

COLOR, PRAY & REFLECT THROUGH SCRIPTURE



*Celebrate
Wonder & Joy*

25 DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR
ADVENT & CHRISTMAS



MARGARET FEINBERG

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Wonder & Joy*

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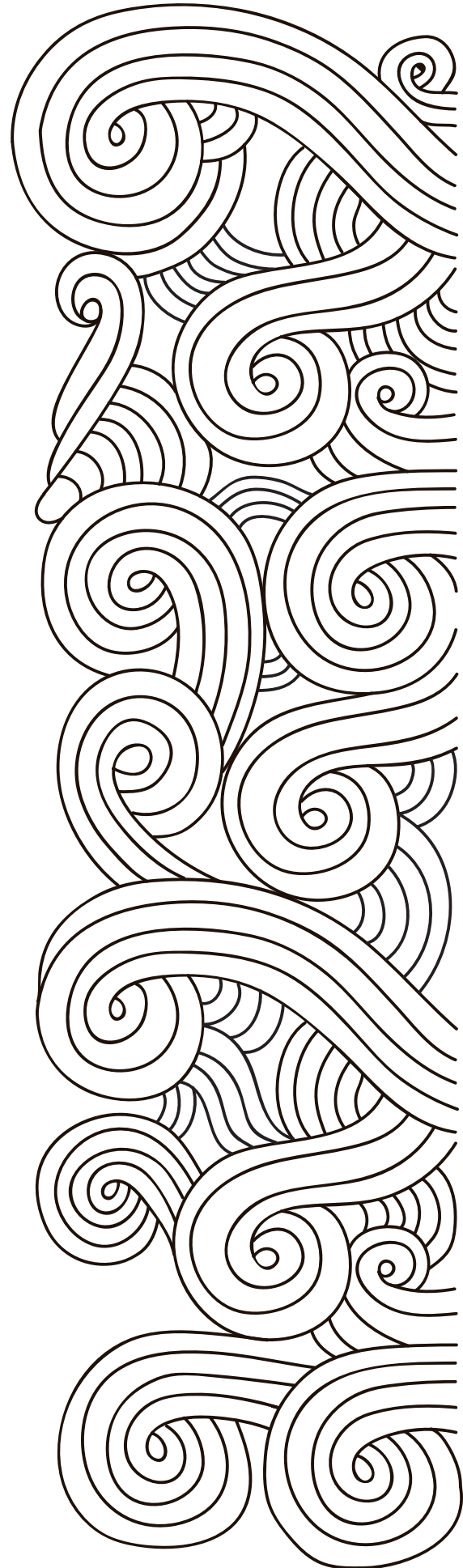
MARGARET FEINBERG

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Celebrate Wonder & Joy

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A Letter from Margaret

Sweet Friend,

If you're like me, the weeks before Christmas overflow with lists and to-dos. Instead of living in wild expectation of Jesus' birth, I find myself in lines at grocery stores, boutiques, and big box stores.

Yet Advent beckons us to prepare for the arrival of a tiny infant with a frame so small you could cradle Him in the palms of your hands.

Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus* which means "coming." The purpose of Advent is two-fold: a celebration of the arrival of Christ and an anticipation of Christ's return.

Advent awakens our senses to the "now" and "not yet" as God's children.

Advent alerts our hearts to God's work in the waiting.

Advent amplifies our awareness of the our need for a Savior.

Celebrate Wonder and Joy provides 25 Scripture readings coupled with a devotional entry and reflection questions. I'm indebted to the research and insights from my pastor, Troy Champ at Capital Church, for his insights during the development of this study.

