



Advent

HERITAGE CHURCH DEVO



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WELCOME TO THE ADVENT SEASON

Advent is a sacred time of preparation: A season when we quiet our hearts, lift our eyes toward Bethlehem, and remember that Christ came, Christ comes to us now, and Christ will come again. As we journey toward Christmas, we slow down long enough to listen for the whisper of hope, the peace that surpasses understanding, the joy that steadies us, and the love that transforms everything it touches.

Many within our church family have prayerfully contributed to this Advent devotional.

Each day you'll find a Scripture passage, a devotional reflection, and a prayer to guide you. We invite you to take time daily to read, reflect, and respond. Let these pages help you draw nearer to the Savior whose arrival changed the world and still changes hearts today.

At Heritage Church, we seek to help all people discover and deepen their relationship with Jesus while sharing His love with others.

Our prayer is that these devotions will help you do just that: **Discover** Christ again in a fresh way, **Deepen** your trust in Him, and **Share** His light wherever you go this season.

May God meet you in these moments. May hope
rise in your heart, may peace steady your spirit,
may love shape your relationships, and may joy fill
your life as we celebrate the birth of our King.
Come, Lord Jesus.

Merry Christmas and blessed Advent,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sel A Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DAY 1: HOPE IN THE DARKNESS

By: Scot Jones

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:2–7

Advent begins with a whisper of hope breaking into a world weary with shadows. Isaiah's prophecy speaks to a people walking in darkness, people who knew fear, uncertainty, and longing. Yet into that deep darkness, God promised a great light. This light would not come from human strength, political power, or earthly solutions. It would come from a child. A Son. A Savior who would carry names like Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Hope wasn't a feeling they had to manufacture; it was a promise God Himself declared. Advent reminds us that hope is not wishful thinking, but confident expectation rooted in God's unchanging character and faithful word.

Today, our world still feels the weight of night brokenness, grief, division, and struggle. But Advent invites us to lift our eyes and remember that the Light has already come and is still shining. Jesus entered our darkness, our pain, our sin, our fears to bring everlasting hope. As we begin this sacred season, we do not pretend life is perfect; instead, we dare to believe God's light is greater than the darkest night. This week, choose to anchor your heart in the One who keeps promises.

Let hope rise not because circumstances are certain, but because Christ is. The same Savior who came in Bethlehem will come again in glory. Until then, we wait with hope.

Prayer

Jesus,

Thank You for this gift of hope and Your promise to us! I pray that I will cling to that very hope today when things don't go my way. Help me to stay focused on what really matters and share Your love and HOPE with those around me! I love You! Be glorified in all I do! In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 2: BOLD PRAYERS

By: Chris Balaski

Scripture Reading: Romans 15:12-13

The apostle Paul begins with the quote from Isaiah 11:10 calling out the Root of Jesse. This has a dual purpose. The first is challenging the Jewish peoples to accept Gentile worship. By calling out the Davidic Covenant, he is attempting to unite Jewish and Gentile worshippers through the common bond of “hope.” The Davidic covenant also supports verse 13 in providing a clear example of God keeping His promises to his people and His word is never failing. This promise was kept in the birth of Jesus Christ.

Inspiration for this unity that Paul desires may have come from Jesus’ prayer for all believers in John 17:20-26. In verse 23, Christ is praying for unity and then His “hope” is displayed in verse 24 that His followers be with Him in glory. Both prayers are unselfish and express the ultimate in others achieving joy and peace.

But Paul understands completely the limitations of the human mind. Often our display of hope is for the minimum. Likely our petition of abounding or overflowing with hope is only towards our bank accounts, our reception of love, or our health. How often when you pray for an outcome are you just

asking for the minimum? Someone is sick, you pray for them to get well. But why not pray for a cure to the sickness for all? You pray for God's word to reach someone, but why not pray that God uses them in such a way that thousands come to know Christ.

Paul invoking the Holy Spirit to intervene and enable our prayers of hope allows us to tap into God's endless mercy and grace. Hebrews 4:16 says we should (boldly) approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

What should inspire our petition of "hope" this advent season? Revelation 5:5 declares the Root of David has triumphed. The fulfilling of the Davidic covenant through the Messiah whose own prayer of hope as seen in John 17 has been granted and declared a success. As you spend time in prayer this Advent season, remember that you can't "out pray" God's ability to grant mercy and grace. Be bold in your prayers.

Prayer

Jesus,
Help me approach Your throne with boldness and faith knowing that no matter the outcome You are still good! Today, help me share my faith story with someone who needs it! That their life would be

transformed by the Holy Spirit! In Your Name,
Amen!

DAY 3: HOPE

By: Peggy Williams

Scripture Reading: Lamentations 3:21-24

Lamentations is a collection of five poems “lamenting” the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the grief that destruction has caused. It attributes the suffering to the people’s rebellion against God, but ends, as these verses show, with a plea for hope. Their hope is HOPE in the greatness of the Lord.

When we think about hope, do we think about hope as I hope my team wins; I hope I don’t get sick; or I hope I get what I want for Christmas? That is hope with all small letters, a wishful thinking hope. Or do we think about HOPE as a confident expectation in God and his promises?

