



Bible Verses &
Daily Reflections

Bible Verses

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Day 1

The Word

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. John 1:14

Welcome to the beginning of Advent, a time when we celebrate Jesus coming into the world.

There are stacks and stacks of different ways words come to us. I wonder how many you can think of?

TV, social media, phones, overhearing someone talking, songs, podcasts, movies, radio. And of course teachers up the front of class, friends in the playground and conversations with family and friends.

Do you have a favourite way of hearing words?

God has been using words to communicate with people for a very long time. Thousands of years ago he spoke mainly through prophets. Sometimes he spoke to people in dreams. Occasionally, he spoke so a person could hear his voice directly from heaven. That was pretty special, but it didn't happen often.

One thing we *do* know from all this, is that God loves to speak and he loves people to listen to what he says. Why? Why is it important to hear what God says? Because his words tell us what God is like and what is his best way for us to live. That's why God loves to speak to us.

God had a special plan to tell us about himself in Jesus. Jesus was the very big, important word that God had to say. When Jesus lived he was like an **'alive word'** from God. Everything he said and did showed us what God was like. It also showed us how to live to please God.

Jesus IS the Word from God who came and lived right here on earth. When we listen to Jesus in the Bible and see how he lived, we hear that **'alive word'** to us.

I wonder how much you know about Jesus. Perhaps a lot, perhaps not much. Each day in this Advent Calendar we'll be learning something more. So keep listening to God's 'alive word', Jesus.

Day 2

I Am

Jesus answered, 'I tell you before Abraham was born, I am!' John 8:58

Do you have a Christmas tree at your place? Some people have an artificial tree and some people buy a real tree. Of course, a cut down real tree doesn't live very long.

Some trees still in the ground can live for ages. People who know how to work out the age of trees think that the very oldest tree in the world is about 5,000 years old. That is very, very old.

Who is the oldest person you know?

About 4,000 years ago there was a man whose name was Abraham. When Jewish people thought back to the very beginning of their nation, the first person they thought of was Abraham. Other people lived before him, but he was the oldest, most ancient person in their nation.

Jesus makes an extraordinary statement. He says that before Abraham lived, Jesus himself was alive. Jesus is saying that he was alive before he came to live as the human person, Jesus.

Two things in these words of Jesus get us thinking about Jesus being God.

One is that he was alive before Abraham. And so perhaps Jesus is even saying, that he was alive at the very beginning of time.

The other thing is that the two words 'I am' are used as a name for God in the Old Testament part of the Bible. God told the people his personal name. It went something like this - 'I am who I am'.

It's a very big deal to claim you were alive at the beginning of the world. It's also a very big deal to claim the name of God for yourself.

Both these things make Jesus more special than anyone else who has ever lived. And Jesus, this very special person, wants each of us to know him and be his friend.

Imagine being friends with the most special person who ever lived. That's what Jesus wants to be with you - your friend.

Day 3

Son of God

The angel answered Mary....the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Luke 1:35

Every baby is very special. Perhaps you can ask your parents how they felt when you were born.

There is something extra special about the baby Mary was expecting. It was her baby, born like all babies are born. But this baby wasn't only the son of Mary, he was also the Son of God.

This baby had lived before he was born as a baby. Not just for the time when he was growing inside Mary, but even before that. In fact he was alive from the beginning of time. He had always been the majestic, glorious Son of God. But now he was coming to earth as a human baby, who needed to be cared for and looked after.

Imagine! The Son of God who had lived forever, who was right there at the beginning of the whole world, who was worshipped by all the angels, now cried and was hungry and did a poo like every other baby.

When you see a picture of the baby in a manger in the Christmas stories, it's easy to only think of a cute little baby. But Mary's baby was also the Son of God. It's very hard to hold these two things together in our heads. But that's the kind of God we read about in the Bible. One who is full of majesty and splendour, but also willing to be humble and seen as very ordinary.

What do you think Mary thought when the angel told her that her baby would also be called the Son of God?

