful Counselor, a Mighty God, an Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace – all of these relate directly to His relationship to us!

So What?

When we look at the reputation of Jesus in this passage, and then at our own, it seems crazy to think He would come for us. But that's the beauty of what we celebrate at Christmas – that the GOAT came as a little baby for you and me.

And one day, he will return again, and all that this passage tells us about His greatness, His glory, and His power will be on full display for us to see and experience forever. And we won't need to fear our failings, because we know He came for us. Come, Lord Jesus, Come!