Christmas represents capital letter HOPE. God gave us the gift of HOPE when he gave us Jesus, when he sent a baby into the world to teach us how to live, then to die for our sins. His birth, death and resurrection give us the real HOPE. Let us enter the Christmas season with HOPE focusing on God’s steadfast love and mercy as we await the greatest gift ever given.

Romans 15:13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you

may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Prayer

Jesus,

I thank You for Your promise of HOPE! Thank You for the gift of salvation and my relationship with You! I look at all the blessings & the grace, and I am in awe! May You continue to receive all the glory and honor as I maintain my HOPE in you. In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 4: PROMISE FULFILLED

By Jim Parish

Scripture Reading : Psalm 130:5-8

As a Christian most of us recognize that the season of Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas. During this time, we prepare ourselves spiritually and focus on hope, faith, joy, and peace. As shared in verses five and six, waiting is with our whole being and likewise where we should place our hope. While in verses seven and eight, we are told that waiting with hope should also be more than our personal aspiration. It should apply to our nation and world for we are all redeemed through Jesus for our sins.

I'd like to share some reflections on what Biblical hope looks like. In life we "hope" for many things, "I hope it rains", "I hope my team wins", "I hope today is a good day". The list is endless...

However, as the psalmist shares in these verses, we are talking about a different type of "hope", one that is a deeper spiritual and a religiously mature level of hope. Waiting from your soul is more profound, it's waiting from a deeper faith, with the recognition that God's promise or a prayer response is coming from our Lord. This hope is something we desire so deeply that our heart aches for it in anticipation.

To the Jewish people this waiting and hope was for the arrival and fulfillment of God's promise of the Messiah. For us, as Christians, we know that this promise was fulfilled with the birth of Jesus Christ. We now live in a time when the Jewish nation waited and hoped for the coming of the Messiah, we have "hope" with anticipation for Jesus's second coming.

Our hope is founded in the knowledge that we can trust, without doubt, that what God spoke will happen. He has promised us redemption from our sins and that Jesus will return. This hope is to be fulfilled and lead to a life everlasting in his heavenly presence. The psalmist states, "In his word I do hope, more than the watchman for dawn". Not only is the author saying that he has a personal hope but he calls the whole nation to come together in a communal hope with redemption from our iniquities.

As a Christian, I have experienced this level of deep heartfelt hope, sometimes from a place of despair and other times from anxious excitement. In both I am waiting for God's response from a deep spiritual place. A place where I feel at peace through prayer knowing that God hears my pleadings.

Prayer

Jesus,

Thank you for the blessings that You have placed in my life and the salvation provided through Your Son and our Savior Jesus Christ. I give thanks for the birth of Jesus who gave His life so that we may be redeemed and live in eternity with You. In this season of Advent let us rejoice in His birth and grant us peace as we wait with a hopeful and expectant heart. Help us to have a Christian based hope, one that isn't anxious or worried, but one that is joyful with the knowledge that Your love is everlasting, and Your promises are always fulfilled. Amen.

DAY 5: OUR HOPE IS JESUS

By: Drew Vineyard

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 10:23

The hope and promise in Hebrews is Jesus. The hope is Jesus coming here to give us a way to be reconciled with God. The hope is fulfilled in the promise in 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.” What a joy it is that we have eternal life thanks only to God’s grace on us!

During this Christmas season when things get super busy and we worry about gifts and schedules that just drain us, remember that Jesus is alive and loves you. Compared to the hope we have in Him, everything else is nothing. Rejoice for the Messiah has come!

During this Advent season, focus on the hope that Jesus represents in our lives. Lean on him during the tough times and thank Him for the wonderful times. Thank Him for the people in your life. And hold tightly to the hope that we’ve been forgiven for everything we’ve done. Our lives are covered by him!

Prayer

Jesus,

Help me to not get distracted by all the things going on in my life right now. I don't want to miss out on what You are calling me to do! Help my eyes and ears to be opened to seeing those around me that need You. Thank You for Your faithfulness in my life! In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 6: A LIVING HOPE

By: Reagan Daniels

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-5

Advent invites us to pause in the tension between what has been fulfilled and what is still to come. In Christ's birth, God's mercy broke into the world; in His resurrection, that mercy gave us a living hope. Peter reminds us that this hope isn't fragile or fading; it's rooted in a Savior who has conquered death.

While so much around us changes, our hope is alive because Jesus is alive. We are born again into something eternal, unshakable, and kept safe by God's own power.

So often during this time of year, you will hear me remind us in our 10:04 worship times that the whole point of Christmas and Advent is Easter. This passage from Peter helps us remember that. We worship because of this living hope. In fact, the song "Living Hope" has become a central part of our worship in 10:04, and most of us would say it's one of our favorites. We sing this song in praise and celebration of the truth that because He was born in the form of a man to die and pay for our sins on the cross, and was resurrected to conquer death itself, we have freedom. We have a living hope in Jesus.

