



Daughters  
of  
Light

An Advent Study

Heart of Mary Women's Fellowship

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# About This Study

Heart of Mary Women's Fellowship is filled with JOY to bring you this bible study for the Advent 2015 season.

*We hope that you'll dive in, grow in the Lord, and share with others what beauty God reveals to you through it. If you are doing this study independently, know that we at HOM are here for you & that you also have a LARGE community of women through our website and social media that are participating too! You are truly never alone!*

*If you are completing this study in a group setting - we are excited that you have found a local community to grow with, on top of our online sisterhood. Please use this study journal for your reference, resource, and more during your meetings and the personal time leading up to it.*

*Looking for a group? Please visit [www.heartofmarywf.com/groups](http://www.heartofmarywf.com/groups) to find a meet up near you.*

*Are you already in one but not listed on our website? Looking to start one? Please contact us for more information about our "HOM Ambassador" program. We have team members available specifically to help you grow a local group and lead other women through community, prayer, and devotion. Their support is available at all times. We also want to help you grow! We will advertise your group on our website & social media! And we have free resources for you as well. Please email us at [heartofmarywf@aol.com](mailto:heartofmarywf@aol.com)*

*Note: All written content has been reviewed by a Catholic spiritual director to cross check that all statements align with the teachings and tenants of the Roman Catholic Church.*

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# Daughters of Light

## Day 1// The Darkness Will not Overcome

Photo by Cailin Valente

Today's Scripture

John 1:5-14

We sat in darkness and waited. I could hear the waves crashing in; I could feel the sand on my toes. It was early, oh so early. But, what was to come would soon make our lack of sleep worth it. And suddenly, like a triumphant melody, the sun peered over the horizon and gave way to the beauty that was before me. Light had illuminated the ocean with the most magnificent of colors. *And, by that light, what I once could not see, I could now see.*

*"The light shines in the darkness..."*

Just as the sun penetrated the horizon that early July morning, the Son penetrates our hearts every day. No matter how dark, no matter how barren, His light will always overpower our sinful hearts.

And, this is where we begin our Advent series: with the understanding that Christ will *ALWAYS* win. Always. No matter what. The same God that turned a barren wasteland into the Garden of Eden has the power to bring light to our darkened souls. This is what we testify to, in anticipation for the celebration of His birth just four short weeks away; we testify to His light, His power, His salvation.

Just as John testified as he prepared the way for Christ's coming, so too we are called to testify to Christ in our daily lives.



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**“The light  
shines in the  
darkness...”**

I pray that this study empowers you to do just that. To testify to the light that is Jesus Christ. *We are daughters of this Light.*

This Advent, ask God for the grace and wisdom to see all things through His light and I promise you, you'll never lose your way.

Be His.

Happy Advent dear sisters!

- Rachel Peñate

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*personal reflection*

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*my favorite verse*





Today's Scripture

John 19:25-30

The summer before my senior year of college, I knew the man I was supposed to marry. It was confirmed pretty clearly to me through our 2 ½ years of dating. Yet, that August I found myself perpetually teary eyed and emotional over our break-up that I “so didn’t see coming.”

I would be remiss to open the theme of this week without explaining to you how Our Lady penetrated my longing with her love and example: The day Robbie and I broke up it was over the phone – a downfall of long distance dating – and we sat for a long time in silence, a most heart wrenching silence. And, when the time came to hang up the phone, my reaction was immediate (yet, unrehearsed), I looked at the simple Franciscan cross I had hanging in my room and through my sobbing demeanor, *I offered everything to our Lord.*

He “raised” me His cross and I gave Him my minuscule suffering in return.

And, it was in that moment that Our Lady’s humanity came to life in a whole new way. My longing for this man mirrored (in a very small way) Mary’s longing for her son.

Mary became that wise mom who could relate to my suffering, and she was the one to take me by the hand and lead me through that dark period of my life. As Jesus offered His mother to John at the foot of His cross so, too, did He offer her to me.

You see, it is in these moments of longing, of discontent, of fear and frustration that put us on our knees. That remind us of just how human we are, and just how badly we need Our Lord. And, it is Mary who constantly leads us back to Him.



This Advent, it is going to be easy to forget that it is indeed Advent, but just as we remember Jesus' great suffering before His Resurrection, we too remember the great longing of the Israelites before the birth of the Messiah.

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**Mary became that wise mom who could relate to my suffering.**

This Advent, I pray that you experience longing. I pray that you want. I pray that all you desire is given as an offering to our most Blessed Lord as Mary offered her Son at the foot of His cross. And, when Christmas comes, I pray that the longing you've experienced turns to great joy. For, He indeed has come. And, He has come to bring peace to our weary little souls.