Perhaps she couldn't understand how it worked, but she knew God. So she was prepared to say to God 'I'm willing to be your servant'.

Day 4

Redeemer

The Redeemer will come to Zion. Isaiah 59:20

Have you ever heard anyone called a redeemer? It's a word people hardly ever use.

In the Bible the word 'Redeemer' is used a lot. And there are other words that go with it. Redeem, redeemed, redemption. These are very important words in the whole story of the Bible. But what do they mean?

We need to go back to a story in the Old Testament. God's people were slaves in ancient Egypt for a very long time. Their lives were miserable and they had no way to escape. As slaves they had no freedom to do anything they wanted to do. But God stepped in and rescued his people from being slaves.

To redeem people is to rescue them from slavery. The person who does the rescuing is called the redeemer. The people who are rescued are called the redeemed and the whole rescue plan is called redemption.

God's people never forgot this great rescue by God. But more rescuing or redeeming was needed, both back then and now. Let me explain why.

Have you ever tried to do the right thing for a whole week? Pretty hard isn't it? We feel free, but somehow we don't always live the way we know we should. An even bigger problem is that no one lives the way God wants them to live.

We all need rescuing or redeeming from doing the wrong things when it comes to how God wants us to live. We can't redeem ourselves. We need a Redeemer! Jesus came as our Redeemer. When he died on the cross, he paid the price with his own life to redeem us and secure our freedom. He freed us so we could live for God and not live in a self-centred way.

P.S. Did you notice another unusual word in today's verse? Zion. The city of Jerusalem was built on Mount Zion. Jerusalem was a very important city for God's people. Jesus came to that city to die on the cross as our Redeemer.

Day 5

Light of the World

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

John 8:12

Have you ever got up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom when your house is in darkness? Perhaps you stumble over clothes on the floor or tread on a piece of Lego. Ouch!

Light is so good! We get light in lots of ways. The sun, the moon, light globes, candles, fire. These are all sources of light and it's so good to have them. Otherwise we'd all be stumbling around in the dark!

What Jesus says about light is pretty incredible. He says, 'I am the light of the world!' **He** is the light. **He** is the light the whole world needs. To know Jesus is to have a light shine on your life. This helps us from stumbling around in the darkness. The darkness is not living God's way. These are pretty big ideas. What can it mean that Jesus gives us the light of life?

It really is a huge idea. Here are just a few things that happen when Jesus shines his light on our lives. We know we are precious to God and that he loves us. That's a brilliant ray of light to light up our lives. Another ray of light helps us see that God cares about every single person, no matter who they are. This means we should look out for others and be kind to them. Another thing Jesus' light shows us is how we effect others. Kind words and actions help people and mean words and actions hurt people. Another ray of light tells us to look after our planet because God created it and cares about it.

The light of Jesus keeps beaming more and more into our lives as we get to know him more and more. There is a shiny brilliance about living our whole lives in Jesus' light.

Day 6

Lamb of God

John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, 'Look the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' John 1: 29

Do you have a special meal for your birthday or for Christmas dinner? It might be a baked dinner or pizza or something entirely different. For lots of people, there is a connection between a particular food and a special occasion.

At the time of Jesus, lamb had a special meaning for the Jewish people. We usually go to the supermarket and buy meat in trays. But years ago lots of people saw animals being killed before they ate them. A bit gruesome!

In the Jewish temple, lambs were killed regularly. This provided food, but more importantly it was a lesson for the people. What was God trying to teach them? He wanted them to know they could be his friends. But there was a big problem. There were so many things they kept doing that God wasn't happy about. He needed to remind them that he wanted to be their friend but something had to be done about their sins. God takes sin very seriously. Sin is deciding to live our lives our own way without taking much notice of God.

Each time a lamb was killed it was like a mini visual aid. It taught the people that something had to die in order for their sins to be forgiven. Only then could they be friends with God.

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he knew that he was the one who would completely deal with our sins so we could be friends with God forever.

