



O COME EMMANUEL

A DEVOTIONAL FOR 11-15s

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INTRODUCTION

Advent is a special time of waiting for the **joy of Christmas**, when we celebrate the birth of Jesus. To get ready, we'll explore the special names for Jesus you might know from the Christmas hymn, 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel'.

For the next 24 days, we'll look at these names. For each day, you will find a reading, a reflection, and a question to chat to God about to get our hearts and minds ready to welcome Jesus.



This guide is based on a fuller resource for adults, *O Come Emmanuel*, featuring newly commissioned artwork by SunYoung Kim. It is available as a full-colour book from Church House publishing, www.chpublishing.co.uk.

Find out more at
cofe.io/OComeEmmanuel

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GOD'S WISDOM

1 DECEMBER

Read: Proverbs 2.6-11

Think of all the people in your life who give you 'advice' – parents/carers, teachers, friends, online influencers. All around us, people are trying to get us to live a certain way, make particular decisions, buy specific things. How do we know which advice to follow?

Our reading from Proverbs tells us that, more than just 'advice', God gives *wisdom*. It's not just an opinion on how best to live – it's the real, genuine, truthful answer on how best to live! Through it, we can filter the advice of others.

Reflect: What other benefits does God give us, through his wisdom? Look back at today's reading and see how many you can spot.

Chat to God: Pick one particular benefit from today's passage that you need right now. Ask God for it. Give space to 'catch' God's response to you. (This could be a Bible verse, a word, phrase, image, or feeling ...)

GOD'S WISDOM

2 DECEMBER

Read: Psalm 90.14-17

Today's psalm is often described as 'A Song of Moses', written during the forty years he spent wandering the desert with the Israelites. Conditions were tough for them, and this psalm is honest about them. We, too, experience challenges in life (although they might look a bit different). Subjects we don't like, teachers we don't get on with, mental or physical illness we don't understand, parents we don't agree with, friends who let us down.

We can be encouraged, as Moses was, that we have a God who never stops loving us and is able to give meaning and fulfilment to the work we do.

Reflect: Which challenges are you facing at the moment?

Chat to God: Be honest with God – as Moses was – about these challenges. Ask God for help where you need it.

GOD'S WISDOM

3 DECEMBER

Read: 1 Corinthians 2.1-5

Do you ever look at other people and think, 'I could never be as clever/wise/articulate/insert-your-own-adjective as them'?

Today's reading is really encouraging for all of us who sometimes feel like rubbish Christians! Paul is saying that, on his own, he is weak and nervous. But with the power of the Holy Spirit infusing his words, they became super-powerful. And most importantly, they built people's faith in *Jesus*, rather than in *Paul*. Impressive people draw others to themselves – but we want to draw others to Jesus. So, hooray for our weaknesses!

Reflect: Is there a character trait you admire (or even envy) in others? What makes you want it?

Chat to God: Thank God for making you *you*. Ask God to infuse your character, words and actions with his mighty power, so that those around you would see how amazing Jesus is.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY (**'ADONAI'**)

4 DECEMBER

Read: Exodus 3.1-6

Do you tend to think of God as a close personal friend, or as an all-powerful being? Both are true! In today's reading, God cares for Moses, appears to him and calls him by name. But then Moses is told to 'come no closer' and remove his sandals, because he is standing on holy ground. God's holiness is so pure that Moses would be overwhelmed by it if he got any closer.

You have a heavenly Father who loves, sees and knows you – but who also created the complex scientific formulae which keep our planet going, and the intricate way our bodies work to keep us alive.

Reflect: God is in charge of all creation – and wants to be your friend. Which of these truths do you find hardest to believe?

Chat to God: Ask God to help you embed whichever truth you find hardest to accept.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY (**'ADONAI'**)

5 DECEMBER

Read: Exodus 6.7-8

If you sometimes feel like God doesn't hear your prayers, listen up! God's people, the Israelites, had been slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years, with no change. But in today's reading we catch a glimpse of how God answered their prayers for freedom.

