

in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

You Are Not Alone

This Christmas, you are not alone. Christ the Saviour is present in our world. He weeps with us in our isolation, depression and anxiety. His heart breaks with ours at the injustice and loveless actions of humanity, but He has a plan to make all things new again.

The Christmas message is not just an event in the calendar to commemorate the birth of Jesus 2000 years ago. It is a reminder that this birth changed the trajectory of humanity. Jesus was called Immanuel, which means "God with us". He wants to draw us close to Him. He longs to wipe away our tears of sorrow. He promises a peace and contentment that defy all understanding.

This is the power of the Christmas story—a story more relevant this year than ever before. The same Jesus who was born in the first century says to you today, "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). This Christmas, remember and celebrate this good news.

Encouragement for Every Emotion

Are you feeling depressed?

"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Are you separated from your friends and family?

"I will never leave you nor forsake you"
(Hebrews 13:5).

Are you worried about finances?

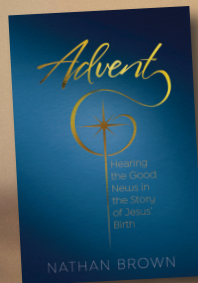
"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6).

Are you afraid about the future?

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).



Discover more about the real story of Christmas



Advent:

Hearing the Good News in the Story of Jesus' Birth



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Make 2021 the year you'd hoped for.



Finding Hope

in an uncertain world



What's The Solution?

What began as a new decade of promise and excitement quickly became the year many would prefer to forget. Smoke darkening the sky, storms and floods, travel restrictions, hotel quarantines and forced isolation. Many lost their jobs and were left wondering how to look after their families. PANDA reported a 20 per cent increase in phone calls from depressed mums, struggling to look after their newborns.

Separation, anxiety and fear. These are 2020 in a nutshell. Now it's a waiting game. When will this pandemic be over? When can we resume our normal lives? As Christmas nears, what will this year's family gatherings even look like?

For many this Christmas, there won't be the usual backyard barbecues or picnics at the beach on those long summer days. Christmas parties will be cancelled. Grieving families separated. And for those already in isolation, loneliness, anxiety and depression just seem all too much.

What's the solution?

Finding Joy

History demonstrates that during periods of uncertainty, people look for something or someone to lead them out of the crisis. In August, an Australian shopping centre made headlines around the world for putting its Christmas tree up four months early. Queen Victoria Building (QVB) stunned Sydney shoppers with the revelation of a new festive artwork that they dubbed the 2020 Tree.

"Following a challenging and extraordinary year so far, we collaborated with celebrated local artist, Gerwyn Davies," a QVB spokeswoman said. "We know the Christmas tree is traditionally, and universally, considered a symbol of hope and joy, which is why we have used [it] . . . to encourage the people of Sydney to pause, reflect and find joy."

The True Meaning of Christmas

After an unprecedented year of lockdowns, natural disasters, political movements and protests, the thought of Christmas still sparks a hope within us. This is because the true meaning of Christmas doesn't depend on external factors like shopping, presents or Santa. It cannot be overcome by fear and un-

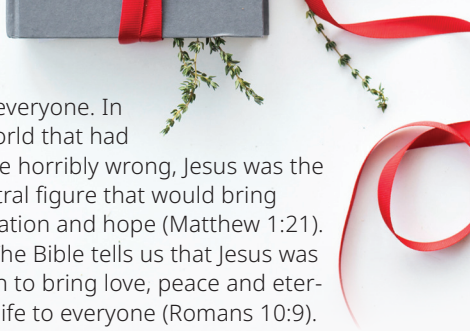
certainty. It cannot be defeated by lockdowns or restrictions.

More than 2000 years ago, a baby boy was born in a humble stable in Bethlehem. A single star, shining in the East, declared His birth. Angels announced the event to shepherds on a hill and wise men followed the star to present this Child with precious gifts. This world-changing moment, unnoticed by many, was the fulfilment of God's promise to heal a broken world with a message of peace, joy and love.

The good news that was declared at the very first Christmas remains good news for you today. Just as we did then, the world still needs a rescuer to "heal the broken-hearted and bind up all our wounds" as the ancient Hebrew composer David wrote in Psalm 147.

A Message of Hope

For centuries, the Jewish people had been waiting for the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6, 7). But when the time came for Jesus' birth, almost no-one realised that, at that moment in Bethlehem, the One for whom they had been waiting was born. The news of Jesus' birth wasn't just for a small select group of people, it was



for everyone. In a world that had gone horribly wrong, Jesus was the central figure that would bring salvation and hope (Matthew 1:21).

The Bible tells us that Jesus was born to bring love, peace and eternal life to everyone (Romans 10:9).



"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord' (Luke 2:10,11).

Christ the Lord was the Saviour born to save a world in crisis. A planet isolated and stained by sin no longer needed to be anxious about the future. This baby born in a stable in Bethlehem would save a dying world by the giving of His life. This was the ultimate gift. This is the hope of Christmas.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes