



ADVENT WORSHIP SERIES

# Come Home for Christmas

## REFERENCES

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- [1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26](#)
  - [Psalm 148](#)
  - [Colossians 3:12-17](#)
  - [Luke 2:41-52](#)

Yesterday was Christmas. Whew, we're worn out. The crowd will be thin today, most likely. Only those faithful ones who come whenever the door opens will be present. Too many others say they have to tend to their guests or that they are the guests because they went home for Christmas. That is understandable. And we can't really blame them, especially after weeks of saying, "Come Home for Christmas!"

But this is a "life goes on" week. It is a "come down the mountain" week. We go back into the world where we have to deal with the absence as much as the presence, where we have to face uncertainty that lies alongside our hope. We tell the story of Jesus being lost in the temple. The lost child is every parent's nightmare. What have you lost? What have you forgotten, overlooked, ignored? This week is a cold splash of water on a frigid morning after a long night of celebration.

Yet, we don't dampen the spirit too much. We can bask in the glow of the season for a little while longer. After all, this is Christmastide; we're still surfing on that wave.

We can ease our way back into the brokenness of the world around us. We can be real about what we face day by day in this life. But we do it from the

confidence that we are surrounded by home, by a community that truly loves and cares for us. The church is the visible sign that we are not alone in this world, no matter how difficult it might be at any one time.

So, how do we extend the presence of home when we leave? When we re-enter the world around us? We can, on the one hand, become attuned to the presence of God all around us. The world isn't the absence of God, no matter how much it might feel like it at times. It isn't our calling to get through the world as quickly as possible to finally get to some heaven someplace else. No, heaven is here; Christ is here; home is here. We just need the eyes to see it.

Where have you seen God at work in the world around you? Tell those stories this week. Tell the stories of preparation, getting ready to immerse ourselves again. Pray those prayers of petition, where we ask God to be visible to us in our world, for God's will to be known in our lives and in our community. Ask for Emmanuel, God with us, to be with us! And then affirm the faith that says we know God is indeed with us!

