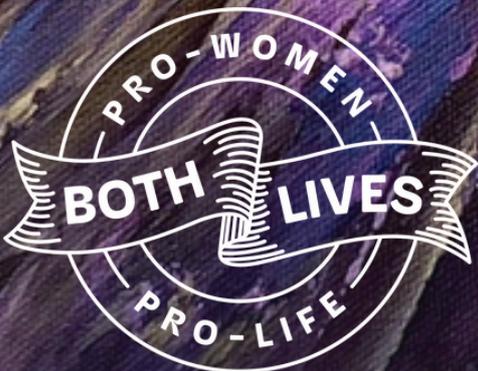


GOD UNBORN

Advent devotions 2025





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Many of you journeyed with us in March, when—through our God Unborn devotional—we celebrated the astonishing truth that the Word became flesh at His conception.

Now, nine months later, we enter Advent: a season of anticipation, reflection, and holy waiting. These weeks invite us not only to remember Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, but to linger in the mystery of the Incarnation itself—God joining humanity in the smallest, most vulnerable way, formed and carried in His mother's womb.

As we approach the celebration of Christmas Day we think again of God's unborn story; about Mary's courageous "yes", Joseph's steadfast obedience, the tender forming of Jesus in the womb, and the "yes" of those often-overlooked participants who welcomed and worshipped Him.

We'd love you to join us over the next four Sundays as we pray, reflect, and give thanks for God's extraordinary gift—the Incarnation and birth of Jesus, our Saviour and King.

Ephesians 3:9

“.....to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things.”

Today marks the first Sunday in Advent. Over these next weeks, we will reflect on the most beautiful pregnancy story ever told. It is a divine story—but also profoundly human. A story in which heaven bends low to earth, and the one who created all, was Himself formed in His mother’s womb. The Word who spoke the universe into being and calmed the storm in an instant – voiceless. The Alpha and Omega, submitted to be formed in the smallest, most hidden way.

For nine quiet months He waited in the darkness of His mother’s womb until, at last, heaven and earth would join in celebration at the birth of their Saviour-King, Jesus Christ. But in our reflections, He is not yet born. We linger in those last weeks and days of pregnancy when Mary—like any expectant mother—would have been preparing for the arrival of her child, both practically and emotionally. The miraculous beginning had, in some ways, settled into an ordinary rhythm. For Mary and Joseph their angelic visitation was behind them; their courageous yes to God’s salvation story already given; their new “normal” slowly unfolding.

Pause for a moment and imagine that time. Think of what it means to be pregnant—perhaps remembering your own experience, or that of someone you love.

We, with our modern technology, can see so much of what Mary and Joseph could only trust. We can watch the quiet miracle of life unfolding in the womb, stage by stage.

Jesus' tiny heart began to beat only about three weeks after conception. By six weeks His small body was already taking recognisably human form. Between ten and eleven weeks, the very hands that would one day touch the sick, lift the lowly, and break bread for the multitudes had fingerprints and fingernails.

In pregnancy two lives, bound together—intimately, uniquely, biologically, relationally. Mary's body continued its slow transformation, shifting from the invisible to the unmistakable signs of pregnancy. And Jesus—conceived by the Spirit yet developing just like any other child—grew safely within her.

Loved. Carried. Nourished. Awaited.

This is the tender, human beginning of the story of redeeming love. Jesus became an embryo for the sake of all embryos. He entered the secret, sacred place of the womb for every mother and every child she bears. With the establishing of this family; mother, father and child we see God's loving, relational heart and design for our flourishing.

And so, as Advent begins, we stand in awe of a God who chooses to draw near in the smallest, most vulnerable way— in His incarnation dependent on this woman and this man - inviting us to wonder, to worship, and to wait with Him.

Prayer

God of grace and mercy, all powerful Lord, we come to you in humble adoration.

Lord of life, you entered into our world in utter vulnerability and weakness, carried in and by one whom you created. In Mary's womb, protected, supported, as you grew and kicked and moved utterly dependent upon others.

Lord of life, we worship you.

Lord of all, born in water and blood. Coming to us in weakness, validating life. Being fed, changed, cleaned and carried. The Creator now carried in the arms of the created.

Lord of all, we worship you.