Like the lambs in the temple, Jesus would die. But it wouldn't need to be done again and again. Because Jesus is the Son of God, when this Lamb of God died, he was able to deal with the sins of everyone. Now whoever trusts in Jesus as the Lamb of God, will have their sins completely forgiven.

If you trust that Jesus died for you, you can be friends with God. A friend of God forever.

Day 7

Mediator

For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. 1 Timothy 2:5-6

A mediator is someone who helps two people who are not getting along to find a solution so they can get along better. Sometimes in a family when kids disagree or feel things are unfair, they call out to one of their parents to come and help settle the argument. By doing this they are asking this parent to be a mediator. The kids want the parent to hear both sides and help find a solution that everyone is happy with.

God wants to get along with us. In fact he wants us to be part of his family. But there is a problem. God is perfect and holy and can't have anyone in his family who ignores him or decides that they know best rather than God knowing best. He is God after all! This is a big problem. But there is a solution!

Jesus Christ is not only God but he also came as a human person. This means he totally understands God's side of things and he also totally understands the problem for us. He is the ideal person to be the mediator between God and us.

But even more than that, he has supplied the solution to the problem. This mediator has become a ransom. That means that he has paid the price to remedy all the things human beings have done wrong when it comes to loving God and other people.

If we ask Jesus to be the mediator between ourselves and God, God will welcome us into his family. In fact, God is so excited when this happens that he has a huge celebration in heaven. That's how much you mean to him!

Day 8

Immanuel

The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14

...they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us') Matthew 1:23

Imagine for a moment that your school Principal is called Mrs Smith. One day a visitor comes to your school and you point to Mrs Smith in the playground and say 'that's Mrs Smith.' The visitor might wonder, 'What does Mrs Smith do?' Then you add, 'She's our school Principal.' That title adds a whole lot more information. It says what Mrs Smith does in the school.

The baby Jesus was given the name 'Jesus'. But the title 'Immanuel' adds a whole lot more information. That title describes what Jesus did in the world. He came to live as God among his people.

In the Hebrew language Immanuel means 'God with us'. Jesus, as Immanuel, would deal with our sin, so God could live with us. And Jesus as Immanuel would rise from the dead and give his Holy Spirit to everyone who trusts in him.

When you have God's Holy Spirit living in you, you always have God with you. Jesus, who is Immanuel, makes this possible. He gives his followers his Spirit.

In fact one of the great promises Jesus makes to his followers is found in the very last verse of Matthew's Gospel: 'Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

Matthew starts his story of Jesus by describing what he does. He is 'God with us'. He ends his story of Jesus by telling us that Jesus, through his Spirit, continues being God with us even though we can't see him. One day we will see Jesus and live with him forever.

He is forever Immanuel, 'God with us'.

Day 9

Cornerstone

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation. Isaiah 28:16

(God's people are) built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. Ephesians 2:20.

Lots of kids love to build things. Are you one of them? What do you like to use? Building blocks, Lego, cards, kitchen containers or something else?

As you build, you quickly learn that a good foundation is very important. It must support what you are building.

When big buildings are constructed, as well as a good foundation, a cornerstone is put in place. The whole building is measured from this important stone. If walls are not lined up properly, the whole building will be out of shape. It's the cornerstone that makes sure the building is not all wonky and out of alignment.

The New Testament loves to compare God's people to the way a building is constructed. God uses two things to help us grow properly. The first of these is a strong foundation. The foundation is the words of the Bible.

The second is the cornerstone. Today we learn that Jesus is that chief or main cornerstone. How do God's people keep from being all wonky and out of alignment? By having Jesus as the one we all keep in line with. We need to keep looking to Jesus to help us grow in knowing God more. When we look to Jesus, we become more and more like him. We also keep learning how to love one another.

Jesus remains the cornerstone of God's people for all time. So as long as we live, we need to keep checking that our lives are in line with him.

