

ADVENT

OVERFLOW GATHERING



OUR PRAYER FOR YOU

Jesus, we pray for the souls reading this devotional for the next 31 days. We ask You to bless them, speak to them, and prepare them as we lead up to Christmas and the following year. This season is so much more than what the world makes it to be. This season is about Your birth, because without Your birth there would be no cross or resurrection. We would have never gotten the chance to truly live, be in Your presence, or have a relationship with You.

We're praying that You change lives, soften hearts, and open eyes to what truly matters this season. Let our hearts overflow with joy to the celebration of Your birth.

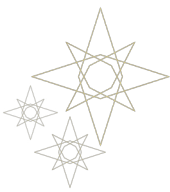
DAY 1

Advent is defined as the arrival of a notable person, thing, or event. This time of year is referred to as advent because it is noted as a season of preparation for Jesus' birth. The preparation for this season may not quite be what one would think when thinking of a preparation for an arrival. When you think of preparing for someone's arrival, you may think of people typically having family come in for the holidays. The receiving family's anticipation for their coming family's arrival increases as the time of the arrival gets closer and closer. As anticipation increases the family may arrange things in their lives differently for the convenience of their guests. In the same way this is how we should view the coming of the celebration of Jesus' birth.

Our preparation for Christmas should include a period of recollection of what Jesus has done for us, and a spiritual preparation that allows for time to draw closer in our relationships with Jesus. By doing this, we are allowing ourselves to become spiritually full, so that we may in turn give God the glory to the fullest of our ability. This includes giving Him glory by our actions, worship, prayers, giving, serving, and any other form of giving back to God. We can prepare ourselves for this period of extensive giving by being susceptible, or spiritually sensitive to God's commands, and allowing God to refine and refocus our hearts to His purpose.

Take this first day to think of 'spiritual holes' that may exist in your relationship with God (places in your relationship that could use improvement), and list some things you need to do to prepare yourself for the coming celebration of Jesus' birth.

Prayer: Jesus, I recognize that I may not be as spiritually ready as I think I am to celebrate Your birth and what You have done for me. I ask that you remove any callous that may be on my heart to this season, and help me to be spiritually sensitive to what You have to say to me. I know this process of refinement isn't going to be easy, but I know that You are worth it. You have done so much for me! Thank You Jesus! Prepare my heart for a time of giving back to You.



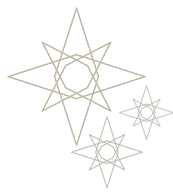
DAY 2

Scripture: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." -Isaiah 7:14

Overview: God spoke to His people through the prophet Isaiah. Dark times were upon Israel. She had defied God and was being judged. Israel had one lousy king after another, and her back was against the wall. But God wasn't done with them yet, Hezekiah would come, and for a time, Israel would successfully turn back to God. Isaiah 7 speaks of that promised child, Hezekiah, but like much of the Old Testament, there is a much deeper significance. Ultimately, there would only be one true Immanuel, literally translated 'God is with us', and that Immanuel is Jesus, truly and forever God with us.

Application: With hindsight it is clear to see what God intended, yet it was not clear to the religious leaders of Jesus' day. A part of it probably was that He was so HUMAN. So NORMAL and born of a carpenter, yet so unlike them. He walked among men because God had chosen that as His path. That path brought Him near to us, near enough to touch. Just as the people had a hard time believing that Jesus was in fact the Son of God; sometimes we have a hard time believing that Jesus is still with us today in the same way He was with the people back when He walked the earth. Jesus is just as much with us today in our hearts as He was then. Even more so now, because there is no physical limit to His presence!

Prayer: Thank you Father God for Your marvelous plans. You knew humanity would be doomed unless You made a way...and You made a perfect way. Jesus was the perfect pathway back to Your grace and Your love; back to the place of a relationship with You, which You had always desired for us. Help us to see you are always with us, even we don't feel like your there. Thank you Jesus for being God with us!



DAY 3

Scripture: "Early in the morning, as He was returning to the city, He was hungry. Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He went up to it and found nothing on it except leaves. And He said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" At once the fig tree withered. When the disciples saw it, they were amazed and said, "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" Jesus answered them, 'I assure you: If you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you tell this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' it will be done. And if you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.'" -Matthew 21:18-22

Overview: In Hebrews 11:1 faith is defined as the substance or reality of things hoped for and the evidence or proof of things not seen. And by this the ancestors gained God's approval by it. When we believe and don't doubt God's promises He will answer our God sized prayers in ways we could have never imagined, just like Jesus did with the fig tree. He is so big and we are so small, yet He loves us unconditionally and delights in answering our prayers so that He may be glorified. God gives us no reason to doubt his word, so take God up on his promise of answering our God sized prayers!