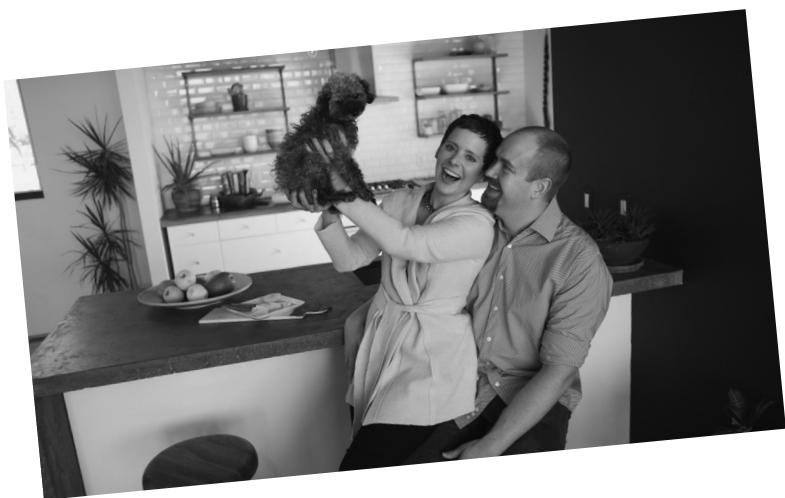
You're invited to gather around the table. Invite a friend, your kids, or grandkids to join. Grab a handful of colored pencils, markers, or crayons to slow down as you read the Scripture. Take time to circle the verbs, underline the names, and consider the details of the text as you doodle, color, and reflect.

Please don't keep what you are learning to yourself. Share what you are discovering on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or your blog using the hashtag: #CelebrateWonder. Join our community—there's plenty of room for you.

My prayer is that during this time you'll step back from the hustle and bustle of the holidays and make room for Him.

Much love and Merry Christmas,

Margaret, Leif, and Hershey



How to use the Color Method

Creativity splashes through the readings of Scripture. I'm learning to let my inner doodler dance and play. I scribble like a 4-year-old, but the swirls and colors provide time for the words and the phrases to sink deeper into my soul. I hope they will for you, too.

Coloring slows our pace.

Coloring highlights the patterns, repeated words, and holy emphasis.

Coloring invites us beyond reading the Scripture and invites the Scripture to read us.

The readings in *Celebrate Wonder and Joy* are short. The Color Method will add a few minutes as you read through each portion of Scripture several times. The depth, the richness, and the discoveries make this extra effort worth every moment.

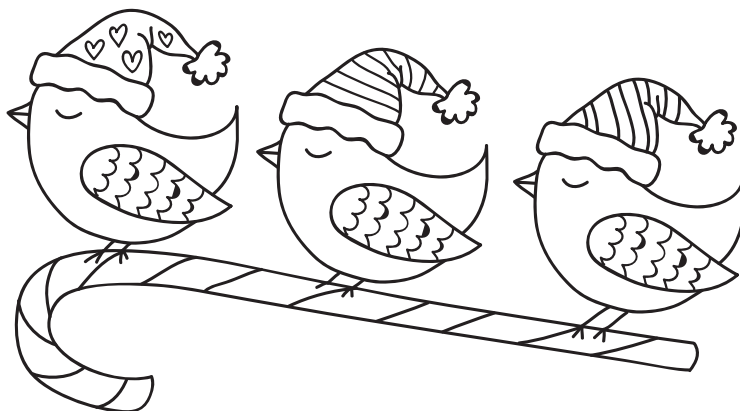
Here are possibilities for different colors:

- Circle verbs in **red** to highlight the activity of God and people.
- Circle places in **brown** to note location.
- Circle names in **purple** to identify people.
- Mark numbers in **orange** to identify numerals, which may have Biblical significance.
- Mark the Holy Spirit, angels, and the prophetic in **blue** to identify God's presence and handiwork.
- Scribble observations in **green** to record insights.

Feel free to choose your favorite hues.

Following the Scripture reading, you'll find a devotional that zeroes in on one concept from the passage. I wrote these to spur your thoughts and hearts Christward. Each reading closes with reflection questions designed for personal or small group use.

As you finish studying each day, consider how to respond in an active way. You may be nudged to prayer, repentance, a generous act, or a kind word. Ask God how to be both a hearer and a doer of the day's reading.