As we read the Christmas story each year, a major theme we see is the waiting, the anticipation, and the expectation of what is happening throughout all of creation. Many of us, when we take the time to pause in this busy season, understand this feeling. Waiting is hard; it can threaten to steal our hope. But when we cling to our living hope in Jesus and worship in our waiting, the joy of Advent and the power of the Resurrection always win.

As we wait for Christ's return, Advent teaches us to hope with confidence, not wishful thinking. The same God who fulfilled His promise in Bethlehem will fulfill His promise again when Christ comes in glory. In the meantime, we wait as people of resurrection, guarded by faith, sustained by grace, and anchored in an inheritance that will never spoil or fade. This is the hope that lights our Advent candles and carries us through every shadow: the living hope of Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Jesus,
Help me to slow down and remember all that You have done for me and my family. I am so thankful for your goodness. Thank You for being my Living Hope! In every moment, good or bad, help me to give You praise! In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 7: FAITH IN MOMENTS OF FEAR

By: Courtney Hardy

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:26-38

When we were first introduced to Mary, she was young and engaged. What hope she must have had for her plans and for her future. I'm sure, like all women, she had her own plans about her wedding, being a wife, and one day becoming a mother. Then Gabriel appeared, and that hope changed. Fear and doubt took over for a brief moment. But Mary had strong faith, and her faith turned that fear/doubt back to hope again. Mary knew the Lord would make whatever was to be okay.

If this happened in 2025, I can't help but wonder what Mary's response would have been. Would she worry what her friends and family thought? Would she be afraid to lose followers? Would she have asked Gabriel for some time to "process things"? Would she have posted about it on social media asking everyone what they thought?

My hope for our church this season is for us to all have faith like Mary. In moments of fear and doubt, to boldly proclaim "I am the Lord's servant" and to fully trust in His plan.

Prayer

Jesus,

When my plans are interrupted and things seem uncertain, help me to trust that You are in control and You are working things out for my good. Let my life bring You glory in all that I do. Help me to have strong faith. I praise You today for Your goodness that is so evident in my life. In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 8: ON EARTH, PEACE

By: John Joiner

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:8-14

The way God chose to announce the birth of Jesus, just doesn't make sense to my rational brain. Instead of declaring it from the city centers in highly populated areas, the angel of the Lord spoke to shepherds in the middle of nowhere. That's not how I would have done it at all! But I'm so glad God's in charge of things like that, and I'm not. My dad used to joke with me as a kid saying, "Boy, if I told you to go out and mess up, you'd mess up going out!" To a point, that's true! God's perfect plan is so perfect, it's hard for us to even comprehend the choices He makes.

One of those choices is reflected in the wording the angel uses: *"on Earth peace to those on whom His favor rests."* We often read that as *"peace on Earth,"* but that's not what the angel said. There was not an immediate or widespread feeling of peace that fell across the earth with the birth of Jesus. Instead, it was a declaration of a gift being offered, the gift of peace. The world will still experience trouble, but there is one person who brings peace; one gift so magnificent that when we find favor in Jesus, we can experience true peace. I pray this Advent season we all experience the true peace of Jesus through a personal relationship with

Him. He is the most precious gift we have ever received.

Prayer

Jesus,

Thank you for the true peace I have found in You.
When I am stressed or worried, help me to cling to
Your promise that You are there for me. Thank You
for the gift of Salvation. I praise You for Your
faithfulness in my life. In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 9: UNENDING PEACE

By: Ann McCullen

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:6-7 (NIV)

Our world is filled with advice and opinions on every topic imaginable: our finances, parenting, fitness, politics, relationships, careers, mental health, and on and on. *“What is the key to a happy life?” ... “How do I raise healthy, successful kids?” ... “How do I create the life I long for?”*

In our search to be happier, healthier, wealthier, and more successful, it’s easy to allow worldly sources to define our goals and our purpose. As we listen to podcasts, scroll social media, align with ideological groups, read blogs, and subscribe to newsletters, we are often inviting strangers to shape our decisions and our future. Rather than finding peace, we are left feeling lost and unfulfilled.

In this season of Advent, we are reminded once again that we have direct access to the Wonderful Counselor who can direct our paths to ensure perfect peace and joy. Instead of making our decisions based on the advice of the latest social influences, we are free to claim a future of unending peace when we place our hope and trust in our Mighty God, our Prince of Peace, our Messiah, Christ Jesus.

Prayer

Jesus,

Give me discernment and wisdom as I go
throughout this day. Help me to meditate on Your
Words and show Your love to those around me.

Thank You for Your unending peace and hope! I
love You and praise You! In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 10: THE GIFT JESUS LEAVES US

Scripture Reading: John 14:27

By: Bob Brumfield

Jesus told His disciples, “I am leaving you with a gift.” Imagine how those words must have sounded to the men who had walked beside Him for nearly three years. They had seen miracles, heard His teaching, and shared life with the Son of God. The thought of Him leaving must have filled their hearts with uncertainty. Yet in the very moment He spoke of His departure, He also spoke of a gift, a gift of peace that only He could give.

During this beautiful season of Advent, we may find ourselves feeling a bit like those disciples. Christmas brings many good things, including gifts from those we love, but nothing compares to the gift Jesus left us. His birth was the beginning of God’s greatest promise, and His peace is the gift that remains with us today.