-Rachel Peñate

*(A small note – You'll be happy to hear that Robbie and I were married a little over a year later. I attribute so much of our relationship to that moment in which I chose to hand the Lord everything.)*

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# *study questions:*

**Q: When in your life do you experience longing?**

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**Q: What is your relationship like with Mary? What do you love about her? What don't you understand about her?**

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**Q: What makes it difficult to embrace your longing? How might you better embrace your longing after this Advent?**

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Today's Scripture

Matthew 6:24-34

*"Do not worry about your life... Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span?"*

I once heard it said, that when we have debt, we are a slave to that debt. As a barely-out-of-college loan holder and new homeowner, that alluring phrase has caused me great anxiety over the years. I don't want to be a slave to debt, so I tried everything I possibly could to get out of that debt. I wrote and re-wrote multiple ways to "snowball" our interest rates and rearrange our budget. I got upset at my husband if he bought something before we discussed where it would fit into our budget, and I become really discouraged when our bank account wasn't getting larger but rather getting smaller. I would pray that some anonymous person would send us an \$80,000 check in the mail and we could get this whole stage of life over with.

And then, I crashed my car...

Something funny happened that Wednesday morning: I took a different approach to what I could've seen as our impending financial doom. Instead of seeing dollar signs, I saw an opportunity for freedom. I gave all of my anxiety and longing to God. All of it! I gave Him permission to take care of us. And, do you know what happened? He did!

No, there was no \$80,000 check or miraculous discovery of a way to pay it all off in one year. But, there was a new freedom in allowing my desires and longings to be for Christ alone. The Lord had already proven that one to me. But, I needed a swift kick in the butt to remember. I do not have to be "financially free" in order to be free from financial anxieties. Christ offers us a freedom that being debt-free can never compare to.



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## **We each long for security in some way.**

Yes, I do hope one day to be free of my debt at some point. But, right now, the Lord is asking me to trust Him on this one, and this verse from Matthew is my proof that He will come through 100% of the time.

I have no idea where you are at when it comes to financial stability. Your story probably looks quite different than my own. But, I do know that we each long for security in some way, shape, or form. Whether it be in terms of what we eat, what we clothe ourselves with, or the people who surround us, Christ in the most beautiful of ways (aka – Scripture) reminds us that we cannot add to our days by worrying. Give Him all that you have and all that you want, and He will give you all that you need. Embrace that freedom this Advent, and give God all the praise and thanks.

- Rachel Peñate

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*my favorite verse*



# study questions:

**Q: What is it that causes you anxiety?**

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**Q: Why is it that you experience this anxiety? What are you afraid of?**

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**Challenge: Re-read Matthew 6:24-34 and ask the Lord to speak to you through this passage. Write down all that He is saying to you, and carry it with you this week. Ask Him for the freedom to overcome this anxiety and trust Him in all things.**

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# Daughters of Light

## Day 4// Longing for a Child

Photo by Cailin Valente

Today's Scripture

Genesis 15:1-6  
17:15-19  
18:9-15  
21:1-8

Three months ago, my husband and I lost our first child.

We were eight-weeks in, joyful with anticipation, delighted. After three long years, God had finally called us to be parents.

And then the symptoms arrived, and the doctor confirmed the most devastating of prognosis: miscarriage. An ugly word if I've ever seen one. I was left beside myself, just like Abraham, "you promised me descendants Lord, where are they?" My desire to be a mom did not diminish with the physical void of my empty womb.

Yet, here I was, stuck in the reality that for some reason it wasn't our time yet. So, I stopped asking "why" and allowed the Lord to heal me. I allowed Him to remind me of all the beautiful blessings we did have. I allowed Him to teach me that I was indeed a mom, and that my love for our little Sarah Grace is a love that cannot be fabricated or replaced.

You see, I still long for a child that I can hold and kiss, but God has granted me so much peace in knowing that His promises are true. And, this is why we chose to name our little one Sarah, because God came through for Sarah. And, He will (and has always) come through for us. In the little ways as well as the big ones.

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**The desire to be a mom did not diminish with the physical void of my empty womb.**



This Advent, it's easy to forget the longing of the Israelites. It's easy to forget that there was a time Christ's birth wasn't a given. There was a time Christmas shopping was a priority the day after Thanksgiving. But, we are invited into remembering this longing because it is our longing that reminds us of how dependent we are upon the Lord. But, more so than that, how much the Lord wants to shower us and surprise us with His love on Christmas Eve.

- Rachel Peñate

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*my favorite verse*



# *study questions:*

**Q: Have you ever questioned a promise that God made you? Why?**

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**Q: What keeps you from trusting His promises? Why?**

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**Q: What can you learn from Sarah & Abraham's witness about what it means to trust God? And, how can you apply that lesson to your life?**

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# Daughters of *Light*

Day 5// Longing for "My Way"

Today's Scripture

Jeremiah 33: 14-16

Luke 21: 25-28, 34-36

Approximately 2,000 years ago, a young woman named Mary was told that she would birth and raise the son of God. I don't know about you, but if I was Mary, I most likely would've screamed and run for the hills. Either that, or pee my pants.