Application: Our God is such a big God! And He wants to answer our prayers. God says He delights in it! If you have ever found yourself feeling otherwise it is because of our lack of faith or trust in God. Jesus reminds us here that our prayers are directly proportional to our faith in Him. So when we pray we can't be afraid to pray God sized prayers! When we pray small self-conceivable prayers, we are not giving God room to show us how big He is, and in turn showing how little our faith in Him is. Has God not proven himself throughout history and in each day of our lives? Take a moment to think of all the moments God has proven himself to you throughout your life.

Prayer: God, thank You for all the times You have rescued me and proved Your self faithful to me when You had nothing to prove, because even when I am unfaithful You promise You are still faithful! Oh God, teach me to trust in Your promises and that You are truly never failing or unfaithful. Help me to trust in who You say You are, and believe that when You say it's done it is! Open my eyes to see that You delight in answering my prayers because it gives You glory. Help me to not be afraid to pray big prayers, because You are a BIG God and can more than handle my big prayers. Thank You for Your promise!



DAY 4

Scripture: "And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them." -Genesis 3:21

Overview: The first casualty (among many) of the fall in the garden. Now realizing they were naked, and feeling shame, God clothed them with garments of skin to replace their attempts to clothe themselves with leaves. An animal(s) had to die so that they could have what they needed, though they only needed it because they had sinned. Adam and Eve had literally just committed a world-changing sin, and God was just as interested and motivated to provide for them as He had been before the trouble. However, their sin was not without cost, and this was just the beginning of the price tag.

Application: God constantly takes care of us when we don't deserve it. This makes God our ultimate parent. Our parents in this life how great, or not great, they may have been are no comparison to how God treats us every day. He wants to take care of our needs, it gives Him glory when we look to Him for our needs. Let your needs be known to God today.

Prayer: Father, I praise You! You are patient and ever-merciful with us and our messes. I praise You because You do not treat us as we deserve, that You do not treat us as we tend to treat others. I praise You because You are quick to forgive and that no matter what we have done You still only want what is best for us.



DAY 5

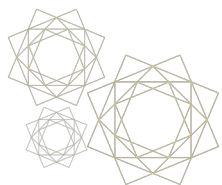
Scripture: "May the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; may the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."
- Numbers 6:24-26

Overview: The Lord gives instructions to Moses, Aaron, and the priests on how to properly to bless the people of the community in Israel.

Application: This is a prayer that most of us who have been in the church for a while have heard several times and maybe have even memorized. When you hear phrases or words over and over again, sometimes they seem to lose meaning. For some reason your brain just stops listening to the message behind the words. I think it is important to re-evaluate verses you've heard a lot and try to elicit the rudimental meaning.

To wish that someone be blessed seems very basic. We say it automatically when someone sneezes! But when you read about people being blessed in the Bible, it is a BIG deal! When Jesus or Moses or Jacob blessed people, it literally changed the course of that person's and their future generation's lives! Truly blessing someone is POWERFUL! Additionally, to pray for the Lord to keep you signifies His unfailing protection over your life. The next two phrases of the verse mirror each other, but are equally important. The Lord is light and love and full of mercy and grace, and we as His church should strive to be those things too in order to bless others. So by being blessed by God, not only does it change the projection of your life, but it can also change the course of others' lives who encounter you. People who come into your path may see and be attracted to the warm light shining through you and may come to know the True peace of God as a result!

Prayer: Thank You Lord for Your continued blessings on my life. I desire to continue learning about You and what Your will is for my life. I forever want Your face toward me and for You to give me peace no matter what the circumstances of my life may be. I feel Your light surrounding me, and I know You care for me very much. I love you more than life, and I hope to continue to grow my relationship with You.



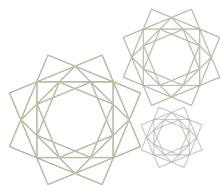
DAY 6

Scripture: “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts. -Malachi 3:1

Overview: Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets to speak to Israel before God fell silent for over 400 years. Even after centuries of disappointing human performances, God still had a plan, and He wanted His people to be aware of His plan. He would send a messenger in Jesus’ time who was John the Baptist. And John would begin the process of preparing the way and the people for the soon-coming Christ.