We don't know why God doesn't always answer our prayers at the time we want them answered. What we do know is that God sees all the world and all of history in a way that we can't. God's timing is perfect, even if we can't see it at the time.

Reflect: Is there something in your life that you would like God to change? Perhaps a health concern, financial worry, challenging relationship or academic hurdle.

Chat to God: Tell God your answer. Consider starting a habit of praying daily for this – and watch what God does.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY (**'ADONAI'**)

6 DECEMBER

Read: Exodus 24.15-18

Today's reading seems a bit weird, doesn't it? I mean – maybe you've climbed a mountain or a hill. Maybe you've even experienced cloud on top of that mountain. But have you experienced God's glory in a fire?!

God reveals himself differently to each of us. Moses' mountaintop drama was just what the Israelites needed: obvious, physical reassurance that God was with them. These days, we have the Bible, Jesus, and many stories of Christians throughout history who have lived faithfully. Through these, we can feel God's power like Moses did on the mountain. We can also know God close to us as Moses did.

Reflect: How close to God do you feel right now?

Chat to God: James 4.8 says, 'Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.' Ask God to help you draw nearer, or thank God for being close, depending on how you feel.

GOD'S SON (‘ROOT OF JESSE’)

7 DECEMBER

Read: Isaiah 11.1-5

This prophecy – given to Isaiah hundreds of years before Jesus was born – describes a promised king who will, once and for all, defeat sin and death, bringing us back to God forever.

‘Root of Jesse’ means ‘from the family of Jesse’. Family trees were important in those days. They revealed something about where you’d come from and what you might become. Because Jesus came from Jesse’s family – Jesse was the father of King David – this told the Israelites that God’s promised Saviour would also be a king. However, King Jesus would do far more than King David could do. He would live a totally sin-free life, enabling him to one day take the punishment for our sin on the cross.

Reflect: What do you know about your family tree?

Chat to God: Thank God for all the people who came before you.

GOD'S SON ('ROOT OF JESSE')

8 DECEMBER

Read: Romans 15.12-13

Gentiles are people from a non-Jewish background. At the time of today's reading, the Jews thought that God's Saviour would be sent only to them, so it was important to hear that he was for the Gentiles too. Jesus is for every nation, every language, every background. There is no culture on earth which the good news of Jesus can't reach.

And what did Jesus come to bring to every culture? This passage says joy, peace and hope. Do you see these qualities in people around you at school, at clubs or in your family? Do you see these qualities in the Christians you know? Being a Christian doesn't mean we'll never become depressed, stressed or anxious. But it does mean we can look forward to the future with hope, not fear.

Reflect: Which of these three qualities – joy, peace, hope – do you need most at the moment?

Chat to God: Ask God for it!

GOD'S SON (‘ROOT OF JESSE’)

9 DECEMBER

Read: Isaiah 42.1-4

People were expecting Jesus to come and bring justice – to make things right where they were unfair. Isaiah highlights this. But people were also expecting Jesus to be a powerful political leader who would overturn the unfair systems through angry protests and violence. This couldn't be any further from who Jesus is!

Jesus is gentle, patient, forgiving and full of love. By following his teaching, Christians have made a huge difference in unjust situations all through history. And one day Jesus will come again to bring justice forever.

Reflect: Which situation in the world comes to mind first when you think of the word ‘injustice’?

Chat to God: Pray now for this situation. Pray for all those affected by it, and success for those working for change.

GOD'S KEY

10 DECEMBER

Read: Isaiah 22.22-23, 25

The 'key' in today's reading lets us into God's family ('house of David'). But it eventually fails. None of us, however 'good' we are, can become a member of God's family on our own.