Day 10

Bread of Life

I am the bread of life....I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. John 6:48 & 51

Most people in countries near where Jesus lived, ate bread at every meal. In fact bread was so much a part of what they ate everyday, that the word 'bread' could be used to mean 'food'.

Imagine how hungry you'd get if there was nothing to eat.

When you remember how important bread or food is, can you think what Jesus might have meant when he called himself 'the bread of life'?

We need physical bread or food to grow. But no matter how much we eat, this food will not make us live forever. People in the Old Testament had some special bread that came down from heaven. It was called manna. That was back in the time of Moses when God's people desperately needed food. The manna was special because it came from heaven, but eating it did not help them live forever.

Jesus says that he is the living bread that came down from heaven. When we eat what he offers, he gives us the power to live forever. Jesus is much more special than the special bread in Moses' time.

Bread or food is essential for us to live and grow strong. Knowing Jesus is essential for us to live as God's children and grow strong as followers of Jesus. Jesus died and rose again so that we could become part of God's family and live forever.

We can't live without eating. Food is essential.

We can't live forever without trusting in Jesus. Jesus, the bread of life, is essential.

Day 11

The Vine

I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener.....I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.
John 15:1 & 5

Have you ever seen a grape vine? Perhaps you have seen another kind of vine. A vine grows and grows and all along it, branches lead off in different directions. These branches often have leaves and in the case of a grape vine, bunches of grapes. That's if, and it's a very big if, the branches stay connected to the vine. You can't get bunches of grapes if the branches get broken off from the vine.

Can you think why?

All the nutrients travel along the sap of the vine into the branches so the branches can stay healthy and grow and produce fruit.

The gardener who tends the grape vine works hard so the branches get as much nutrition from the vine as possible. He may trim or prune the branches back, but if the branches are to stay alive, they must stay connected to the vine.

Jesus uses this visual aid of the vine and the branches and applies it to himself. He is like the vine. He is the one who has the life-giving energy within himself to give life to his followers. His followers are like the branches. What happens when they stay connected to Jesus, who is the vine? They stay healthy in loving God, they grow in becoming like Jesus, and they produce the fruit of real change in their lives.

Did you notice that Jesus adds the word 'true' to the vine? Jesus is the true vine. We can't be the people of God without Jesus, because he is God's true vine.

Jesus also makes it very personal. He says 'remain in me'. This is all about staying close to Jesus. What an amazing invitation! So next time you see a vine, think of Jesus and his invitation to stay close to him.

Day 12

Glory of the Lord

The glory of the Lord will be revealed Isaiah 40:5

Imagine you had someone visit your school who you thought was totally amazing. You rush home to tell Mum and Dad all about the visit. What words would you use to try and get across to them just how amazing this person was? Would you use any of these? The person was - Incredible! Fantastic! Out of this world! Just wow! Awesome!

When the Bible tries to capture just how amazing God is, it speaks of God's glory. His glory is all that is incredible, fantastic and awesome about him. The Bible uses words like God's splendour and his majesty. All these words are wrapped up in that one word 'glory'.

The Old Testament looked forward to a time when the glory of the Lord would come and his glory would be seen. The Lord would be announced by a voice crying in the wilderness.

Who was the Lord this voice was announcing? Who was the Glory of the Lord 'in person'? It was the Lord Jesus Christ! One of Jesus' disciples wrote about Jesus like this - 'we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son.'

When Jesus came as a baby and when he lived, he didn't look very glorious or splendid or majestic. But if we look at him really closely in the pages of the New Testament we can get glimpses of him doing and saying the sorts of things only God can do or say about himself. They are glimpses of his glory. But the most incredible, fantastic, amazing thing about Jesus is his resurrection. He lives forever in glory and will come again so we will all see him and will say together 'Jesus is just wow! Incredible, amazing, and totally glorious.'

Day 13

Man of Sorrows

He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of sorrows, and familiar with pain. Isaiah 53:3

When people think about Christmas, mostly it makes them think of lots of good things. A baby being born, angels singing, a bright star, presents, food and fun.