Application: The people of God had completely turned their face from Him, and He still made a way for them to come back to Him. He let them know that He wasn’t forsaking them and that the Messiah was coming. God makes us aware today by His word. If we aren’t in His word everyday and seeking out what He has to say to us, we are deceiving ourselves and in rebellion against God by ignoring what He has for us in our day to day lives.

Prayer: Lord, we as humans, as You have pointed out, are exceptionally wicked. We often deceive and are deceived. But You do not want us to be unaware. Your delight is in our recognition of You as Lord of our life, and seeking what You want for our life. Help us to look to Your word for our guidance. Thank you for relentlessly pursuing us, even through the halls of history and on into eternity.



DAY 7

Scripture: "Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us. We are pressured in every way but not crushed; we are perplexed but not in despair; we are persecuted but not abandoned; we are struck down but not destroyed. We always carry the death of Jesus in our body, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who live are always given over to death because of Jesus, so that Jesus' life may also be revealed in our mortal flesh."

"We know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and present us with you. Indeed, everything is for your benefit, so that grace, extended through more and more people, may cause thanksgiving to increase to God's glory. Therefore, we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." -2 Corinthians 4:7-11,14-18

Overview: God gave us this extraordinary power, this treasure which is the Holy Spirit living in us. He set this amazing treasure in us, a clay vessel, so that by Him we are made new. He placed something as awesome as the Holy Spirit inside of us so that as clay vessels we wouldn't be empowered by ourselves but by His glory in us. Just as a potter presses and kneads his clay to make it into something special, God presses in us and molds us into the vessel he needs us to be to carry His treasure throughout the world. This process is painful, but in the end we will be a vessel God can use for His glory.

Application: To be the vessel God needs us to be; we have to be willing to die to our own desires, hopes, and dreams for our lives every day. By laying ourselves down, Jesus is revealed to others because He is able to shine through. Because of this undeserving honor of getting to be His vessel to the world, we can't give up! No matter how hard the process is, God is refining us into His special vessel that has a purpose. The purpose of letting that treasure shine through us, so that the life that is in His death will be revealed to the dead. So keep looking up, and don't let the things of this world distract you from letting His light shine through to all we encounter.

Prayer: God, I can't believe You would use someone like me to show the world who You are! I am so undeserving and under-qualified, but I accept that You still want to use me, and want to show others who You are through me. Help me to submit myself to You everyday so that Your work can be done through me. Help me lay down my desires and my wants and replace them with Yours. I know this process is not easy and can be painful, but I can see You are so worth it! Thank You for laying down everything so that I could be Your vessel and be a part of what You have planned.



DAY 8

Scripture: "He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God." -1 Peter 1:20-21

Overview: Nothing about humanity has taken God by surprise. Before humanity ever fell, God had already made a plan for our redemption. Throughout the Old Testament humans made sacrifices to God of animals whose blood was shed to pay for their sins. Jesus, however, was chosen by God to be the perfect and once-and-for-all sacrifice. He paid our sin debt. He made a way back to the Father.

Application: Could you imagine if we still had to do sacrifices today to atone for our sins? Sometimes we lose the gravity of Jesus' sacrifice, and what He did for us. We tend to think it was no big deal for Jesus to sacrifice Himself, that because he was God in flesh He didn't feel pain, suffering, or experience the emotional pain that we feel today. But God, loved us so much He willing went through everything we have to go through, and so much more.

Prayer: Father, I praise You for Your wondrous ways. Thank You for atoning for my sin once and for all. Thank you for coming down and suffering with and for us. Help me to be willing to sacrifice for You, because You sacrificed so much for me. I praise You for never giving up on us, even in times when we give up on You. I praise You for Your amazing patience and love for us.



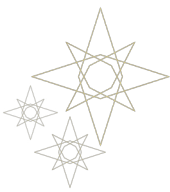
DAY 9

Scripture: "For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly. For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us! Much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by His blood, we will be saved through Him from wrath. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life!" -Romans 5:6-10

Overview: He did this amazing act of love without a second thought so that we would have the opportunity to be with Him, and have a relationship with Him. God has already forgiven our sin on the cross! Jesus isn't afraid of getting dirty to wash away our sin. Because of Him our sin no longer holds us back from meeting with God! God wants us to be close to Him! He loves us more than any parent could ever love their child or any spouse could love their other half. God is the ultimate form of love, so much that He kicked open the gated of hell and defeated all opposers. All just so we could be with Him.

