

## December 31 | Sunday

Advent: Overwhelming Joy and Tragedy

Read [Matthew 2:1-18](#)



### 01 | Mon – Babies at church | Read [Luke 2:22-24](#)

Joseph and Mary were devout Jews so they followed Moses' law that...“every firstborn son is to be consecrated to the Lord” and brought their newborn to the temple to be confirmed as one of God’s children. Christian parents bring their infants to be baptized or dedicated as a sign that they also belong in the family of God. A baby not only brings joy to their parents but also to a faith community. When you see little ones at church, how can **you** welcome them?

### 02 | Tue – Simeon’s anticipation | Read [Luke 2:25-35](#)

God had revealed to Simeon he would not die until he had seen the Christ, the Savior. Joseph and Mary were probably not the only new parents in the temple that day but Simeon was led by the Holy Spirit to recognize their baby as the fulfillment of God’s promise. Do you live in eager anticipation of seeing God’s promises fulfilled like Simeon did? In what ways have you experienced the Holy Spirit’s leading in your life?

### 03 | Wed – Anna’s worship | Read [Luke 2:36-38](#)

At 84 years old, Anna did not let age diminish her love for God nor belief that prayers would be answered. Instead of complaining, she spent the waiting time by worshipping “day and night” and God **did** allow her the joy of being one of the first to recognize the newborn Messiah. Anna is an example of someone who focused on **who** God is (worship) instead of impatiently looking for things yet to come. How do you find your joy in the Lord as you expectantly wait for what He will do next?

### 04 | Thu – The Wise Men’s quest | Read [Matthew 2:1-12](#)

Unlike the traditional manger scene, the Magi probably did not arrive until months after Jesus was born. They had followed the star for almost two years (Matt. 2:16) so imagine their joy as they neared the end of their journey. The Magi logically looked for the newborn king at the palace but when the star led them to a humble home, they recognized Jesus as the One. Has God come to you in unexpected ways and it resulted in great joy when you recognized Him?

### 05 | Fri – Herod’s response | Read [Matthew 2:16-18](#)

Jesus’ birth brought joy to his parents, shepherds, Simeon and Anna, the Magi but not to King Herod. Fearing the loss of his throne and furious at being outwitted by the wise men, Herod ordered the murder of all Bethlehem baby boys two years and younger. This tragedy underscores the deep evil that can grip a person’s heart who defiantly and repeatedly rejects God. Just a short time later, Herod himself was dead...with no record of ever repenting. Tempted to believe power and wealth will bring you lasting joy? Remember Herod’s story.

### 06 | Sat – Joy for you too | Read [Matthew 2:13-15 and 19-23](#); [Romans 8:28](#)

God brought Joseph, Mary and Jesus safely back to Nazareth. Just as life returns to normal after a celebration of the holidays, the joy of Jesus’ birth faded into the routine of life. Little is recorded about this family until Jesus began his public ministry about age 30. Though Mary endured the devastating death of her son, she also experienced the incredible joy of his resurrection. No matter what life throws at you, remember...God’s good plan for you **will** be accomplished. How will you carry the joy of this truth with you into an unknown future?