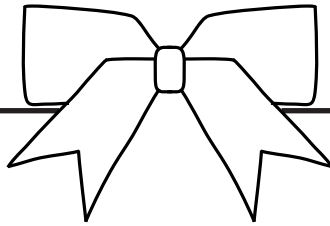


DAY ONE

HARK! WHEN YOU HEAR THE BELLS

ISAIAH 7:14 NASB

¹⁴Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.



If you thumb through Scripture, you'll notice how waiting weaves itself into the fabric of history. God waits. Creation waits. Humankind waits. We wait for reconciliation and redemption, healing and wholeness. We crane our necks, strain our ears for bells of freedom to ring and jingle.

Throughout the Bible, a question reverberates:

“How long?”

Those two little words appear more than fifty times in Scripture, and it's no wonder, because waiting is part of all our stories. Adam and Eve wait, fresh fruit staining their faces, for God to discover what they have done. Noah waits for the first raindrops to pitter-patter on his odd-shaped boat. Abram waits for a promised son, Jacob waits for a promised wife, and the Israelites wait for a promised new life.

For four hundred years, the prophets wait in silence for a syllable from God. All heaven and humanity hold their breath for the arrival of Immanuel.

Deep in the fabric of our souls, we wonder, “How long must we wait?”

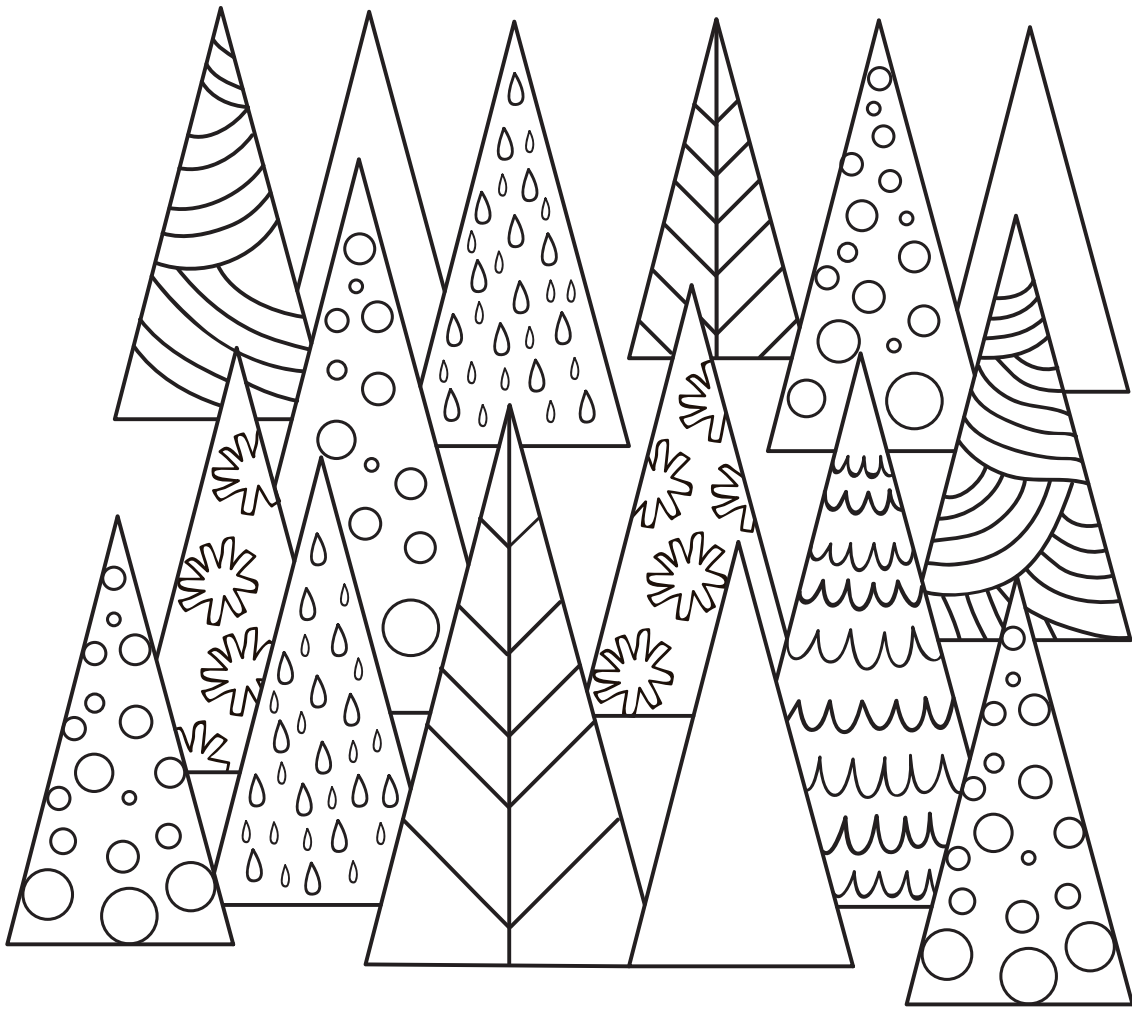
The truth about waiting is God asks this question, too.