Application: One of the most beautiful things about the cross is that God loved us in our sin, through the dirt of our lives. Think of the worst thing that you have ever done, or the worst thing you may ever do, God still loves us despite knowing these moments. He loved us so much that was willing to give himself up and be tortured, beaten, and died in the worst form of death ever created in the world. All for us. This kind of love can seem so unreal to us, because God's love is so much bigger than the idea of love we have. This sometimes causes us to doubt that this love even exists, but God still loves us just as much knowing that we may have these doubts.

Prayer: God, sometimes Your love seems so unreal to me. I'm sorry for any of the times I've ever doubted Your love for me. Thank You for loving me with such intensity even when I can't bare to love myself. Thank You for showing me what true love is like through Jesus, a love that exceeds all expectations and parameters, and breaks down every wall I may have in my heart. Please keep breaking down those walls I have, and help me to be sensitive to You, Your word, and Your love. So that I may be able to show that same kind of love to people I encounter, and point them to You.



DAY 10

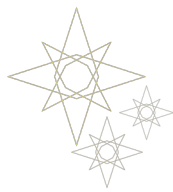
Scripture: And the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat. All the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel." -Genesis 3:14-15

Overview: The fall. The devil tempted Eve into losing paradise by choosing what looked good to her. With all of Eden, the only thing out of grasp was the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil....and she already had all the good, but it LOOKED good. The way something looks can be deceiving. The devil got her to wonder whether or not God's plan was good, whether she would just be happier doing it her way....and the rest, as they say, is history.

But God warned the devil way back then that it wasn't over. He would have control over a lot, and for a long time, but only God is completely in control and God was in complete control of this decision too. Satan would be opposed to Jesus; and Jesus would be opposed to him. Satan would arrange things to try to destroy Him, ultimately even nailing Him to a tree, but even in that, God was in control, and it was that same tree that defeated Satan once and for all.

Application: Have you ever done something in your life that seemed good at the time but later on came to realize that it was a big mistake? Those moments are why it's so important to listen to God's plan, even when it seems like our plan is better. When we look in His word and know what He wants for our lives we are able to follow out His plan, even when that plan is trusting that we are not in control and that He knows best.

Prayer: Father, I am thankful that You alone are in control of all things and that You always have been. Although many times my life seems completely out of control, I can rest in You and Your promises. Help me to look to you in all aspects of my life.



DAY 11

Scripture: "The greatest among you must be a servant. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."- Matthew 23:11-12

Overview: Jesus is teaching the crowds and the disciples various truths. He criticizes the Pharisees and the religious leaders of this time for how unattainable they've made a relationship with God seem. He tells the people how God REALLY is and how He loves and desires a relationship with us all. In this verse He makes it clear that in order to inherit the Kingdom, you must have a servant's heart and humble yourself.

Application: A lot of people, similarly to the Pharisees, have this mixed up. They think that they should be exalted for their great efforts they make in following the Law. While following the Law is important, when you are doing it to make yourself look or seem higher or better than others, that is completely missing the point and not pleasing God. The whole purpose of the Law was to acknowledge that you do mess up, and only a relationship with God can make you right. It wasn't to pretend you had it all together so you didn't need God to forgive you. Your own abilities, good or bad, can't make you holy or righteous. Only a relationship with God can do that! In this Christmas season, it is important to remember as a church that we should remain humble and thankful for all that God has done for us and our loved ones. We must be servants and look for ways we can bless others and bring them to know Jesus. It is easy to feel entitled to things in the society we live in, but we should remember that we are entitled to absolutely nothing in this world. We don't get to judge who gets to come to know Christ. We should share that news with everyone and let God work in their life how He wants to. God doesn't judge us by our works alone, He also desires obedience and a relationship with Him. We will never measure up, but that is why we must be humble and surrender to walking with Jesus! He made sure we had a way to have a relationship with God that would never be broken. We were not entitled to it, we were freely given it by an ultimate sacrifice. Jesus humbled himself for us and because of that He will be exalted forever!

Prayer: Lord, help us look for ways to bless others. We are Your servants who want to wholly surrender to You. The world likes to trick us and make us believe Your love is conditional based on our works, but that is a lie. Nothing can separate us from Your love. Help us model Jesus, the ultimate servant, in our lives. We want to be servants in Your Kingdom and to bring others to know You. Thank You so much for Jesus and all that He has done for us!