Lord of hope, we pray for all children born and still growing in a womb. Enable each to experience love, hope and joy. May future generations flourish in your care. Let forgiveness, mercy and peace enable life to flourish.

Lord of hope, we worship you.

Lord of grace, we pray for all mothers and fathers. We ask for encouragement, support and understanding. Help us all to value life and live in love. Help us to demonstrate love, that all may flourish.

Lord of grace, we worship you.

Amen



Luke 1:30-31

But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a Son, and you are to call Him Jesus.”

When the fullness of time arrived, God's eternal plan unfolded in the most unexpected way: His Son entered the world not as a man, or even as a newborn, but as an embryo, a foetus, an unborn child. Jesus, fully God and fully man, shared His mother's biology, her DNA, and her humanity, from the moment of His human conception. Imagine Mary, for nine months feeling Jesus grow, stretch, and turn within her womb; the Creator of all, nurtured and sustained inside one of His created.

Mary's pregnancy was unexpected and unplanned, not to mention the timing entirely inconvenient – starting with an arduous journey and ending with a less-than-comfortable birth away from home and family. Her “yes” to becoming the mother of the Son of God was courageous and costly. It risked her reputation, her marriage, even her life. Yet her trust untied the knot of Eve's distrust, opening the way for salvation. Through her obedience to God, the promise whispered in Eden (Genesis 3:15) and echoed by the prophets was fulfilled: the Word became flesh, dwelling first in the hiddenness of a mother's womb. This same Word would later suffer and die for the souls of men on the cross, claiming victory over the serpent and bringing life to all who believe.

Mary lives her “yes”. She trusted that the promise of God’s blessing – for her, her people, and generations to come – would come through the birth of this child. She trusted in God’s love, constant presence and purpose. Her Song of Praise in Luke 1 reminds us that God sees the humble and lifts them up. Her obedience was not passive but brave, trusting God’s blessing in the midst of uncertainty. Bravery requires trust, and trust means saying “yes” to God without knowing the end of the story. Do we trust God with what He asks of us each day?

Ponder those first moments between mother and son. Mary caring for, protecting and loving a yawning, stretching, suckling baby Jesus. Mother, chosen by God, and Son, sent from the Father.

God’s heart for mothers shines through the Incarnation. He entrusted His Son to Mary’s care, affirming the dignity of motherhood and placing family at the centre of His salvation plan. Yet in our fallen world, not every woman experiences pregnancy. Some endure loss, some cannot conceive, and many mother in other ways. Advent invites us to hold these realities tenderly, remembering that God’s compassion extends to every circumstance.

God is full of compassion and empathises with and understands the messiness and brokenness of life because He lived it. Jesus’ humanity was intentional: He was formed in the womb, entered poverty and lived as a refugee. In His ministry, He showed mercy to the vulnerable – His defence of the woman caught in adultery reflects His own mother’s vulnerability to similar accusation. Even from the cross, His provision for Mary reveals His care for widows, orphans, and all who feel unseen.

As we celebrate this season, let us not forget the mystery at its heart: God came down, fully human, fully divine, nurtured by a mother’s love. Mary’s “yes” enabled the miracle of life, her obedience glorified God, and her trust inspires us to say “yes” to God too.

Prayer

Father God,

You designed me and know me. You created me with purpose and for a purpose. Through your word and in the counsel of your Spirit, help me to know you.

As you lovingly invite me to walk in step with you, and reveal your heart's design for me, help me even in my fear and confusion to trust you enough to say yes.

Like Mary, may my yes bring glory to you.

Amen



Matthew 1:20-21

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Amidst the dark, cold nights of winter, the arrival of Christmas brings with it a glorious hope. Up and down the country carol services and nativity plays will herald the arrival of the baby Jesus. God incarnate, born into an unremarkable Middle Eastern town, laid into an animal feeding trough, and placed within an ordinary family.

Joseph is sometimes the forgotten character of the Christmas story; the ordinary carpenter from Nazareth who was given the extraordinary task of being the Son of God's earthly father. As a young man betrothed to be married, he was met with the unexpected news that Mary was pregnant. Aware of the shame and stigma that this pregnancy could cause Joseph had intended to divorce his wife quietly, but God had different plans. After an angel appeared telling him that what was conceived in Mary was from the Holy Spirit 'he did as the Angel of the Lord commanded him' and took Mary as his wife. Joseph said yes. God chose to place his son under the care and protection of a man who valued fatherhood, someone who took his role as a father seriously despite the challenging circumstances he found himself in.