In Exodus 10:3, Moses and Aaron deliver God's message to Pharaoh: “This is what the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, says: ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me.’”

God is at work in the waiting, even when the wait seems long, to bring the Israelites and each of us, step by step, toward salvation and redemption.

God sends a baby boy in a basket to deliver the Israelites freedom.

God sends a baby boy in a barn to deliver us freedom.



God asks, “How long?” then delivers the answer, the gift of freedom, in person.

Hark! The bells of freedom in Christ ring for you.

Your freedom arrives in a divine plan, a holy person, a sacred child. Whenever you hear bells jingle this holiday season, celebrate the wonder that your freedom rings in Christ.

Reflection Questions:

1. What are you waiting on God for most this Advent season?
2. In what area of your life do you need to hear Christ ring the bells of freedom?
3. How do materialism and commercialism drown out the bells of freedom Christ has rung for you?
4. Using the Color Method, what stood out to you most from today’s Scripture?
5. What do you find most challenging in today’s passage? Most comforting?

DAY TWO

GOD IS NOT AFRAID OF THIS

MATTHEW 1:1-7 NKJV

¹The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: ²Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. ³Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. ⁴Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. ⁵Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, ⁶and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. ⁷Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa.



Matthew launches his story with a genealogy of Jesus, marking the beginning of the arrival of the Messiah and the coming of the kingdom of God. Several women appear in the genealogy—a rarity in Jewish genealogical records. To the first readers of Matthew’s Gospel, their inclusion caused jaws to drop and mouths to gape.

These women hang dirty laundry on Jesus’ family tree. Tamar is abandoned and pretends to be a prostitute. Rahab is a prostitute and traitor; Ruth, a gentile widow and immigrant; Bathsheba, an adulteress.

For the Biblical statistician, three of the four were gentiles, considered unclean by the Jews, and three of the four were involved in adultery. Those are bad odds.

Yet Matthew does more than mention these women, he highlights them, and in the process, reveals that God uses people with shady pasts to unfold His plan to save the world. Gentiles. Sinners. Prostitutes. Adulteresses. And men who deceive, murder, and steal. Together, their stories remind us:

God uses imperfect people to accomplish His perfect purposes.

These women and men are vital to delivering the Greatest Gift to the world.

Like each of them, none of your past sins keep you from service in God’s plan. No matter where you’ve been, no matter what you’ve done, God wants you to be part of His redemptive work.

Reflection Questions:

1. Do you see anything in yourself in the imperfect people in this genealogy?
2. Where have you disqualified yourself from being used by God? How has God used you anyway?
3. How have you seen God use broken, imperfect people in your life?
4. Using the Color Method, what stood out to you most from today’s Scripture?
5. What do you find most challenging in today’s lesson? What do you find most comforting?