As we move through this season, may we remember that the greatest gift of all is not found under a tree, but in a Savior who came to bring us hope, peace, joy, and love.

Prayer

Jesus,

Thank You for the ultimate gift of love and for giving up Your life for me. I pray I never forget the true meaning of this Advent Season. Help me share Your love with those around me. I praise You today and always! In Your Name, Amen

DAY 11: PRAYER & THANKSGIVING

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:6-7

By: Brittany House

We tend to worry. A lot! Even when we say we don't, we do. It's almost second nature for us to stress, to plan, to overthink, and to carry the weight of things we can't control. But Paul is reminding us that worry is not meant to be our response, prayer is.

We've got to condition ourselves to turn our worries, doubts, fears, and anxieties into prayers. And once we've taken those burdens to our Father, we must let Him have control. We can't keep picking things back up after we've laid them at Jesus' feet. He is more than capable of handling what overwhelms us.

Paul continues, "Tell God what you need." God genuinely wants to hear from us. He already knows our every need, yet He invites us to speak to Him about them. Prayer should be so natural to us; not just something we rush through, but something we hold in the highest honor. It's a privilege to be in communication with our God! When we pray, He hears our every word. He listens closely. He never tries to hurry us along. He never gets distracted by something else. He loves to hear both our praises to Him and our cries for help!

But Paul doesn't stop there. He says, "and thank Him for all He has done." Thankfulness is what opens our hearts to peace. When we thank God, we shift our focus from what's missing to all that He's already provided. And in that space of prayer and thanksgiving, we will experience God's peace, a peace that doesn't make sense to the world, but that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

There is nothing like His peace. It protects and reminds us that we are safe in the care of our Heavenly Father.

Prayer

Jesus,
I give You control. I lay my doubts and fears at Your feet. Help me to leave them there and not pick them back up. Thank You for ALL that You have done for my family and me! For all the ways You have provided and for all the unanswered prayers. Thank you for the times when I thought I knew what I needed, but you knew better. You are so wonderful, and I love you! In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 12: THE GIFT OF PEACE

By: Liz Covin

Scripture Reading: Romans 5:1-2

During the Christmas season I often think about Joseph. He was a righteous man living his life and preparing for marriage to Mary. The turn of events with Mary abruptly changes for him. Being the man he was, he wanted to do the right thing and fix the situation. Life can stop all of us in our tracks with personal relationships, illness, family problems.

They can quickly change our plans and rob us of our peace. It is our human nature to try to “fix it.” Peace comes to me in situations when I am still and patiently wait for God’s still and precious voice. It is very freeing to know and understand that I cannot fix the problem, but I do know who can!

The gift of peace from God through the birth of Jesus is the most precious gift. Joseph realized after the angel’s visit to him in a dream what he should do with his marriage plans. He knew his obedience to Father God would fulfill God’s promise to us. Is it easy? No, but it will be God’s plan. Ephesians 3:20 “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.”

Prayer

Jesus,

Help me to stop trying to find peace by being in control. Today, when things don't go my way, help me to lean on You for strength and guidance instead of overacting. Thank You for Your patience and grace. In Your name, Amen!

DAY 13: BEING PREPARED

By: Jim Wild

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:38-42

As we enter the Advent season, a time of anticipation and preparation, many of us focus on shopping, cooking, and preparing our homes for family and guests. While these traditions are meaningful, Advent invites us to prepare in a deeper way. The prophets remind us to look beyond the present moment and prepare ourselves for an event with eternal significance.

In Luke 10, Jesus visits the home of Martha and Mary. Martha is busy with preparations, while Mary sits at Jesus' feet, listening to him. When Martha asks Jesus to intervene, he gently replies, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

This Advent, let's remember Jesus' words. It's good to welcome guests and celebrate together, but even more important is making time each day to listen for his voice and prepare our hearts for his coming. Consider setting aside a quiet moment for prayer or reflection, allowing the true meaning of Advent to shape your season.

Jesus is real. He loves you and me. He was born and is the Messiah—hallelujah and thanks be to God!

Prayer

Jesus,
Thank you for this reminder! Today, help me choose to make time with You. Let me hear Your voice clearly and recognize it. Through all the busyness of this season, You have remained constant and true! Thank You for being all that I need and for Your goodness to me!
I love You. In Your Name, Amen.

DAY 14: RIGHTEOUSNESS & PEACE KISS EACH OTHER

By: Debra Mullins

Scripture Reading: Psalm 85:8-13

At the time of this passage, the Jewish people were facing struggles and discouragement following their Babylonian exile. They were experiencing social hardships, and the Psalmist cries out for God's intervention. We are reminded of God's power and what He can do for those who welcome His righteousness.

This Psalm illustrates that the more we embrace righteousness in our lives, the clearer God's blessings will be evident. When we seek God's righteousness and His kingdom first, we will see His hand at work in our lives.

"Righteousness and peace kiss each other." It is through our faith, reverence, and obedience to God's way that we will discover peace. When we walk each day guided by God, we can experience His peace. Praise God and recognize the glory He brings to each day.

