

# Hope for every home, an advent journey.



\*The Thompsons are not a real family, but their story is inspired by the experiences of families we support across the UK.

Advent is a season of anticipation, a time to slow down, reflect, and prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. In the midst of winter's darkness, we look forward to the light of Christmas: the birth of Jesus, God's promise of hope, peace, and restoration. It's a time when we remember that even in the most difficult circumstances, light breaks through. This advent, use this resource to journey with us we reflect on light in the darkness, either individually in your personal reflections, or with a group such as home groups or youth fellowship.

If you're short on time, please feel free to use our one-week bonus study on page 5.

Each week of Advent we'll meet a member of the Thompson family and hear their story. Their struggles reflect those of thousands of families across the UK today. Through scripture, reflection, and prayer, we'll journey with them, remembering the hope of Christmas and the work Spurgeons does to bring light into difficult places.

**No family should face life's struggles alone.**

# David's story

David is a single dad, raising his teenage son Jamie and young daughter Lily while caring for his mother, Margaret. Like over 3.18 million single-parent families in the UK, he balances work, parenting, and financial strain. On a £18,000 part-time income, David often faces impossible choices, like heating the home or buying new shoes for his children. He struggles with anxiety and isolation, feeling he's failing his children.



**Across the UK, one in three children in single-parent families lives in poverty, and fathers like David often carry silent burdens.**

**At Spurgeons we provide parenting support groups, mental health services, and advocacy for parents under pressure, reminding them they are not alone. Because no family should face life's struggles alone.**



Joseph, a man of quiet strength, obeyed God's call to protect and raise Jesus. He trusted divine guidance even when it disrupted his plans. Like David, he bore the weight of responsibility with faith and love.

***"Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife... He will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:20-21***

David's story reflects something of Joseph's quiet obedience. Both men carried heavy responsibilities, often in silence, trying to protect and provide for their families in uncertain circumstances. Joseph reminds us that faithfulness in struggle is seen and honoured by God.

**Take a few moments to answer these questions, either discuss as a group or reflect on in your own quiet time.**

How might God be calling us to stand with single parents today?

What hidden burdens might families in your community be carrying?

What can Joseph's quiet obedience teach us about supporting those who carry heavy responsibilities?

# Jamie's story

At just 16, Jamie carries adult responsibilities. Like 1 in 5 young carers in the UK, he misses school to support his family. His dream of studying computer science competes with his duty to help at home, he often hides his stress behind humour or challenging behaviour.



Through school-based counselling, Spurgeons' staff see young people like Jaimie come to us with responsibilities and worries all too often. Our counsellors give young people like Jamie a safe space to process emotions, find resilience, and rediscover hope for their future.

No young person should face life's struggles alone.



***"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2***

Jamie's heavy load reminds us that God never meant for one person, especially a child, to carry so much alone. The law of Christ is fulfilled when we, as the body of Christ, come alongside young carers and lighten their load.

James Fegan, who was renowned for his support to children in the 19th and early 20th Century, teachings remind us that "we must not only rescue children from hardship but restore their hope. Every child deserves the chance to dream.". For Jamie, this is key, showing the importance for children to have the space and hope in their lives to dream about their futures, like Jamie who wishes to study computer science but due to the weight he carries often doesn't have the headspace to dream about his future.

## Prayer activity

Light a candle and pray for young people balancing school with hidden responsibilities. Ask God to ignite their hopes and dreams, even in tough circumstances.

# Lily's story

At 8, Lily is awaiting an autism diagnosis and has sensory processing difficulties. She struggles in school without enough specialist support. With over 120,000 children in the UK waiting for an autism assessment, many like Lily feel misunderstood and isolated.



**At Spurgeons, we provide trained staff who advocate for children like Lily, ensuring they find safe spaces to thrive.**

**Because no child should face life's struggles alone.**



***"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." Romans 15:7***

Jesus welcomed children that others dismissed. Lily's longing "to be understood" challenges us to become communities of true acceptance. When we welcome and affirm those who are different, we reflect the heart of God and bring Him praise.

**Take a few moments to answer these questions, either discuss as a group or reflect on in your own quiet time.**

How does our society make children like Lily feel excluded?

What does it mean for the church to truly welcome children with different needs?

How can you ensure people feel welcome this Advent?

# Margaret's story



Margaret, 71, is the family anchor. She provides childcare despite severe arthritis, feeling guilty she can't contribute financially. Like 1 in 4 older people in the UK, she struggles with loneliness and declining health. She worries what will happen to her family if she can no longer cope.

At our family hubs, our staff at Spurgeons see families of all shapes and sizes, and the pressure grandparents, aunts and uncles feel as they wish they could do more to support their family. We walk alongside grandparents raising or supporting children, offering emotional and practical help.

Because no family should face life's struggles alone.



*"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25*

Margaret's story highlights the need for encouragement and shared responsibility within community. God calls His people not to face struggles alone but to build one another up, especially in times of pressure.

## Prayer activity 'Prayer window display'

Decorate a window with stars, candles, hearts or whatever is comforting to you. Each decoration represents a prayer for a person or group. Invite neighbours to add their own prayers, let it be a light and comfort for those who need encouragement

# The Thompson Family

Together, the Thompsons represent thousands of UK families balancing poverty, disability, caring responsibilities, and isolation. Christmas can magnify these struggles, when resources run thin and expectations run high. But it can also magnify hope.



At Spurgeons we stand with families like the Thompsons every day, offering practical help, emotional support, and hope rooted in love. No family should face life's struggles alone.



*"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them." Acts 4:32-35*

The early church responded to need by living generously and sharing with one another. This vision of community reflects the hope of Christmas - God with us, calling us to be with one another in love.

**Take a few moments to answer these questions, either discuss as a group or reflect on in your own quiet time.**

What would it look like for your community to live so generously that "there were no needy persons among them"?

How might you bring hope to a struggling family this Christmas?

Where do you need to receive Christ's light in your own family this Advent?



# A prayer for families this Christmas

***Loving God,***

We lift up families who are struggling today, those carrying burdens too heavy to bear alone.

Bring comfort to those who feel overwhelmed.

Bring peace to homes filled with worry.

Bring hope to hearts that feel forgotten.

May your love shine through the kindness of others.

May support come in the form of listening ears, open hearts, and practical help.

And may every family know they are not alone - that they are seen, valued, and held in your care.

Use us, Lord, to be part of the answer.

Help us give generously, pray earnestly, and act compassionately.

So that this Christmas, more families can find strength, healing, and joy.

***Amen.***