DAY 12

Scripture: "For we know that if our temporary, earthly dwelling is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal dwelling in the heavens, not made with hands. Indeed, we groan in this body, desiring to put on our dwelling from heaven, since, when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. Indeed, we groan while we are in this tent, burdened as we are, because we do not want to be unclothed but clothed, so that mortality may be swallowed up by life. And the One who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a down payment." -2 Corinthians 5:1-5

Overview: Jesus is returning as a fierce king, not as a baby in a manger. He has defeated sin, death, and hell so we can live! He has won the victory and is coming back to take us home! We should be anxious for his return, not living in fear of death. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment." Fear does not come from God, because of what He did for us there is no fear in death. In fact, we should be longing for the day that we can meet our Savior face to face, and experience his resurrection power. When Jesus left to prepare a home for us He gave us the Holy Spirit as a comforter, to know that He is with us in this body. This body wasn't meant to be permanent, yet we spend our whole lives trying to glorify this body and keeping it comfortable. Jesus has called us into so much more than the daily grind we call life, He has called us into living life more abundantly. Living for His will and not our own, to live our lives with the sole purpose of sharing His story with everyone we can before this tent we are in is taken down.

Application: God has so much more in store for us after this life, more than we could ever imagine. Think of a moment in your life where you experienced the most overwhelming presence of God. Now let it sink in, that moment is only a small fraction of the God that we are going to experience once this body is gone. We will be worshiping before the most glorious sight our eyes have ever known, our beautiful holy Savior. This gift is all because of Him, and His love for us.

Prayer: Thank You Jesus for this precious gift You have given to me! Knowing one day that I will be standing in Your presence, I can't even fathom what that would be like, but I feel my spirit groaning for it! Thank You for the gift of Your Holy Spirit that lives in me, and let's me feel your presence everyday while I'm on this earth. Help me to be aware of this fact and live the life of 'more abundant' that You have called me to live. Help me to know fear doesn't come from You and to live each day boldly for You.



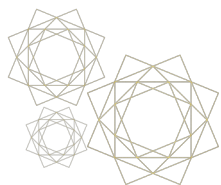
DAY 13

Scripture: "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." -2 Samuel 7:12-13

Overview: In this scripture God was speaking to David through Nathan. David had said he wanted to build a temple for God to dwell in, and God promises David an enduring kingdom. The promise is only partially fulfilled by David's son Solomon. Although Solomon did reign after David, and did build the temple for God, this promise was only fully fulfilled in Jesus, the eternal Heir to the throne of David. God was relentlessly putting the pieces into play for His plan. Israel's first king was Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin. However, God had chosen Judah as the eternal tribe, the tribe the Messiah would come from. God took the kingdom away from Saul and gave it to David, a man God described as 'after His own heart'.

Application: Why did God choose David, was he better than us? Purer? More righteous? Hardly, David was an adulterer and a murderer. So why did God love him so and call him a man after His own heart? Because he LOVED God fully, completely, and without wavering. God has loved us far beyond we can even understand or grasp. All He wants is for us to love Him back. What are some ways you can show God you love Him?

Prayer: Father, I know that I am nothing but dirt and water, mud, in Your sight without the blood of Jesus washing over me. Only in Him do I have anything of worth or value. Yet You sought me out. You pursued me and drew me to You. You loved me WAY before I ever loved You. Let my love for You be a force so strong within me that people recall that about me years after I am gone. I wasn't perfect when You found me, and I am not perfect now, but I am in love with You. Help me to show that love to You, others, and fulfill Your perfect plan.



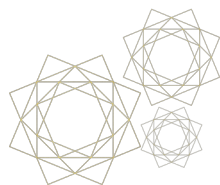
DAY 14

Scripture: "What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He did not even spare His own Son but offered Him up for us all; how will He not also with Him grant us everything? Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the One who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the One who died, but even more, has been raised; He also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: Because of You we are being put to death all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than victorious through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that not even death or life, angels or rulers, things present or things to come, hostile powers, height or depth, or any other created thing will have the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" -Romans 8:31-39

Overview: Paul lets us know God IS for us, and because He is for us, He gave everything He had so He could be in a relationship with us. God gave us Jesus, and if He gave us His only Son, is there anything He wouldn't hold back from us? Jesus bridged that humongous gap between God and man. A gap no matter how much all humanity tried, could never get close to filling. What an amazing gift God has given us in Jesus! His love is perfect, because it is so perfect there is nothing that can come against it, no amount of sin, or even ourselves can separate us from His love. This victory we have that Paul addresses, is from having His love in our life, because of nothing being able to separate us from this love there is nothing we should fear, not even death itself.