Seek direction in His Word, for God desires that we follow His path. When we take the time to allow God to lead us, by turning to Him in prayer and meditating on His word, we find peace.

Prayer

Jesus,

I am thankful for Your power and Your ability to do the impossible. Guide me so that my eyes might be opened to see all that You are doing. Help me to not be blinded by all the things that can so easily distract me. May You receive all the honor and glory in my life. In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 15: EVERLASTING JOY

By: Sam Wadsworth

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:10-11

Today we're pondering joy — something the angel Gabriel says will be sparked for all people because of the good news he had come to share with the shepherds that day. The message Gabriel had to share is indeed *good news*. It is the gospel! The Messiah is born, and not only is he the Messiah, but he's also Savior and Lord. In these two tiny verses, Gabriel is informing us that because of what happened on this first Christmas morning, great joy is in store for all people. God's redemption plan is in motion. The people of God will be delivered and reconciled and saved. This is what generations of Israelites have been waiting for!

So let's talk about joy... Joy is a condition and not a feeling. Joy is not happiness. Joy is consistent with pain and suffering and every other up and down of life. Pleasure and happiness are not. Dallas Willard defines joy as, "A pervasive and firmly established sense of well-being."

The angel Gabriel tells us that this good news will provide all people with a firmly established sense of well-being — a deep sense of belonging and an indescribable impression that everything is

ultimately going to be OK. How can Christians stay so calm in a crisis? How can we have faith that everything is going to be ok when everything seems to be crashing down around us? We have an everlasting joy because of what Jesus did for us: He saved us and is continuing to save us from sin, condemnation, and death.

The gospel message is the source of our joy. We've been saved by grace, and we've done nothing to earn it. Christians must cling to this truth! We should know that whatever happens in this lifetime, we have a "firmly established sense of well-being" because we know the Messiah, the Savior, the Lord, who was born on Christmas morning.

PRAYER

Jesus,
Thank You for Joy! I have this gift because of what You did for me on the cross. Thank You for salvation and the freedom from death! It is because of Your sacrifice that I have been made new and will always have everlasting joy! No matter what may come my way, help me to choose joy! I praise You, today, for this gift! In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 16: STRENGTH, SONG, AND SALVATION

By: Cynthia Green

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 12:2

The image of God as strength, song, and salvation is woven throughout the Bible. It is not only a concept, but also a map, a how-to. He is strength because He is *the* source of power and might. He is song because He is praiseworthy. He is salvation because He is the Deliverer. It is the journey of transformation, the process by which God produces beauty from ashes.

The ashes can be the result of our own doing or the result of being done to. The source matters not for God is an equal-opportunity Deliverer. But He does begin in the ashes, in the cloudy remnants of a life turned upside down. When the unthinkable happens and you're tossed into the depths of chaos, fear, desperation, and hopelessness you're in what some consider a coveted position. "The clouds are the dust of His feet." (Nahum 1:3) As Oswald Chambers penned, *'They are a sign that God is there. What a revelation it is to know that sorrow, bereavement, and suffering are actually the clouds that come along with God! God cannot come near us without clouds—He does not come in clear-shining brightness.'* In our vernacular, the stage has been set.

Our path out of the rubble is determined by our response, how we choose to respond to God who is now in our midst. If deliverance is the desired result, then sing! Praise His worthiness in a manner that can be experienced by others. Refuse the myopic view of your present situation by focusing on Him, His character, His attributes, the history of things from which He has already delivered you. Draw Him nearer. Keep His audience. How? With praise! Remember, He inhabits the praises of His people. (Psalm 22:3 sort of)

His deliverance, your salvation, is the result of the strength, song, and salvation sequence. Just as you don't hope and pray that water will turn to ice when exposed to conditions at or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit (as hope and prayer are nonessential to the outcome), you can be confident that God *will* deliver you. Oh, and if your confidence is somewhat anemic, it will be strengthened as well.

Prayer

I praise You today and always! You are so good and so faithful to me! Even when I don't see it, You are working! Help me to draw near to You. Not just when times are hard but in good times, too. And help me to share Your love with others, today. In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 17: JOYFULLY FOLLOWING JESUS

By: Abby Anderson

Scripture Reading: Psalms 16:8-11

Our word today is joy. The Advent season is a season of joy. The dictionary definition of joy is “a feeling of great pleasure and happiness”. Put in even simpler terms, joy makes the heart glad. The Bible gives us many reasons to be joyful, or full of joy. For example, the literal biggest one, Jesus was born. He is here with us.

The Advent season is the season of awaiting the coming of Christ. Meaning, without Advent, we wouldn’t have Jesus. And without Jesus, we wouldn’t have joy. In today’s verse, Psalms 16:8-11, we read that following the Lord makes the heart glad, following the Lord brings us joy. This is the Bible quite literally telling us that by having faith in Jesus we will be joyful!

Christmas time is a fun time. It’s the day we celebrate the Lord’s birth. However, it can be easy to get wrapped up in the fun celebrations like lights, gifts, and snow. What we need to remember is that Christmas quite literally brought us the Son of the Lord. Christmas brought us joy. Just like today’s verse tells us, keeping the Lord at your right hand will bring joy.