When Jesus came, he became the 'key' to knowing God. We couldn't get to know God in our own strength - our sin would always get in the way. But through Jesus' death and resurrection, he made it possible for us to enjoy eternal life with God now and in heaven. There's no more important 'key'!

Reflect: Have you ever been locked out of your house? How did that feel? How does it feel to know that Jesus has made sure you will never be locked out of God's house?

Chat to God: Thank Jesus for being the 'key' that gives us true, authentic, joyful eternal life. If you're not sure of your place in God's family, why not invite Jesus into your life now?

GOD'S KEY

11 DECEMBER

Read: Revelation 3.7-8

Today's reading is from the very end of the Bible, where God has given a man called John a vision of what the future looks like. Jesus has the ultimate 'key' to eternal life – and what he opens for us, no one can close. In other words, our eternal future with God is secured. Nothing can separate us from our relationship with God, both here on earth and in heaven.

We might feel like we have 'little power' at times, but the good news is that as we cling to God and his Word (the Bible), the Holy Spirit will give us the strength we need to stand up for Jesus, even when it's hard to do so.

Reflect: When or where do you find it most difficult to be a Christian?

Chat to God: Ask God to equip you to stand up for Jesus in this environment.

GOD'S KEY

12 DECEMBER

Read: Psalm 89.28-29

Do you ever doubt that God is interested in you, or has a plan for your life? Maybe it's not something you've ever thought about before. God spoke these words about David, but it's true for each one of us: his love for you is 'steadfast'. That means it's not going anywhere!

We can also trust God to keep his 'covenant' (promise) with us – that, through Jesus, we can know true freedom from what the world says we should be doing with our lives. God's plan for you is the best one!

Reflect: Do you have ambitions for your life? It's not wrong to make plans. But living as a Christian means entrusting our dreams to God. They might change under God's guidance. But the result will always be the best.

Chat to God: Tell God about your ambitions.

GOD'S LIGHT (‘MORNING STAR’)

13 DECEMBER

Read: Psalm 27.1-4

Just as physical darkness can be confusing and scary, spiritual darkness can also be difficult to navigate. How do we find our way in life when so many voices are telling us contradicting things? Just as a light helps you see where you're going, God helps us to travel through life. When we're struggling with a decision, he guides us. When we're struggling with a task, he equips us. When we're fearful for the future, he brings us peace.

God is Light. So, when Jesus was sent into the world, he was named 'Light of the World'. He is the embodiment of God on earth, lighting our way and showing us how to live. He is completely trustworthy.

Reflect: Can you remember being in a (physically) dark place? How did you feel? Are there any situations in your life that feel like that?

Chat to God: Ask Jesus to bring his light into these situations.

GOD'S LIGHT (‘MORNING STAR’)

14 DECEMBER

Read: Malachi 4.1-2

Do you know the carol ‘Hark! The Herald Angels Sing’? There are some brilliant lines in the final verse which are taken from today’s reading: ‘Hail the Sun of Righteousness! Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.’

Jesus has come to bring light, life and healing to us. Sounds fantastic! But it comes after a warning. Those who ignore God and continue to wreck the world with sinful attitudes will not receive the wonderful eternal life Jesus came to bring. If we want true light, we need to honour the name of Jesus, putting him first in every area of our lives.

Reflect: What does ‘healing’ mean to you? Physical? Emotional? Spiritual?

Chat to God: Tell God your desire to put Jesus first in your life. Or, if you’re not in that place yet, ask God to reveal himself to you.

GOD'S LIGHT (‘MORNING STAR’)

15 DECEMBER

Read: Revelation 22.16-17

We often hear the word ‘inclusive’. But have you noticed how ‘exclusive’ our culture often is? Some people don’t fit in because of what they look like, how they dress, or what their opinions are. We say ‘inclusive’, but often we mean ‘people who agree with, or are similar to, us’.

Well, there’s good news in today’s reading. God’s kingdom truly is ‘inclusive’. Jesus extends an invitation to all of us. We are all included! For anyone ‘thirsty’ for a full, meaningful life, Jesus says, “Come!” He is the light which can be trusted by all of us, whoever we are.