Application: So many times we as Christians let the world affect our attitude and outlook on life. If something doesn't go our way we have a bad day, we usually effects our attitude and outlook on life for that day. But Paul tells us no matter what we face in our days here, we have a reason to be joyful and have victory because we have Jesus' love in our life and it out weighs all bad. Sometimes I let myself get so caught up in my days that I forget to live in Jesus' victory, and because I'm not living in his victory I find myself letting so many things that don't eternally matter steal my joy. What are some things in your life you find stealing your joy? Do they eternally matter, and do you let them outweigh Jesus' love for you?

Prayer: Father, thank You that you ARE for me, thank You for giving all You had so that I could have a relationship with You, and help me to not take that for granted. Help me to live my days in Your victory because of Your unfailing love for me. I'm sorry I let so many things from this world steal my joy. Help me to see that my joy should be Yours alone, and I shouldn't let these things affect me because I have You love, and You are for me, and that's all I truly need. Thank You for giving Your Son so I could live in your victory. Thank You for being such a good father and caring for my needs.



DAY 15

Scripture: "I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears... The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." -Psalms 34:4,18

Overview: This is a psalm from David when God had rescued him. He praises the Lord throughout this psalm explaining how terrified he was and how God remained close to him especially when he felt defeated. God delivered him from his struggles and healed his broken heart.

Application: Christmas isn't always the happiest time for a lot of people. Whether due to death or divorce or not having enough money to provide a magical Christmas, it isn't always as joyful as the commercials make it out to be. That is the problem though: joy can't be bought or provided by worldly things. True joy can only come from the One Living God! There is hope in Jesus Christ, that is what Christmas is REALLY about. God's love coming in the form of a small baby to bring hope and joy to a lonely and broken world. He will deliver us from all our fears and while we are hurting, He is near to us and will heal our broken hearts. The type of joy He brings lasts forever! If you are struggling to feel joyful this holiday season, focus on the One who can bring you everlasting joy! Cry out to Him and feel His presence come near to you! The Holy Spirit will fill you with the greatest peace that can only be described as heavenly!

Prayer: Lord, I know there are those who struggle during the holiday season. I ask that You be with them during this time. I pray they draw near to You and rely on You for joy. This world likes to make us think it can provide us with joy, but it is all an illusion. Only You can bring everlasting joy! Help us look to You because You say that You are near to the broken-hearted and that You will saved those crushed in spirit. Thank You for being such a loving good Father to us!



DAY 16

Scripture: Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." -Genesis 12:1-3

Overview: Thousands of years before Jesus' birth, and before Israel was a nation, before Abram had even had a son, God promised him that in him all of the families of the earth will be blessed.

Through Jesus that has been made manifest. Abraham was the father of the Jewish people, and Jesus' earthly lineage began with him. Abraham was old, and married to a barren woman, and despaired of ever being a father, let alone being a blessing to anyone else....But God.

So many of the very best stories include a "But God".

Abraham believed God, and God blessed him, just like He said He would. We now, too, are also the spiritual children of Abraham, and we are richly blessed through our relationship with Christ.

Application: Abraham trusted God with what seemed as the impossible. We tend to have trouble trusting God with even the smallest things, let alone the seemingly impossible things. Think of some things you have been struggling to trust God with. Now give those over to God one by one and believe like Abraham, and trust that He will turn those things over for His glory! When Abraham trusted God it wasn't a beautiful picture all the time, sometimes trusting God hurts, but believe and trust God and He will use you as a blessing just as He did Abraham.

Prayer: Father God, I know that faith means much to You. Your word is full of proof of that truth. I don't want to have "grain of mustard seed" faith, I want to have life-changing, earth-moving faith. Grow that faith in me, for all good things come from Your hand. Thank you for all the many blessings in my life, including the ability to study and be humbled by Your living word.



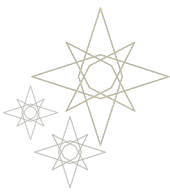
DAY 17

Scripture: "Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops; they have laid siege against us; with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek. But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." -Micah 5:1-2

Overview: More than 700 years before Jesus was born, God spoke through the prophet Micah, telling of a momentous occasion for the tiny Judean town of Bethlehem, the town of David. That One would emerge from her to be a ruler from and for God. God had a plan for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem long before the event ever took place. Clues of His coming are spread throughout the Old Testament, passed along to those who were educated, and interested in God's plan. These facts would have pointed a clear path to Jesus if anyone was looking for God's Messiah and not one of their own choosing, who would fit in with their plan.