Prayer

My heart is glad to know You and be known by You. Thank You for this precious gift. I could go on and on with thanks for all that You have done for me! You are such a kind and loving Father. I love You and praise You! In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 18: OVERFLOWING JOY

By: Josh House

Scripture Reading: John 15:9-11

When I was thirteen, Christmas morning meant one thing: heading to my grandmother's house. It was a House family tradition, one that my two brothers and I looked forward to all year long. My Nana was that kind of gift giver. She always came through, every single time.

That year, all I wanted was a Memphis RiverKings hockey jersey. Hockey had just made its way to the Mid-South, and the Colorado Avalanche were dominating the NHL. I loved the game and wanted that jersey more than anything.

When we got to her house, I did what any kid would do, I went straight for the tree, searching for the gift with my name on it. But when I found it, my heart sank. It wasn't a box. It was a tube. Who wraps clothes, or better yet, a hockey jersey in a tube?

In that moment, I was sure Nana had finally missed. I tried to smile through lunch, but honestly, I was disappointed. The joy was gone.

Finally, it was time to open presents. My Nana handed me the tube with that smirk on her face;

one I somehow missed. I tore it open, expecting a hockey poster, but inside was something far better: my first ever Memphis RiverKings hockey jersey.

Instantly, joy flooded back in. She had come through, again. I still have that jersey to this day. When I think about that moment, I'm reminded of what Jesus said in John 15:9-11.

He told His disciples to remain in His love, to stay close to Him, and that doing so would fill them with joy that overflows.

Just like that gift from my grandmother, God's love often comes in ways we don't expect.

Sometimes it's wrapped in a "tube" when we were hoping for a "box." We might not see what He's doing, but if we stay close, keep trusting, keep obeying, we'll find that His joy was waiting for us all along.

The truth is, joy doesn't come from getting everything we want. It comes from staying connected to the One who knows what we need.

This Christmas, maybe God's love is showing up differently than you expected. Maybe joy feels out of reach. But Jesus' promise still stands: "Remain in My love... and your joy will overflow."

Stay close to Him. Keep trusting. Keep waiting with hope. Because even when it doesn't look like it yet, the best is yet to come.

Prayer

Jesus,

Thank You for Your unending love for me! No matter what I am going through, help to me to draw closer to You and trust that You are near. Help me to remember Your promises and keep Your Word hidden in my heart! I praise You for giving me joy! In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 19: AN ATTITUDE OF JOY

By: George Calhoun

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:4-5

Rejoice!? In a world full of problems how can you redo your life to rejoice?

Here's one way to consider:

A coworker bursts into your room with a spitting screaming monkey on his back. "Help me!" he yells. "You've got to take my monkey and put him on your back!" Of course some stresses cannot be avoided. Yet feel free to not accept every problem some people want to toss on you.

Reduce stress to rejoice more!

Another consideration:

A man on a streetcorner rubs his face furiously three times, squawks twice like a wheezing crow, then repeats the process over and over. A passerby asks, "What are you doing?" with the reply, "Scaring away wild tigers." The passerby is stunned. "You're crazy! There aren't any wild tigers within 10,000 miles of here!" The gyration continues. "And not a word of thanks from anyone." Give gratitude to add to your attitude, an attitude of joy.

I don't think of all the misery, but of the beauty that still remains. - Anne Frank

Not even one thing in your life to rejoice about?

Through Jesus, you can have the greatest single joy: Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. - Psalms 23:6

Prayer

Jesus,
Help me to have an attitude of joy no matter the circumstance. There are plenty of things to complain and worry about so help me to turn those complaints into thankfulness and praise. You have blessed me more than I could have ever imagined and for that I am grateful. I rejoice because of who You are and all that You have done and will continue to do. In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 20: CHOOSE JOY

By: Allison Downing

Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Has something bad happened to you? Something disappointing? Maybe, as my friend Heather says, people are being people, and you find yourself walking through a valley searching for the mountain top. It's easy to read this passage, but it can often be difficult to put this scripture into practice. But here's what we need to understand: joy and happiness are not the same thing.

Circumstances make us happy or sad – they are temporary emotions tied to what's happening around us. But joy is different. Joy comes from the Lord. Joy is felt in our heart. There's a reason the beloved song reminds us that this joy can be found deep in our hearts (go ahead and sing it, I'll wait) - it's a place the world cannot reach. As Christians, we can rejoice even in hard and ugly times because we have the joy of knowing God's plan is bigger than us and any circumstance we face.

This Christmas season is a time to remember the joy of the Lord that came with the birth of Jesus. Try embracing the three practices from Thessalonians: First, “rejoice always” (vs 16). Remember that your joy is rooted in Christ, not in your circumstances. We get to choose what we

focus on. Will that be rejoicing in our blessings or wallowing in circumstantial loathing?

Second, “pray continually” (vs. 17). Do you have someone you call or text throughout the day or chat with frequently? Spouse, friend, sibling, child? God wants a similar relationship with us. To remind us that He’s got this! Check in with Him like you would a close friend, sharing your frustrations, expressing gratitude, and asking for help and guidance.