Today's name for Jesus doesn't sound very good. 'Man of sorrows' seems a very strange name.

When Jesus was born we get hints that his life was going to be hard. The cruel King Herod tried to kill baby Jesus. Mary was told that hard things would be part of Jesus' life and that would make her very sad.

When we read the life of Jesus in the New Testament, we see that many hard things did happen. Some people didn't like Jesus at all and wanted him dead. Jesus was talking to all sorts of people saying God loved them and wanted to be their friend. This upset those who had strict rules about who God should accept and who he should have nothing to do with.

Jesus was turning everything upside down!

Finally, these people managed to bring Jesus before the Roman ruler who was in charge. He ordered that Jesus be put to death on a cross. This is what Christians remember at Easter on Good Friday. They remember that Jesus died so we could be forgiven by God. He died in our place. By doing this, God's anger and disappointment with us could stop and God could welcome us into his family.

The greatest sorrow Jesus experienced was taking on himself our sins, our pride and our self-centredness. He did this so we could have a fresh start with God. This makes all the difference in the world. How can we know this is true? Because Jesus didn't stay dead. He rose from the dead and is alive right now. He throws open the door to welcome us into God's family.

If you believe that Jesus, the man of sorrows, died for you, then you can pray to him. Thank him for dying in your place and tell him you want to be his friend. He is alive and will welcome you into God's family.

Day 14

Alpha & Omega

I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. Revelation 1:8

Some leaders of countries are very powerful. Some are in power for a short time and others stay in power for a very long time. But for every one of them, their time in power comes to an end.

This name of Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, tells us that Jesus is different from every leader who ever was and who ever will be.

Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. Greek was the language that the New Testament was written in. So it's a bit like saying that Jesus is the A and the Z. He is the very beginning and he is the very end of everything.

He is the Almighty One in all of history and in all of eternity. No one is more powerful than him. No other leader rules for all of time, except him.

Jesus **is** the most powerful. He always **has been** the most powerful. He **always will be** the most powerful.

Sometimes life can be very hard. It's good to remember that Jesus is in control even in the hardest times. Jesus lives and rules forever. From the beginning of everything to the very end.

When you follow Jesus as your Lord, you can be sure that he will always be there for you. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last.

One day, everything that is wrong in this world will be made right by Jesus. That is a great future to look forward to. Jesus promises to walk beside you now and into all of eternity.

Day 15

Prince of Peace

For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given ...and he shall be called... Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Have you ever seen two children fighting? There might be yelling, nasty comments, bickering. There might even be hitting and punching. It is definitely not peaceful!

When these two children calm down, sometimes there is real peace between them. They say they are sorry and mean it, and decide to go and play a game together. But what if the two children refuse to say sorry and go away angry and upset with each other. This is not real peace even though the fighting has stopped.

Peace. What does it look like? It is far more than a fight stopping.

In the Hebrew language there is a word for real peace. It is the word 'shalom'.

When a person heard the word 'shalom', they thought of lots of ideas all connected to 'peace'. Harmony and completeness. Wholeness and abundance. To wish someone 'peace' or 'shalom' was to wish them a wonderful life filled with good things and filled with lots of good friendships. This was a life overflowing with peace.

'For unto us a child is born'. Jesus is this child. He is 'the Prince of Peace'. He will rule with peace and harmony. He will bring wholeness and abundance to people's lives. He will bring peace between people and with God.

This peace starts right now. When people love Jesus and want to live his way, they begin a lifetime of being in harmony with God. Other things begin to happen too. People who love Jesus, start to love other people more and more. They start caring for the world around them. They want peace in every part of their lives.

Real peace, shalom peace, keeps growing throughout our whole life. We might have some ups and downs along the way, but when we know Jesus, we know the Prince of Peace. He will keep growing his peace in us.

Day 16

The Way

Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' John 14:6

Sometimes there is only one way to get to a destination.

You are told, 'The only way to get to that island is by boat.'