Reflect: How would you describe ‘water of life’ to someone who asked?

Chat to God: Ask God to fill you up with the good things he has for you, so that you can shine a light wherever you go.

GOD'S KING

16 DECEMBER

Read: Isaiah 2.4

How many countries can you name which are currently experiencing war or conflict? (If you need a hand, try scrolling a news website.) War leads to violence, poverty, homelessness, trafficking, hunger, disruption to education, and destruction of whole towns and cities. It is a horrible example of sin destroying our world.

But as we get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus, we can also celebrate that Jesus came as a King who would bring peace. He brought it during his earthly life, both in how he lived and how he taught others to live. And he will bring peace for all eternity when he comes back to earth.

Reflect: Which areas of the world – or your life – need peace right now?

Chat to God: Ask Jesus to bring peace to this area of the world.

GOD'S KING

17 DECEMBER

Read: Ephesians 2.19-22

Think of the 'kingdoms' on earth. None of them are perfect. There is no king, queen, president or prime minister throughout history who has ruled their kingdom perfectly.

But the Kingdom of God is perfect in every way – and we get to be part of it! The Bible calls us 'citizens', 'members of the household of God' and 'a dwelling-place for God'. Wow! And just like a strong building needs a cornerstone on which to build, the Kingdom of God needs a King, Jesus. Everything built on Jesus will be solid and unshakeable.

Reflect: What communities are you part of? In which ways do they work well – or not so well?

Chat to God: Thank God for his Kingdom and the privilege of getting to live in it. Ask Jesus what role he wants you to play in it, inviting him to be the centre of all you do.

GOD'S KING

18 DECEMBER

Read: 1 Peter 2.9-10

If you're part of a church, I wonder if there are people you admire in the congregation? People who are on fire for Jesus, who know the Bible really well, who always pray with passion or speak words of wisdom?

The Bible says that we are all God's people – a royal priesthood and a holy nation. Not just the ones who seem super-holy but *everyone*. And yes, that includes you! God loves you so much, has created you with special gifts and talents, and has good works already planned for you to do, now and in the future (Ephesians 2.10). As we worship and serve Jesus as our King together, God unites us into one big family.

Reflect: What has God made you good at, or given you a passion for? Is this something you are using (or could be using) to bless your church or local community?

Chat to God: Talk to God about your gifts and how you're using them. Ask God for opportunities to use your gifts to build the Kingdom of Heaven.

GOD'S PRESENCE (‘EMMANUEL’)

19 DECEMBER

Read: Isaiah 7.14-15

The word ‘Emmanuel’ means ‘God with us’. It probably seems obvious to us these days, but in the days before Jesus came, this would have been quite an extraordinary idea. God himself coming to live with us on earth?! But that is exactly who Jesus was – fully human, fully God.

Jesus is someone we can relate to. He was born, grew up and worked as a carpenter. He had friends and enjoyed parties. He got tired, sad, angry and scared. He knows how hard life can be. But Jesus is also God: able to consistently refuse evil and do good. Jesus is not only our friend, he is our Saviour.

Reflect: Do you remember losing your first tooth or making a new friend? The same God who made the universe also experienced these things - how does that make you feel?

Chat to God: No other faith can boast a God who comes down into our suffering to live amongst us, so thank God for sending Jesus to us.

GOD'S PRESENCE (‘EMMANUEL’)

20 DECEMBER

Read: Psalm 80.2b-3

Lots of people think they don't need God. They might have decided God doesn't exist, or they might not have ever thought about it. They might be filling their lives with sport, work, music or friends.

But these are just distractions from what our lives are ultimately about. None of it can rescue us from the problem of sin – the bad stuff we do which breaks our relationship with God. The psalmist recognised that he needed saving, and called out to God, trusting that one day a Saviour would be sent to bring us back to God.

