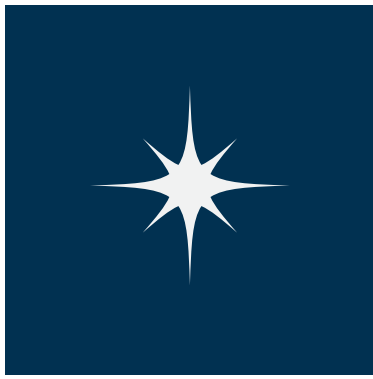




Light in the Darkness

Advent Reflections on the Character of God





Introduction

Names.

We are taught to name things from the time we are infants: Rock. Grass. Blue. Mother. Friend.

Naming things gives them meaning and significance. It brings clarity and understanding.

To God, names are significant as well. He renamed people in the Bible based on what He was doing in their lives. Jacob (the supplanter) became Israel (God perseveres). Simon (the listener), became Peter (the rock). Abraham's wife, Sarai (quarrelsome), became Sarah (princess).

In the same way, the names of God give us insight into His character. When we consider His names, we are dwelling on who He is. The more we understand who He is and embed that truth in our souls, the more we are drawn into worship and into a deeper relationship with Him.

In these Advent devotions, we will be looking at four different names of God and what they show us about His character. We chose these names based on the song "Waymaker" written originally by Nigerian singer, songwriter, and worship leader Sinach. If you'd like to hear the whole song, you can find it on YouTube.

Way Maker
Miracle Worker
Promise Keeper
Light in the Darkness

Our hope and prayer for you is that by looking deeper into the significance of these aspects of God's character, that you will worship Him for who He truly is. We also hope that these devotions and the accompanying Facebook group will help you to slow down a bit this busy season and have a more spiritually meaningful Advent.

We invite you to take a deep breath, press pause on all the crazy, and remember how much you are loved by your Heavenly Father. He loves you so much that He came down from heaven, put on a body, and was born as a baby in a manger. He truly is our Way Maker, our Miracle Worker, our Promise Keeper and our Light in the Darkness.

That is who He is.



Way Maker



Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
Isaiah 43:19

When I consider how God has shown Himself to be the “Way Maker” in my own life, I think of my husband and the family God has built with us. He was an orphan by the age of 17. My family was dysfunctional and chaotic. Neither one of us thought there was a spouse on the horizon or a way out of our isolation and singleness.

Through a series of circumstances only God could have orchestrated, we crossed paths at a picnic that neither of us were originally going to attend. About 1 year later, we were married.

God sets the lonely in families... Psalm 68:6a

God took two lonely, isolated people and brought us together. He has provided for us over the years and established a new family, new hope, and new avenues to serve Him. He is our Way Maker.

Isaiah 43:16-19 (emphasis mine)

This is what the Lord says—

***He who made a way through the sea,**
a path through the mighty waters,
who drew out the chariots and horses,
the army and reinforcements together,
and they lay there, never to rise again,
extinguished, snuffed out like a wick:*

“Forget the former things;

do not dwell on the past.

See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

***I am making a way in the wilderness**
and streams in the wasteland.*

When God took on a human body and came to earth as Jesus, He was most certainly doing a new thing! He was making a way for us to know Him. Before that first Christmas, the only way to meet with God was through the Old Testament sacrificial system.

When He died on the cross, paying the penalty for our sin, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. That curtain closed off the holy of holies, the innermost room of the temple where the high priest could go once a year and meet with God.



Jesus was the final sacrifice. His death opened the way for all of us to enter the holy of holies and meet with Him. Hebrews 4:14 calls Jesus our “great high priest”. Verse 16 says, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

Not only is God the Way Maker in our own lives and circumstances, but He is also the ultimate Way Maker, having created a way for us to be reconciled to Him and to be in relationship with Him.

Amy

Journaling Prompts

1. How have you seen God to be your Way Maker? In your life circumstances? In your relationship with Him?
2. Do you see ways that He is doing something new in your life?
3. Do you struggle to see God as your Way Maker? If so, why is that?

Miracle Worker



*All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign.
Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son
and will call him Immanuel.
Isaiah 7:14*

Though a virgin, she birthed the Christ child. Matthew 1:18
At His mother's insistence, He turned water into wine. John 2:11
With very little food, He fed 5,000 and had food to spare. Luke 9:13-17

Preparing to write this devotional, I pondered what story I would share. Do I have any miracle stories?