We so often take for granted the humanity of Mary, and the reality that she was just as human as you and I. Although sinless, she still encountered all the emotions and all of the temptations that we combat. Although sinless, she still had to make the choice to receive Jesus in her womb. I bet you that she had a whole plan laid out for her and Joseph's life, and an unplanned (albeit miraculous) pregnancy was not a part of it. Yet, she didn't run for the hills, she accepted God's plan quietly and with great faith and courage.

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**Sometimes we don't  
answer His call, but  
He is always ready to  
answer.**

So often, I long for my own way. I long for my plans because I think (quite absurdly) that they are better than God's. Yet, what does this season teach us about our own plans? They pale in comparison to what God has in store for us. What do you think Mary's life would've looked like if she said, "No thank you Angel Gabriel. Tell God He can pick someone else"?

Sometimes, this thought terrifies me. Not because I don't want to do the will of the Father, but because I wonder how many times I've said, "no" to God and shut the door to His amazing plans for me.



The beauty of understanding God's plan though, is it isn't a crazy long equation with only one answer, or a really crazy maze with only one route. But, rather, it is a journey with Him. Sometimes we don't answer His call, but He is always ready to answer. He is always ready to take us on a wonderful journey and sweep us off our feet. It is not over my dear sisters. No matter how many times you've said, "no" to Him, today brings a new opportunity to say, "yes!"

- Rachel Peñate

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*my favorite verse*



# *study questions:*

**Q: What kind of fears do you think Mary encountered when she was approached by the Angel Gabriel? Put yourself in her shoes, what would you have been thinking?**

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**Q: When is a time in your life you said “yes” to God’s plans for you? How did it turn out? Would you say “yes” all over again? Why or why not?**

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**Q: What holds you back from following Christ in all things? What do you need prayers for in order to gain greater courage that He will not fail you? Ask someone to pray for you this week.**

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Photo by Cailin Valente

## Today's Scripture

Acts 9: 1-19

I often wonder what God saw in Paul, on his murderous journey to Damascus. Paul expressed no remorse, yet God was merciful. He proved to have greater plans for Paul than Paul did for himself. And Paul, however blinded (quite literally) to his fate that day, came to recognize this.

I can only image that in those three days of blindness, Paul experienced a weakness he had never experienced before – a man that was once feared by the Christians, was now at the mercy of Christians. A man that was once hunting down Christians, was, only a few years later, proclaiming God's mercy and love in order to spread Christianity.

Like the story of Paul, I often wonder what God sees in me. I fail so many times. I promise to sin no more, yet a few short weeks later I find myself crawling back to that Confessional. Paul's longing for his sight is reminiscent of my longing for the restoration of my faith. Yet, there is a beauty in those three days of waiting for the Resurrection, those three days of blindness. In the darkness is where we yearn for the light.

Be assured, we are not called to sit in our sin to “experience” this darkness (please, run to Confession), nor should we pray for physical blindness (that would be silly). Rather, we are called to embrace our loneliness and longing in every moment, at every opportunity. In this darkness, we are taught something greater about ourselves: Our dependency upon the Lord.

Whether it be a longing for financial freedom, a child, God's plans to be revealed, or our faith to be restored, God desires to comfort us through it all. When we embrace our longing – our weakness – we embrace God's ability to be our strength.



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**God desires to  
comfort us through it  
all.**

Paul could've done anything after his encounter with the healing power of God. He could've ignored God's voice, and continued to live as he did before. But, that encounter changed him. That encounter gave him the courage to proclaim with boldness Christ's incredible love and power.

Sisters, what a beautiful example this is. I desire to emulate Paul's response to his great longing in all that I do. I desire to embrace God's strength in every situation. I pray, this Advent, our response to God may be as courageous as Paul's.

And, like Paul, may we be so lucky one day to count ourselves among the saints in heaven.

- Rachel Peñate

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a blank space to write, draw, paint, stamp, or express yourself  
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*my favorite verse*



# study questions:

**Q: Re-read Acts 9:1-19 slowly and take time to imagine what Paul experienced. Perhaps, put yourself in his shoes. Imagine his experience as your own. What strikes you? Write this down.**

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**Q: What does God's mercy mean to you? What do you think it meant to Paul?**

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**Challenge: Pick one thing you currently experience longing for, and write it down. Place that piece of paper in your Bible as a bookmark to Luke 1:45. In times of doubt or struggle read that verse, meditate upon it, until your heart is granted peace.**

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