

# JESUS

GOD'S PROMISE



ADVENT DEVOTIONS



Creative  
Communications  
Sample

INSPIRATION FROM  
HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

**Henri J. M. Nouwen**, professor, theologian, prolific author, has had a tremendous impact around the world due to his ability to bring others closer to Christ. His writings have inspired millions to learn, discern and even do some writing themselves. During his lifetime (1932–1996), he authored more than three dozen books that have sold more than 7 million copies worldwide.

A central reason for his lasting and profound impact was his ability to present Scriptural truths in a manner that resonates in the hearts of readers. That is exactly what is on display here, in *Jesus: God's Promise*. Especially valuable in this Advent season, Nouwen's writings prepare us to better understand ourselves and the Word of God.

In addition to Nouwen's wisdom, we present original reflections based on his writings, short prayers and select Scripture passages. May this booklet serve as a unique, moving and enriching resource, helping you to more joyfully welcome our Savior in the Christmas season.

Often, Nouwen's readers are forever altered, transformed in their faith and their relationship with God and each other. This Advent, with the help of this little booklet, I pray that you can experience just that.

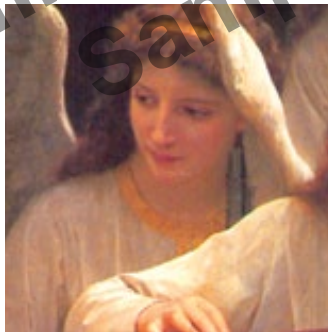
Terence Hegarty, editor

First Sunday of Advent

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But, in accordance with his  
promise, we wait for new  
heavens and a new earth, where  
righteousness is at home.

2 Peter 3:13



Monday, First Week of Advent

## ON GUARD, YET OPEN

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Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly...

*Luke 21:34*

*Our waiting is always shaped by alertness to the Word of God that comes to us in mysterious ways. It is waiting in the knowledge that Someone wants to address us. The question is, are we home? Are we at our address, ready to respond to the doorbell?*

*We need to wait together to keep each other at home spiritually, so that when the Word comes it can become flesh in us.*

Being “on guard” raises an image of a sentry on the lookout for trouble, scanning the horizon for the next threat. Such a posture might actually weigh us down even more. The best guard of our hearts is not fear, but openness to God’s presence, which can be found even amid the “worries of life.” Advent calls us to a renewed vigilance for not only avoiding threats, but seizing opportunities to encounter God in the here and now.

The four weeks before Christmas often feature parties, shopping and travel as well as religious observations. Lest these become burdensome obligations, we need to be watchful for the presence of God. Advent is observed not to be a killjoy in the midst of secular celebrations, but to keep our minds and hearts focused on the source of real joy, peace and light as we ready ourselves for Christmas—and, indeed, for the coming of the Holy One of Israel.

**Lord, may your presence be felt in our hearts throughout this Advent season.**

Tuesday, First Week of Advent

# EVERLASTING LOVE

I have loved you with an everlasting love.

*Jeremiah 31:3*

*Try to enter this enormous mystery, namely that you, like Jesus, are the beloved daughter or beloved son of God. This is the truth.*

*You were the beloved before your father, mother, brother, sister or church loved you or hurt you. You are the beloved because you belong to God from all eternity. God loved you before you were born, and God will love you after you die.*

So enveloped are we in the love sustaining us from moment to moment that we may overlook the mystery of it. The word “mystery” comes from the Greek root meaning “closed lips”: to stand in the presence of mystery is to be unable to say anything about it.

The fact that we know Jesus is the living revelation of God’s love does not make it any less mysterious. But spending some time in silent openness to that love can stretch our hearts to more fully surrender to God’s loving purposes. Advent worship services surround us in God’s marvelous presence, but other forms of prayer can do the same. Resting in a word or two of Scripture, like “everlasting love,” seeking not so much to understand but simply to be open, is another way. Even sitting silently before a lighted Christmas tree, appreciating this sign of the Light of Christ eternally among us, can deepen our sense of God’s love.