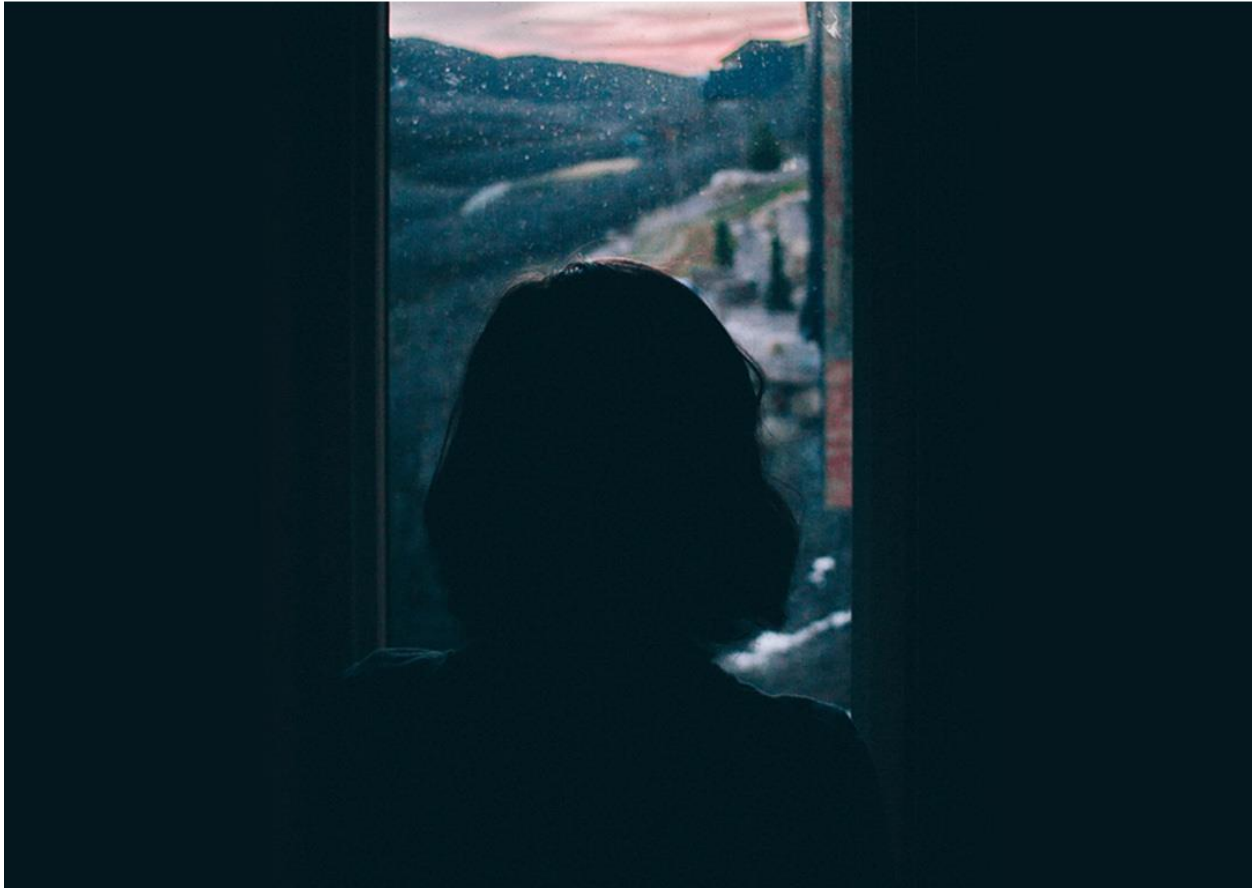
What habit will we continue after this season ends that will keep us close to that presence? What opportunities will the community provide that keeps our eyes open to the movement of the Spirit in and around us? How can we study together, pray together, share sightings together as we carry home with us into the world around us?

We don't want to lose this, this feeling of home, of connection, of hope. So what can we do to hold on to it, to keep from being lost at home?

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# Lost at Home

COME HOME FOR CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERIES



## WEEK 5: LOST AT HOME

*Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.*

*After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.  
And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.  
When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."  
He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"  
But they did not understand what he said to them.  
Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.  
And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.  
(Luke 2:41-52)*

We jump forward in time for our fifth week. Jesus is now twelve years old and traveling to the temple with his extended family for Passover. In Jerusalem, it would have felt like a huge family reunion during Passover. Family from all different sides would have traveled and gathered to make the appropriate sacrifices at the festival. I can imagine there were large, loud gatherings at mealtimes with children playing the way cousins always do, even when they see one another only a few times a year.[1]

The fact that Mary and Joseph traveled in a band of other travelers, probably made up mostly of relatives and didn't even realize Jesus was missing at first, indicates the size of the crowd with whom they traveled. I can picture people walking along the road, laughing and talking. Children were running and weaving their way in and out of the legs of the adults in their midst. It is no wonder that Mary and Joseph missed that Jesus was absent.[2]

Different families have different traditions and customs when they gather. I know families who have bonfires or create songs and skits and perform them. In my family, we played board games and put together jigsaw puzzles. Extending your family by sharing your traditional activities with others can help connect you with others.

Our project this week connects us to others through friendly competition or some other similar activity.

**Project Game Night or Puzzle Night:** Invite someone you think of as extended family or adopted family to come over for an evening of games or to make a jigsaw puzzle.

Weekly discussion questions:

- 1) Whom did you invite?
  - 2) Describe the experience. Was it light-hearted? Was it fun or funny? Was it competitive?
  - 3) How did the visit affect your relationship with this person or these people?
  - 4) What traditions or customs did your extended family have when you gathered at holidays?
  - 5) How has this project affected you? Your relationship with someone else? Your relationship with God?
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[1] *Feasting on the Word*, 166.

[2] *Feasting on the Word*, 168.