When you hear that, you need to decide whether you will get on the boat? If you ask, 'Is there really no other way to get there?', the answer comes back 'No, I'm telling you the truth, there's no other way.'

Jesus talks about a destination and a way to reach it. The destination isn't a place, it's God the Father. There is only one way to know him, to be welcomed by him, to enjoy the life he offers.

What is the only way? It is Jesus. He is the way. You might ask him, 'Is there really no other way?' His answer comes back, 'No I'm telling you the truth, there's no other way. No one can come to the Father except through me.'

We can trust Jesus' words because he is the truth. His way is the way of life.

Why do we celebrate Jesus? Because of how amazing he is. He is all the things on every day of your Advent calendar.

Today, we see how Jesus is at the heart of what God is doing in the world.

God wants people everywhere to come to him through Jesus. He is the way.

God wants people everywhere to believe in Jesus. He is the truth.

God wants people everywhere to know the life Jesus offers. He is the life.

Jesus is the only way to the Father. The invitation is there for each of us to come to the Father through him. Have you accepted it?

Day 17

Lord

Let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah. Acts 2:36

In many schools (where I come from), male teachers are called 'sir'. This is a way of showing respect as well as being a quick way of talking to them. 'Yes sir' is much quicker than replying to your teacher with 'yes Mr Heatherington-Glaudoberman-Jones'!

Some people are 'Sir' with a capital 'S'. That really means something. The person has been knighted by the Queen of England for some outstanding service. You might have heard of Sir David Attenborough. He got 'Sir' added to his name way back in 1985.

In the time of Jesus, 'lord' with a small 'l' was used a bit like we use 'sir' with a small 's'. Jesus was sometimes called lord with a small 'l' when he was teaching people who gathered around him.

Then something dramatic happened. There was a gigantic shift in how Jesus' followers began to call him Lord. It was now definitely 'Lord' with a huge capital 'L'.

What happened? What caused this gigantic shift to take place?

It was Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Jesus is Lord of all.

His followers recognised that Jesus was far greater than any teacher. He is the risen Lord who has conquered death and reigns in heaven. He is God the Son himself.

From the time of Jesus' resurrection, whenever Jesus' followers call him 'Lord', they mean Lord with a very big L.

In fact the way they called Jesus 'Lord' was so big and so unique, that they refused to call anyone else 'Lord' in the same way.

It's still like that today. Whenever we say 'Jesus is Lord' we mean that he alone is worthy of our honour and worship. Nothing should ever take his place in our lives.

Day 18

Morning Star

I, Jesus... am... the bright Morning Star. Revelation 22:16

If you live in the city, it's very hard to imagine how dark it would be at night if there was no electricity. No street lights, no neon signs, no lights in shop windows or office blocks or houses.

If you live on an isolated farm, you probably have a much better idea of how dark it gets when the lights go out for the night. And how brilliant it is when the first ray of light begins the dawn of a new day.

Can you imagine the darkest of nights suddenly being transformed by a brilliant glow of light lighting up the sky. If you can, you get some idea of what this name for Jesus means. He is the Morning Star who ends the darkness and begins the light of a brand new day.

Jesus is only called the 'Morning Star' once in the whole Bible. It's right at the end, in the Book of Revelation. This book has lots of images and symbols in it. This is partly because it's trying to describe things that we haven't experienced yet, especially what life will look like when Jesus returns. At that time God will make all things new. There will be a new heaven and a new earth.

The coming of Jesus as the bright Morning Star heralds the great beginning of this new heaven and new earth. The shining of the Morning Star tells us that the dawn of a whole new age for eternity has started. The brilliance of that new age will outshine everything that exists now.

Who will enjoy living in this new age of light that Jesus, the Morning Star announces? It is everyone who loves Jesus and trusts in him. Jesus, the bright Morning Star will shine on all who follow him. And they will live in his light forever.

Day 19

Good Shepherd

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. John 10:11

A shepherd looks after sheep. We never hear that Jesus goes out into the fields and looks after those woolly four-legged animals. So what is he talking about?