Lord, stretch our hearts that we might more fully embrace your love.

Wednesday, First Week of Advent

# LIVING AND LOVING ON THE JOURNEY

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:7

*God is Spirit and the Source of all love.*

*Our spiritual journey calls us to seek and find this living God of Love in prayer, worship, spiritual reading, spiritual mentoring, compassionate service to the poor, and good friends.*

Loving, seeking and finding—all active verbs—involve a lot of work, it would seem. Meanwhile, we are inundated with all sorts of distractions at this time of year that, however alluring, never fully satisfy our hearts. The work of the genuine spiritual journey, on the other hand, draws us into the work of the God who is loving us every minute of the day, always seeking out and finding the lost wherever they are.

Henri Nouwen points out some practical ways we might share in God's work, either through prayer or in service to others. The love God has for us overflows naturally into loving relationships, whether in worship, in service, at the food pantry or in cultivating Christian fellowship.

Preparing for the celebration of Christmas can itself involve a lot of work, but spiritual realities must be cultivated as well. If we look for opportunities to participate in God's loving work of salvation this season, we will surely find them.

Lord, help us to love more deeply this Advent.

Thursday, First Week of Advent

# INCLINED TO GREATER LIFE

...for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations?

1 Corinthians 3:3

*Your losses remind you that all isn't perfect, that you had hoped many events in your life would not have been so painful, but they were. You find yourself disillusioned with the irrevocable personal losses; your health, your spouse, your lover, your job, your hope, your dream...The question is not how to avoid loss and make it not happen, but how to choose it as a passage, as an exodus to greater life and freedom.*

Our mind can play a trick on us sometimes when we get caught up in “all-or-nothing” reasoning. Either I am “all”—the perfect Christian, filled with an abundance of love beyond that of the greatest saints—or I am “nothing”—an abject failure, a hopeless sinner beyond redemption. God’s view of us is different.

I doubt any of us can escape “behaving according to human inclinations” for long, but that is not the end of the matter. We are continually drawn toward the fullness of God’s life, though sometimes painfully aware of falling short of the mark. Indeed, that awareness itself may be seen as a gift from the Lord and a path to humility.

One speaker likened it to our experience of driving a car: As we are moving away from the light of the sun, the windshield looks clean, but when we are headed into the sun, all the dirt and blemishes are revealed.

Lord, give us the courage to face the truth, always aware of your abundant mercy.

# JESUS

## GOD'S PROMISE



ADVENT DEVOTIONS



Experience the prayerful wisdom of one of the most prolific and beloved spiritual writers in modern times. Henri Nouwen has left a legacy of bringing people closer to Christ by consistently presenting Scriptural truths in a manner that resonates in the hearts of readers. That is exactly what is on display here, in *Jesus: God's Promise*. Especially valuable in this Advent season, Nouwen's writings prepare us to better understand ourselves and the Word of God. His writings are accompanied by original reflections based on his words. Scripture and prayer also follow the writings. This Advent, allow this unique and powerful booklet to help you to transform your faith and thus more joyfully welcome our Savior in the Christmas season.

Excerpts on pages 11, 12, 13, 25, 26, 27 from Henri Nouwen, *Here and Now* (Crossroad, 2006). Reprinted by arrangement with The Crossroad Publishing Company. [www.crossroadpublishing.com](http://www.crossroadpublishing.com).

Excerpts on pages 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 from Henri Nouwen, *Finding My Way Home* (Crossroad, 2004). Reprinted by arrangement with The Crossroad Publishing Company. [www.crossroadpublishing.com](http://www.crossroadpublishing.com).

Excerpts on pages 14, 15, 16, 28, 29, 30 from Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved* (Crossroad, 2002). Reprinted by arrangement with The Crossroad Publishing Company. [www.crossroadpublishing.com](http://www.crossroadpublishing.com).

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