Third, “give thanks in all circumstances” (vs. 18a). Even when things don't go the way you hoped, you can find reasons to praise the Lord – the people who have been sent to lift you up or introduce you to Christ, for the things that could have happened but didn't, for the opportunity to be loved by someone who is no longer here and being loved by those who are still with you. We have blessings upon blessings to be grateful for.

We need to practice shifting our focus from worldly things that let us down to focus on the joy of the Lord. A current contemporary Christian song reminds us, no matter the highs or the lows, if the world didn't give you joy, then the world can't steal it away.

As you move through today, shift your focus from finding happiness in things and people to finding

praise and thankfulness in God. His plan is greater than anything you could comprehend. Look back on all He's done in your life; how can you reflect on His faithfulness and still not trust that He knows best? Choose to rejoice. Choose to pray. Choose to give thanks. Choose JOY "for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (vs. 18b).

Prayer

Jesus,

Help me to choose joy in every circumstance. No matter what I may face today, thank you for this gift. Thank you so much for blessing me today and always. You have never left me and for that I am grateful! I praise You! In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 21: JOY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MESS

By: Noah Townsend

Scripture Reading: Habakkuk 3:17-19

Let me ask you: Have you looked around and thought that you had nothing, or that nothing was going your way and asked God, why?

Even when life feels barren—when “the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines,” as Habakkuk 3:17 says, Habakkuk shows a deeper kind of thankfulness.

This gratitude isn’t rooted in circumstances but in the unchanging character of God. Habakkuk looks honestly at real loss and disappointment, yet he chooses to rejoice. We need to just take a look around our own situations... and notice the good and the bads.

His example shows us that thankfulness is not pretending everything is perfect, but trusting that God remains faithful even when nothing seems to be going our way.

In verses 18-19, Habakkuk stands firm, “yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation.” Now you’re asking yourself, how can this guy who does not have things going his way be so thankful. His joy rises not from what he has but

from who God is- his strength, his salvation, and the One who enables his feet to stand firm on high places.

If/when we practice thankfulness in the same way Habakkuk did, we will discover a powerful truth: gratitude anchors us. In every season—blossoming or barren—we can give thanks because God is always enough.

Prayer

Jesus,
Thank You for never changing. When everything around is, You remain constant. Constantly loving, forgiving, and chasing after me. I am in awe of Your grace and mercy. Thank You for being You! In you Name, Amen!

DAY 22: THE GREATEST LOVE STORY

By: Cara Joiner

Scripture Reading: John 3:16-17, 1 John 4:9-10

It's Advent Season!

I love hearing the Christmas Story each and every Christmas. It's a story that never grows old. It's the greatest love story that has ever been told. It's a story unlike any story we've ever read in a book or watched in the movie theater because in all of those stories we are just bystanders, we're observers; but in the Christmas story we are a part of the story. That may confuse you and leave you wondering what I'm talking about. You've seen the pictures of the Nativity, you've probably read and heard the story over and over again, but you've never seen yourself as part of the story. Let me show you what I'm talking about by showing you just a couple of Scriptures.

God did more than tell us that He loves us. He sent His Son to love us. He showed His love by sending His Son into the world to live and give His life for us; to reconcile us to God and, in turn, to one another. But each of us only sees through our own lens of understanding. When I say, "God loves us so much that He sent His Son," you automatically define love by what you have experienced if you've never learned about the love of God.

The word, “love,” for us, can stir warm feelings or very painful memories. We also use the word to describe how we feel about a broad range of subjects. I love ice cream, my dogs, chocolate, my family, my friends, and going on vacations. I don’t love all of them in the same way or to the same degree, but I love them all. You have your list as well.

We love those who love us, we love those things, experiences, or people that are enjoyable, but when we talk about God’s love we’re talking about a totally different kind of love. We can’t love someone the way the Lord loves us unless we first experience and begin to understand the deep, deep love God has for us. When we experience His undeserved love, it will radically change who we are willing to love and how we will love them.

Christmas is so much more than ribbons and bows. Underneath the big pile of boxes, torn wrapping paper, and toys, the greatest gift is the gift of love sent from Heaven, wrapped in a Baby who grew up to be the Gift of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

Prayer

Jesus,
Thank You for Your sacrifice! You gave up Your life for me, and I am in awe of this gift. I am so thankful for the freedom I have because of You. Help me to

share this love with those around me. Help me to see people the way that You see them. In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 23: GOD'S PERFECT TIMING

By: Jim Porter

Scripture Reading: Romans 5:6-8

It's Christmas time!

There are so many things which compete for our attention: family, friends, food, parties, shopping, cleaning, traveling. It can be overwhelming. The time is full of wonder, full of excitement, full of things to do and places to be. Maybe, just maybe we are stretching ourselves too thin, but it's Christmas time! We want everything to be perfect. As humans sometimes we get so involved we lose track of the TIME.

Our Scripture today tells us that our God has perfect timing. "At just the right time" Christ came and demonstrated God's love for us. Just when I was so lost, so ungodly, God took the time to come in the flesh.