Recent reporting* has exposed the extent of fatherlessness throughout the UK; we live in a society where children are more likely to have a smartphone than a father. The detrimental impact of fatherlessness is well-documented, particularly affecting boys who thrive under the care and direction of a loving male, role model.

In a world-seeking direction, Joseph offers us a positive example of fatherhood. Firstly, he willingly sacrificed his pride and reputation by marrying Mary. Can you imagine all the whispers and funny looks the young couple faced as Mary became visibly pregnant? Joseph endured it all alongside her and lovingly committed himself to Mary.

Joseph also faithfully followed God's plan. Inevitably he had questions, worries, and fears at the world-changing news that the angel had delivered to him, but yet he faithfully continued on the journey of fatherhood. Scripture makes clear that Joseph did not sleep with Mary until after Jesus' birth. He exercised self-control to ensure his marriage relationship remained distinct, helping to fulfill the ancient prophecy that a virgin would bring forth a son.

Finally, Joseph also raised and protected the Lord Jesus as his own son. Although this baby was not Joseph's biological son he loved and protected Him as if He was. By naming the child Jesus, meaning 'the one who saves,' Joseph declared his faith in Him as the Messiah, whilst he also publicly fulfilled his role as Jesus' father. Following God's commands Joseph bravely took Mary and the baby Jesus to Egypt, preserving them from Herod's murderous rampage. For the rest of his life Joseph protected his family, guarding the Messiah's identity until Jesus was ready to begin His public ministry.

In the Christmas story we see the value God places on the family and on fatherhood. Despite the various ways God could have chosen to reveal Himself, He purposefully decided to go through pregnancy and to be placed within a family unit. In the sometimes neglected example of Joseph we can see the powerful testimony of an ordinary man who placed his faith in God, actively fulfilling his duties as a father even in the midst of doubt, fear, and uncertainty.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the sacrificial and dignified image of fatherhood exemplified in Joseph, as he gave his “yes” to be a father to your Son.

We honour and celebrate the men in our lives who have modelled your heart for fatherhood, especially those who have generously stepped into the role left vacant by life’s challenges.

We lift up those grieving the absence of a father, whether through loss, hurt, or broken relationships. May they know your unfailing love as our gracious and compassionate Father who heals all wounds.

Draw us close to you as we marvel at the incredible mystery of the Incarnation. Like Joseph, may we give you our humble and wholehearted “yes” even in challenging circumstances. Teach us to trust you and walk the path you have laid out before us, knowing that your ways and plans are far above what we can ever dream or imagine.

In Jesus’ name,
Amen.



SUNDAY 21 DECEMBER - LOVE

Will you give Him your yes?

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

At this time of year, the timeless scene of the nativity story is everywhere. It adorns Christmas cards and ornaments, and across the nation thousands of children step into hand-me-down costumes to recreate it with nervous excitement. Yet when we look at the well known image and really see the often-overlooked participants in the nativity, their “yes” to proclaim and worship the Messiah draws us into something deeper: a reminder that His love is for all people.

Every role in God’s story matters. In a world that sidelines the unseen and the unheard, God’s story offers a better way—a way in which every heart is invited to behold, love and join Him. Each of the people below had a purpose, a role to play in God’s unfolding plan. Their participation was not incidental; it was essential. In God’s story, even the quietest act of obedience or worship carries significance.

Consider the shepherds: humble, ordinary men keeping watch beneath the quiet night sky. Overlooked by society, they were the first to hear the angel’s astounding proclamation: “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Luke 2:10).

Their immediate response teaches us that love calls us to action— to step into the wonder and to seek, with wholehearted devotion, the One whom the angels proclaimed.

The wise men came from distant lands, following a star with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Their long road reminds us that love requires courage and perseverance—but also preparation. Long before they set out, their inquisitive study and searching hearts made them ready to recognise the sign when it appeared. Even the innkeeper (who isn't even explicitly mentioned in the text), plays a subtle yet pivotal role—providing a form of shelter and reminding us that hospitality, however small, opens space for God's love to be revealed.