I believe in miracles. I believe they still happen today. But, have I ever actually witnessed one?

When posing the question to my husband, he started listing off several occurrences in our life together.

- We've been married 28 years.
- He survived cancer.
- Our house sold within 24-hours of listing.

Those were just a few of the instances he mentioned and they were certainly God-things, but were they miracles?

Water wasn't turned to wine.
No one was miraculously healed.
Fish and bread didn't multiply.

What is a miracle, exactly?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary offers two definitions:

1. an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs
2. an extremely outstanding or unusual event, thing, or accomplishment

Have I personally witnessed a miracle?

Divine intervention was certainly required for us to have stayed married nearly three decades. My history had been to run at the first hint that things might get hard or I might get rejected. I very seriously contemplated leaving on many occasions in those early years, but I found myself unable to do so.

While God didn't remove Brandon's tumor as we'd prayed, He used our testimony to bring hope and salvation to others. And though Brandon has never been able to return to work, God has continually provided the finances for every need, including the many thousands of dollars in medical bills.

Not only did our house sell within 24-hours of listing, it sold for considerably more than we'd expected. And that was before the big real estate boom.



My life is filled with miracles and I didn't even see it. Maybe you didn't see His miracles in your life either.

My prayer for us all during this advent season is that the Lord would open the eyes of our hearts so that we can truly see and know the amazing things He does for us every day. Ephesians 1:18

May our faith increase each time we witness His miraculous works. For it is our faith that gives Him room to do even greater things for, with, and through us.

May we never limit His miraculous works due to a lack of faith as we see in Matthew 13:58 and Mark 6:5.

Rose

Journaling Prompts

1. Ask Holy Spirit to remind you of miracles God has already accomplished for you.
2. Invite Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your heart to see His hand at work.
3. Search your heart, with Holy Spirit's help, to uncover any unbelief that may be hindering His ability to work.

Promise Keeper



*The LORD is trustworthy in all He promises and faithful in all He does.
Psalm 145:13b*

“But Mom, you PROMISED that we would get ice cream tonight after dinner!!!”

My twelve year old son is great at taking a casual comment that I make and turning it into a promise sworn in blood... Anyone else have kids who do that? They don't understand that sometimes circumstances change. Maybe we remember that we'll be having a birthday cake in two days, or that we parents are just tired and change our minds sometimes. While we try to be consistent and follow through on what we say we will do, our kids need to realize that casual comments do not equal promises set in stone.

It's interesting that even kids know that a “promise” is significant. If you promise something, it is dependable and reliable. It's GOING to happen.

One aspect of God's character is that He is the Promise Keeper. He doesn't make casual statements and then decide He's too tired to fulfill them. He doesn't arbitrarily change His mind, forget, or decide He has better things to do. If He has said it will happen, then it will happen.

What God says in His Word is firm. Sure. Dependable. Reliable. Trustworthy.

Sometimes we struggle to see God as the Promise Keeper because the adults in our lives weren't promise keepers. Much of our early view of who God is comes from our earthly parents - especially our father. If this is a struggle for you, memorizing and meditating on the verse above from Psalm 145 may be a good start. Spend some journaling and exploring why it's difficult for you to see God as trustworthy and dependable. And then ask God to remind you of how He has already shown Himself to be trustworthy in your own life.

God shows Himself to be the Promise Keeper throughout the Bible. Jesus coming to earth on Christmas fulfilled a multitude of promises found all over the Old Testament. The book of Matthew in particular highlights these, since it was written with a Jewish audience in mind.

Here are some of them:

Isaiah 7:14 promises the virgin birth
Micah 5:2 promises His birth in Bethlehem
Isaiah 9:1-7 Jesus' birth and life
Isaiah 53 Jesus' life in general

When we meditate on (think about, mull over, consider) how God is the ultimate Promise Keeper, it builds our faith that He will continue to keep His promises for the future as well. For example, in Revelation 21-22, God promises



the new heaven and new earth where He will dwell with us and we will always be with Him. I've found great comfort in reading, memorizing, and meditating on those verses as I watch the world continue to spiral away from God. We celebrate God's first advent (coming) at Christmas, but He has also promised a second advent when He will put all things back the way they were designed to be to begin with.