Now is the TIME to pause and celebrate the birth of the Christ child. The TIME is about the child, the promised One. This powerless babe came and broke the power of sin and death. Now is the time for us to set aside the ordinary and spend time worshiping, admiring the Child that changed our lives.

Prayer

Jesus,

Thank You for Your perfect timing. When I feel rushed and overwhelmed, help me to slow down and remember that You are in control. Thank You for not always answering my prayers right away. I know it sounds crazy, but I admit it! You know just what I need and when I need it and You are never late! You care so much for me, and I praise You for that! In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 24: LOVE IN ACTION

By: Molly Joiner

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:4-13

Sometimes it's really hard to love people the way the Bible says we should. In 1 Corinthians 13:4-13, it says that love is patient and kind, that it doesn't get jealous or brag, and that it never gives up. But when my friends hurt my feelings or when someone gets more attention than me, I don't always feel like being loving. Still, God reminds me that real love is about action more than feelings. Jesus showed the best kind of love when He forgave people who didn't even like Him. When I remember that, it helps me try harder to be kind and forgiving.

This verse also says that love never fails. That means no matter what happens, God's love will always stay the same. I know I don't understand everything about life or faith, but I do know love is the most important thing. Someday all the other things we worry about will fade away, but love will last forever because God *is* love. I want to keep growing in that kind of love patient, strong, and real so that when people see me, they can see a little bit of Jesus shining through.

Prayer

Jesus,

Help me to love the way that You love. When I get angry or upset about something, give me wisdom to think before I speak. I want to show honor and give You glory in the way that I live and love. Thank You for your unfailing love. And for the kindness that You show me every day! May You receive all the glory! In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 25: SILENT LOVE

By: Sophia Jones

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-7

When we think about love, we often imagine something grand or glamorous, but the story of Jesus' birth reminds us that real love often appears silently. In Luke 2:1–7, God's perfect love arrived not in a palace, but in a manger. Mary and Joseph didn't have comfort or luxury, yet they carried the greatest gift the world would ever know. Love Himself was born into the simplest setting so that no one could ever say they were too far, too small, or too unworthy to receive Him.

I've learned that the more we draw close to Him, the more we start to feel and show that kind of love. When we're distant from God, it's easy to feel empty or disconnected but when we stay near Him, love naturally overflows into everything we do.

Advent reminds us to slow down and return to that source. Love is more than a feeling; it's a glimpse of Christ in our everyday lives. And just like Mary and Joseph, we get to carry that love wherever we go, into our friendships, our families, and even the small, ordinary moments of our day!

Prayer

Jesus,

Help me to live in such a way that when people see me, they see You! I know I am not perfect and I realize that I am so underserving of Your love and grace. Yet, You give me new mercies every morning! I am so thankful for all that You have blessed me with. Help me be a blessing to others for Your glory and not my own! In Your Name, Amen!

DAY 26: “WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR CHRISTMAS?”

By: Rob Johnston

Scripture Reading: Matthew 1:20-24

“What do you want for Christmas?”

How many times over the course of our lives have we been asked this question? Thinking back upon my own childhood, it seems that question didn’t even need to be asked before the arrival of the Sears Christmas Wish Book – 500 pages of glorious... EVERYTHING.

I remember my sister and I fighting over it, and also using it as a weapon itself at times. It really was spectacular. Held within those pages were so many Christmas wishes that would make my life so much better, more convenient, more fun, or more stylish. It was the book of ME.

Contrast my (or perhaps your own) experience in the run up to Christmas with that of Joseph:

- Due to circumstances out of his control, Joseph was in the unenviable position of receiving a gift he did not want on what would, ultimately, become the first Christmas.
- He wanted no part of it.

- The “gift” he’d be receiving would in no way shape, or form make his life better, more convenient, more fun, or more stylish (parents, I think we would all stack hands on 3 out of 4 of those).
- He was ready to divorce Mary, right up until he wasn’t.

The Lord has a habit of changing our hearts, should we be willing to hear what He has to say to us. In the case of Joseph, it was through an angel of the Lord that Joseph came to the realization that the gift that he was receiving, this Jesus, was not just for him. On what was, ultimately, the first Christmas, Joseph received a gift that was meant for him AND everybody else in the world.

Oh, how far we have come in the way we view Christmas gifts... Because what I want (and get) for Christmas is for me. What we desire for Christmas is generally for us.

But... What if this Christmas we were to ask for gifts that would be for the benefit of others? What if this Christmas we would ask for things that we could give away? What if we were to decide that Christmas isn’t about me, it’s about Jesus.. and asking Him what he’d like for HIS Birthday?

And if you’re wondering what on earth that could be... It would be to be in a healthy relationship with

you. With all of us. Because that's a gift FOR all of us, from the gift for all of us.

Prayer

Jesus,

Thank You for my relationship with You! Help me to stay consistent in reading Your Word and praying to You daily! I don't want to take things for granted all that You have blessed me with and help me in return bless others. Today, as I celebrate Your birth, I pray to never forget the true meaning of Christmas and You coming to Earth to save me! In Your Name, Amen!