Application: We question now, How could they MISS it? Everything was pointing to Jesus! We say that, but don't stop to think how many times we missed it before we saw Jesus for the first time. Just as some miss it still, even some who sit in a church every Sunday. All because Jesus doesn't fit in their box. He was not who they expected or wanted, and so they refuse to acknowledge Him. However, God doesn't need our permission to be who He wants to! It is up to US to step into HIS plan.

Prayer: Father, I don't want to miss it. For years I knew of You, but I didn't know YOU. I owe you everything! My life, my breath, my salvation, my future, my everything! Help me not to be delusional in what I think my life should look like, and instead focus my eyes on You, the Author and Finisher of my faith!



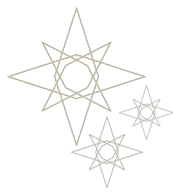
DAY 18

Scripture: "He was in the world, and the world was created through Him, yet the world did not recognize Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God. The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." - John 1:10-14

Overview: Jesus could have come into this world as anyone He wanted to. Instead of coming as a mighty king or a great warrior, Jesus came into this world holding back all power to be able to save and relate to us. He was born into a poor family, birthed in a stable, and laid in a feeding trough so that He could experience being completely human, and not suffer FOR us but WITH us. He did this so that He could be completely perfect in the way that we never could, and become the ultimate sacrifice to save us.

Application: We tend to think that Jesus wasn't really human, that he didn't experience the hardships and pain of humanity because He was God. However, we see that He was and wanted to be, so that He could empathize with us and share the burdens and feelings of this world. That way when we're facing the storms and struggling in this life, we know that we have a loving Savior that understands our mess and is on our side. Our God isn't a faraway God, He isn't afraid of our sin. We have been given this gift to be called his children and given the grace that forgives the unforgivable.

Prayer: Jesus, Thank You for caring and loving me even when I shoved that love back in your face by rejecting You. Thank You for coming down from Your rightful throne to suffer through this world. Remind me that when I feel rejected you were rejected by all to the point of dying on a cross, and when I feel alone that You left heaven so that you could be with me. Thank You God for giving me a right to be called your child when I didn't deserve it. Help me to remember You through all my struggles and what You went through so that You could be with me through those struggles.



DAY 19

Scripture: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the people."

-Genesis 49:10

Overview: These words were spoken by Jacob (Israel) as he was preparing for his death and was giving prophecies concerning his sons. Judah was not his firstborn, nor the firstborn of the beloved wife. But GOD had ordained that the tribe of Judah would be the line which would bear the Messiah. This fact was confirmed thousands of years in the future from the point where these words were spoken.

Application: God uses unremarkable people for his remarkable work constantly. Many people in the bible God chooses to use aren't usually people we would have picked to fulfill His promises. This shows that God can still use us to fulfill His promises if we let Him. We have to be willing blank vessels for God to display His glory through.

Prayer: Father, I am frequently surprised or startled by things in this world. But NOTHING surprises You. Ever. You are in complete and sovereign control of all things, and You have been working out Your plan since the very creation of the world. I accept that Your plan even includes me! Help me to empty myself so that You can fill me. I give You my praise and in You I place my trust.



DAY 20

Scripture: "In that wonderful day you will sing: 'Thank the Lord! Praise His name! Tell the nations what He has done. Let them know how mighty He is! Sing to the Lord, for He has done wonderful things. Make known his praise around the world. Let all the people of Jerusalem shout His praise with joy! For great is the Holy One of Israel who lives among you.'" - Isaiah 12:4-6

Overview: Isaiah speaks of the joy that is to come to the world! The Prince of Peace is on His way! It will be such a joyous moment in all of history that we will forever continue to sing and praise the Lord for this gift He has given to us.

Application: This verse reminds me of the little Christmas song "Go Tell it on the Mountain" that I used to sing as a child. The birth of Christ brings hope to a fallen world, the King has come and He is here to set all things right! I think the greatest part of this verse is the promise that not only will the Messiah come, He will stay and live among us! That is something that I want to share with everyone so they get the possibility of sharing in that joy too!