For Anna (a prophet) and Simeon (a righteous and devout man), longing and waiting with faithful anticipation had shaped their entire lives. When they finally beheld Jesus, their waiting erupted into praise. Through them we learn that God's timing is never hurried; His love unfolds with holy precision.

God's love is love that chooses vulnerability, entering humanity not with spectacle but with sacrifice already in motion as a microscopic embryo. It is a love that seeks out the ordinary, the overlooked, the waiting, and the weary—but it also calls the wise and the elite. And yet, both are drawn by the same love to do the same thing: to bow before the Messiah and to take their place in the salvation story. May we all follow their example, coming with humility, offering what we can, and finding our place in the story of His redeeming love.



Prayer

Father,

In this season that draws our eyes to Bethlehem, turn our hearts to the deeper truth beneath the familiar scene: that you invite each of us into your story.

Thank you for the shepherds, the wise men, Anna and Simeon, and the unnamed figures whose quiet obedience provided space for your glory to be revealed. Their “yes” reminds us that no offering is too small in your unfolding plan. Teach us to recognise the sacred in the ordinary and the significant in the overlooked.

Give us hearts like the shepherds, ready to respond with wonder and joyful obedience. Give us perseverance like the wise men, willing to seek, to prepare, and to follow where you lead. Give us the steadfast hope of Anna and Simeon, trusting your timing with faithful expectation.

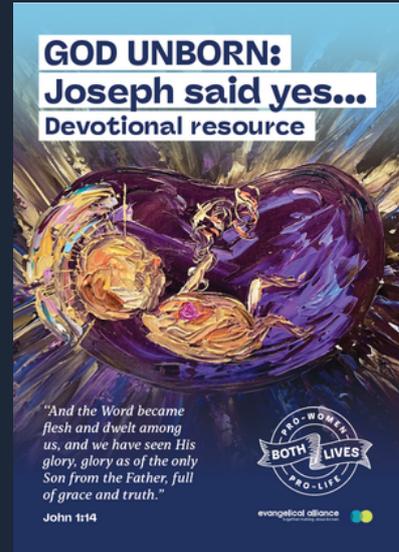
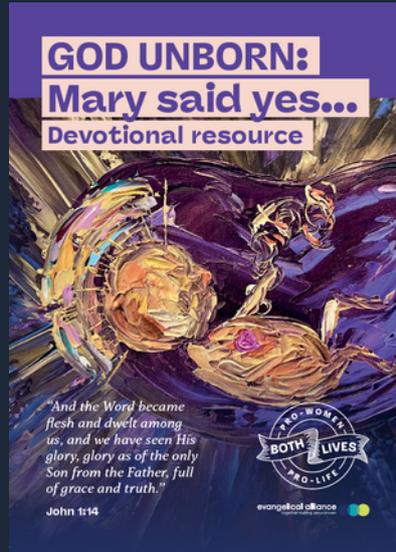
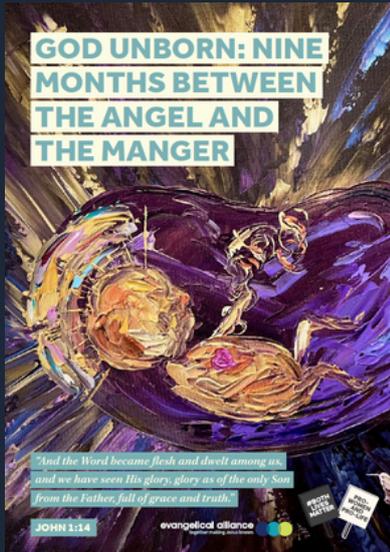
Lord, give us courage to offer our own “yes,” however quiet or uncertain it may feel. May we bring what we have, and find our place in the story of Your redeeming love.

In Jesus’ name,
Amen.

Resources

To further explore the mystery of the Incarnation, check out our devotional resources for churches, groups or individuals:

bothlives.co.uk/god-unborn



Join us as we speak to expert guests about the complex realities of pregnancy, motherhood and the challenges women face in a culture deeply divided on abortion. Rooted in a pro-both lives ethos, this podcast is for anyone seeking honest, nuanced dialogue around what it means to pursue the wellbeing of both women and unborn children.

Episodes 1-12 of Season one are available to stream now on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and on our website: bothlives.co.uk

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