Reflect: Why do you think those around you don't think of themselves as needing to be 'rescued'?

Chat to God: Thank God for sending Jesus to rescue us. Ask God for a greater sense of what this means as you celebrate Jesus' birth this Christmas.

GOD'S PRESENCE (**'EMMANUEL'**)

21 DECEMBER

Read: Matthew 1.18-23

After centuries of waiting, God's people are about to receive their Saviour. God's rescue plan is kicking into action.

Who will God send to save humankind? A powerful warrior? An articulate politician? An outspoken activist? No. The answer to sin and suffering is not to fight back in human ways, but in Kingdom ways. God's King, Jesus, will show a radically different way to deal with sin – not by exerting his power, but by giving it up. So Jesus, who is fully God, enters our world as a tiny, powerless baby.

Reflect: Who are the leaders who are seen as most powerful in the world today? Do you think they are effective at what they're trying to do?

Chat to God: Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. Thank him for this. Ask him how he might serve you this week.

GOD'S MIRACLE (JESUS' BIRTH AND MARY'S SONG)

22 DECEMBER

Read: Luke 1.46-50

Over the next three days we'll be reading the 'Magnificat' – a fancy word for 'Mary's song'. It was the song of praise and thanks Mary sang to God after being told she would birth the Saviour. Mary is amazed that God has noticed her, a young girl from an insignificant town, with no wealth or status. She calls herself a 'lowly servant' who will now be remembered and talked about forever, because of the call God has placed on her life.

God doesn't call us because we are gifted or qualified, but because he loves us! God has a Kingdom to grow and wants to include us in growing it. All God looks for is our willingness to say 'yes'.

Reflect: Do you ever feel left out, forgotten or 'ordinary'?

Chat to God: Tell God how you feel about being loved and wanted by him. Are you willing to say 'yes' to whatever God calls you to?

GOD'S MIRACLE (JESUS' BIRTH AND MARY'S SONG)

23 DECEMBER

Read: Luke 1.52-53

For centuries, God's people had been waiting for a Saviour to free them from the effects of sin. A Saviour to bring down evil rulers, end all famine and drought, and restore creation to its original design. Mary praises God for doing these things – even before Jesus is born. She is showing that she trusts God to keep his promises – even before they have been fulfilled.

Jesus did indeed bring justice through his life. His teachings encouraged other believers to work for justice too. Throughout history, Christians have often been at the forefront of campaigns to bring justice: ending slavery, improving working conditions, building clean water wells, providing education for all, giving equal rights to women, and so much more. God calls us to bring about his Kingdom in any ways available to us.

Reflect: Do you see any injustice currently in your school or community? How would Jesus respond?

Chat to God: Ask God how you can make a difference in the situations around you which don't reflect the value of justice.

GOD'S MIRACLE (JESUS' BIRTH AND MARY'S SONG)

24 DECEMBER

Read: Luke 1.54-55

If you're reading this on 24 December, well done! December is busy. It's not always easy to find time to spend with God. You may have many fun things happening over the next few days: seeing family, enjoying delicious food, attending Christmas services. There are probably jobs to do: wrapping presents, baking treats, making beds for guests, or packing to go and see family.

So if you have managed to focus on God for a few minutes today, lift your thoughts to the reason for all this fun stuff. Ultimately, Jesus has come to bring mercy and forgiveness to everyone who comes to him. That is worth much more than the best Christmas present, the juiciest turkey or the richest cake! Revel in the peace and freedom Jesus brings as you celebrate him this Christmas.

Reflect: Which is your favourite aspect of your Christmas celebrations?

Chat to God: Thank God for this, and for all the fun of the season.

The Joy of Christmas is The Church of England's theme for Advent and Christmas 2025. Find more resources to help you spend some time reflecting on that joy and praying daily throughout the Christmas season:



cofe.io/TheJoyOfChristmas