We need a bit of background. In the Old Testament God talked about himself as being a shepherd to his people, whom he called his sheep. This image contained lots of ideas about the way he cared for them.

As well, God told the leaders of the nation to be shepherds of his people. But many didn't care about the people at all. In fact it got so bad that God made a promise. He would send a special shepherd who would take care of God's people in a way that made God very happy.

Can you think of some of things that a good shepherd might do to care for sheep? He would make sure they had water and food. He would take care of any who were injured or hurt. He would search for any who were lost. He would protect any who were in danger.

John chapter 10 tells us about the sheep who belong to the good shepherd. They know his voice and they follow him. They know that he is their shepherd.

Jesus says he will lay down his life for the sheep. He is talking about his death on the cross for us. This is the place where Jesus protected his sheep from their biggest danger. The biggest danger came from the dark powers that were trying to keep us from being part of God's family.

Do you know Jesus as your good shepherd? If you do, then keep listening to his voice and following him.

Day 20

Messiah

Then Jesus ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. Matthew 16:20

Do you have a favourite superhero? Superman, Spiderman, Wonder Woman or someone else? Superheroes are popular because we all like someone who is on the side of the good guys so the bad guys don't win in the end.

At the time of Jesus, the Jewish people were waiting for a superhero. Someone to fight for them. Many years earlier, God had promised to send a great king, a Messiah. Over the years there were lots of kings but they were all pretty disappointing.

The people were longing for this special, super Messiah to come. It was Jesus! But he certainly didn't look like the superhero they were expecting.

Did you think it was a bit strange that Jesus told his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah?

Why would Jesus do that?

Well, nearly everyone had the wrong idea about what God's Messiah would do. They thought he would lead a mighty army and fight against the foreign power who ruled them. Then they would be winners and become the top nation in the world.

But this was not God's plan!

God's plan was much bigger. It took Jesus a lot of time explaining to people what it meant for him to be this special Messiah. He called people to follow him as God's King and to become part of God's Kingdom.

People from the Jewish nation and from all the nations of the world could become part of God's Kingdom. Jesus, the Messiah King, overpowered the powers of darkness that had kept people trapped and away from God. Jesus did this when he died on the cross and rose again.

Now anyone in the whole world can become part of God's Kingdom.

Jesus truly is the most amazing superhero who ever lived. And of course, he is not made up.

He is real!

Day 21

Son of Man

The Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Matthew 12:40

Some stories are meant to be understood on two levels. A simple one and a deeper one that you have to think about. Take the story of the race between the tortoise and the hare. The hare is a very fast runner but gets easily distracted. In the end the steady pace of the tortoise means the tortoise wins. On a simple level this is just about a race. At a deeper level, it asks people to think about how this works out in life.

Whenever Jesus referred to himself as the Son of Man, he was doing something similar. There were two ways to understand what he was saying.

One way was the everyday, ordinary use of the phrase, 'son of man'. It could just mean being human or saying 'someone like me'.

But there was a second, deeper meaning that Jesus wanted people to think about. To do this it helps to know part of the Old Testament.

The part is Daniel chapter 7, verses 13 and 14. Daniel had a glimpse into heaven. This is what he saw:

There before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven....He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him...his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Whenever Jesus spoke about himself as the Son of Man, he was hinting at this deeper meaning.

How can we be sure that Jesus is the majestic one that Daniel saw in heaven?

We can be sure because Jesus didn't stay dead and buried 'in the heart of the earth'. After three days he rose from the dead. Jesus' resurrection tells us that he is the majestic Son of Man that Daniel saw.

As we sing carols this Christmas, let us worship Jesus who reigns in heaven as the majestic Son of Man.

Day 22

Christ

The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). John 1:41

Do you know anyone who speaks more than one language? Perhaps you speak more than one. Sometimes people speak English at school, at work, or when shopping, but at home they speak a different language.