Amy

Journaling Prompts

1. How have you seen God to be the Promise Keeper in your life?
2. Do you struggle with seeing Him that way because of adults in your own life who didn't keep their promises to you? Spend time exploring this.
3. Which aspect of His promises for the future are you most looking forward to? (Read Revelation 21-22)

Light in the Darkness



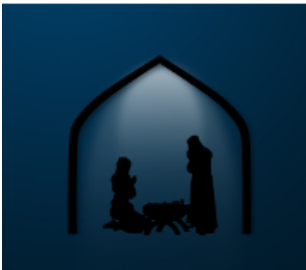
"I am light to the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 8:12

"What if you made the light come up from the bottom instead of down from the top?"

That's the question my husband posed when I asked him to look at my design for the cover of this devotional. He was referring to the light in the stable. I had it shining down on the Christ-child and his earthly parents.

I didn't think it would make much difference, but it was an easy adjustment, so I decided to try it.



"Wow," was my response.

Immediately, I felt the difference, the significance of the light coming from baby Jesus rather than down onto him. Do you see it? Can you feel it?

That subtle shift in visual perspective made a not-so-subtle difference in

the message the image conveyed. Jesus doesn't just give light to the world; He is the Light of the World.

I want to offer this shift in perspective for our time of reflection today.

Let's look again at the focus verse. Jesus said He is the light of the world and whoever follows Him - or in the Passion Translation, whoever embraces Him - will have the light of life.

"Follow Him."

"Embrace Him."

Those are terms of nearness. Of here-ness.

Not somewhere up in the vast sky above, but here, on the ground, with us.

Matthew 1:23 says He is Emmanuel God with us.

Do we really believe He is near us? With us?

We read it in scripture and our spirit must know it, but do we know it in our heart and mind?

Notice how the light in the first image is brightest at the top and by the time it reaches Mary and Joseph, it's faint and not illuminating their path. I think we often think of God as "up there" and far off. Over us, but not with us.



When we take hold of the Truth of His light, that His presence is here with us, we experience Him in a new way. A meaningful way. A life-giving, path-leading, darkness-shattering way.

Several years ago, I decided to give our holiday décor a makeover. I wanted to create a space that invited me to slow down and savor, to reflect and pray. I exchanged the multi-colored lights and ornaments for simple white lights and ornaments of silver and gold.

Very simple. Uncluttered. Peaceful.

One of my favorite things to do this time of year is turn off all the lights in the house, all but those on my Christmas tree. The warmth and peace of the soft white lights draw me in to His presence.

Just as I prepared my home to be a place of stillness, you can prepare your heart to be a place for His presence to radiate in and through you. If you have difficulty experiencing His peace, His presence, His life-giving light, may I encourage you this Advent season to simply invite Jesus to show you? He has promised that when you seek Him with all your heart, you will find Him.

Rose

Journaling Prompts

1. How have you seen God to be the Promise Keeper in your life?
2. Do you struggle with seeing Him that way because of adults in your own life who didn't keep their promises to you? Spend time exploring this.
3. Which aspect of His promises for the future are you most looking forward to? (Read Revelation 21-22)



Parting Words

We pray this devotional has helped you step away from the hustle of the holiday season and step into the quiet, sacred space of reflection.

Our Jesus came, those many years ago to be our way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness. Our hope, peace, joy, SALVATION. Our king and friend. All we will ever need.

He will come again! And as we wait with anticipation, pondering all of who He is a wonderful way to spend time Him.

Stay in Touch



Amy Simon

Amy teaches Christian women how to use a method of journaling and spiritual disciplines to uncover lies from their past, get unstuck in their faith, and live the abundant life God promises us. She also loves to coach Christian writers and help them uncover the unique messages they have to offer the world. She lives in Wisconsin with her husband and three kids and loves coffee and dark chocolate.

Rose Jordan



Rose Jordan is a Christian communicator and creative who comes alongside women to help them cultivate a devotional life they absolutely love so they can enjoy the tangible, meaningful relationship with God they were created for!

She and her husband, Brandon, live in Mineral Wells, Texas. She loves kayaking, painting, and Snoopy.



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Have a very blessed Christmas and a wonderful New Year!