At the time of Jesus, this was the case for lots of people. You might remember that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. The word Messiah was a Hebrew word that meant the Anointed One or the king. Jesus spoke in a language called Aramaic. But the language that was most easily understood in lots and lots of countries near where Jesus lived, was Greek. So when Jesus' followers wanted other people to know about him, they wrote the books of the New Testament in Greek.

Messiah was a Jewish word. They wanted to use a Greek word to help people understand that Jesus was God's Anointed One, his King. There was a Greek word that meant 'someone anointed' and it was 'Christos'. We translate it into English as 'Christ'. That's all a bit complicated!

So what's important to remember? It's this. When Jesus' followers said that Jesus was the Christ, they were saying he was God's King. He was the Messiah King that the Jewish people had been waiting for. He was the King who was at the centre of everything God was doing in the world.

You can think of it like this. 'Jesus Christ' means 'Jesus the King'. 'Christ Jesus' means 'King Jesus'. It doesn't really matter which way round you put it.

Being a Christian is about knowing, trusting and following Jesus as Christ the King.

He is a wonderful, welcoming, loving King. A King who says 'Follow me' and live my way and you will enjoy life with me forever.

Day 23

Saviour

'Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord'. Luke 2:11.

It's hard to imagine the shock, surprise, wonder, excitement a bunch of shepherds felt when they heard this news on Christmas night. Can you picture them, half asleep with an eye on the sheep. It's very dark except perhaps for a small campfire. It's very quiet except perhaps for the bleating of a few sheep.

Suddenly the sky lights up. An angel booms out: 'Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born!'

This is huge, big, gigantic, enormous, stupendous news from God. A Saviour has arrived. He's just been born.

We have people who are saviours today. Fire fighters who save people from burning buildings or cats from trees. Life guards who save people from a big surf or a swirling river. They save people (or cats!) from danger and bring them to a place of safety.

What kind of Saviour is Jesus? What does he save us from? What place of safety does he bring us to?

Let's start with that last question. When Jesus saves us, he brings us to the safest place in the world. He brings us to being friends with God.

What does he save us from? He saves us from what stops us being God's friend.

What stops us is what the Bible calls 'sin'. Sin is when we put ourselves at the centre of our lives and keep God far away. We decide how we'd like to live rather than living how God wants us to live. We often don't give God much thought at all.

How do we get from this dangerous place of sin to that safe place of being God's friend?

We need to be saved. Jesus, the Saviour, is the only one who can do this for us. When Jesus died on the cross in our place he dealt with our sin. When we believe he did that for us, we become God's friend.

This is the biggest salvation, the biggest rescue operation, that has ever happened. At the centre of it all is Jesus, the Saviour.

No wonder the angel boomed out the message: **'Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born!'**

Day 24

Jesus

Mary will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21

Some parents choose a name for their new baby because of its meaning. I wonder if you know why your parents chose your name?

God chose the name for this baby. Jesus. The name Jesus has a special meaning. It means 'The Lord saves'.

Even before Jesus was born, God had a special plan for him. Jesus would be the Saviour. He would save people from their sins so God could welcome them into his family and be their friend.

'Jesus' was the name Jesus' family and friends called him. The name 'Jesus' reminds us that he is the Saviour. It also reminds us that Jesus lived a life like us. He was a baby and he grew up in a family. When he was older, he taught people about God. He met and had conversations with all sorts of people. He faced the kinds of problems and difficulties we face because life can be tough sometimes.

Jesus was super amazing. He was also human. In fact he was completely God and completely human at the same time. He is the only person who has ever been that. It means that he totally understands the sorts of things that might trouble or upset us. He understands when we struggle to please God. He understands when things don't turn out as we'd hoped. And because he does, we can pray and ask him to help us. Jesus promises to be with us through all these times. In fact, he promises to be with us forever.

On Christmas Day we celebrate Jesus coming as a baby. This Jesus is all the names in this Advent calendar. I wonder if you have any favourites?

There is no one in the world worth knowing, trusting and following more than Jesus.