Prayer: Lord, what an amazing Christmas gift of ultimate joy You've blessed us with! Thank You for sending Your Son to set all things right. This world can be so sad and awful sometimes, but You've given us the only hope in this fallen world. I am so thankful that no matter what the circumstance, I can cling to Your promise that Jesus lives among us!



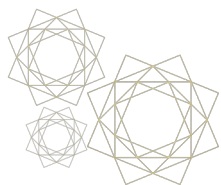
DAY 21

Scripture: "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them." -Isaiah 9:2

Overview: Again God is speaking to His people through His prophet Isaiah. The people are in a desperate place, and Isaiah literally spoke God's messages to them, but His messages to Isaiah were recorded to minister to those who would be reading them during the exile which was much closer to them than the birth of the Messiah. They were truly in a dark place: idolatry, temple destroyed, in captivity in a faraway land, banished from their homeland because of their relentless sin...but God wanted them to know they were NOT forgotten. A great light was coming. And for those who would choose to remain faithful to Him, an eventual release from captivity.

Application: Not only a light for the people living in darkness then, but also in the future, a bright light for all who would come to it: the light of salvation through Jesus. He has released us from our captivity just as He did for His people. Now that we are free in the light of salvation, God calls us to be the light of the world because the light of men lives in us!

Prayer: Father, you have called us to be lights in a dark world. You have called us to stand out and be noticed. You have warned us not to "fit in". Your plan for humanity involves US. Your plan is for us to display Your love and Your light that others might be drawn to You! Thank You that You include us in Your plan for the world. I am sorry for how often I am sidetracked by my own agenda, by my own plans, and being 'too busy'. I praise and thank You Lord that You are never too busy for me, and I ask that You speak to my spirit so that I dare not choose to be too busy for You. I know that Your love is the best and brightest thing in my life....help me to share that with others.



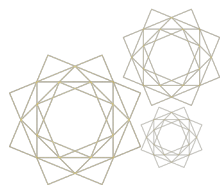
DAY 22

Scripture: "I baptize you with water for repentance, but the One who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove His sandals. He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing shovel is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn. But the chaff He will burn up with fire that never goes out." - Matthew 3:11-12

Overview: John the Baptist was a man behind the scenes in the coming of Jesus. Before he was even born, God had a divine plan for his life, that he would pave the way for Jesus' coming and ready the hearts of the people who stopped to listen to his teaching of repentance. God had given John a platform to lift the name of Jesus, to push others in the direction that Jesus was coming to lead them in. John had realized this big picture, that the Messiah was coming to cleanse our hearts and change the relationship between God and man. He realized that it wasn't about rituals, religion, and who your ancestors were. God revealed to John that He wanted a relationship with man, and that we were created for this relationship. He wants to be with us and sees us as valuable.

Application: Just as God gave John a platform, He gives us a platform to choose to humble ourselves and lift up the same name of Jesus. We all are not worthy, because it's not about us or who we are, it's about who God is. He is the story, we just got to be a small part in it. Jesus is coming back as the mighty king not a baby in a manger. We need to be like John here and proclaim His name as loud as we can! And let the world know that there IS an amazing loving God who cares so deeply for us! How can we go day after day and keep this amazing truth of the gospel to ourselves? Especially when there is a world starving for His love!

Prayer: Oh Jesus, You are so amazing powerful! Thank You for seeing me as a valuable asset to your plan. Give me Your heart for the people that I encounter everyday that are starving for You. Help my heart to be burdened for them like You are. Don't let me pass by another person in my life who needs You and not tell them about You. God, thank You for Your amazing grace! I am so undeserving of the love and blessings you shower me with everyday! Help me to extend that same amazing love and blessings to others I encounter.



DAY 23

Scripture: "So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them." - Luke 2:4-7

Overview: Mary, still obedient to God's plan for her life, goes to Bethlehem with Joseph, 90 miles, even though she is hugely pregnant. God's plan, of course, was for the Holy child to be born in Bethlehem, as the scriptures had proclaimed. Probably all she knew was that Bethlehem was a long way to walk. She knew she was pregnant by a supernatural act of God, but that didn't stop her from feeling uncomfortable or afraid, as any teenager on a long trip would be. Far from her family, far from all she knew, and being obedient to God.

Then, upon arriving in Bethlehem, she goes into labor. And there was no place to go. (And we want to think we are having a hard day...) They wind up in an animal stall because at least that afforded a tiny bit of privacy. And the very Son of God was born there. I cannot even imagine how she must have felt. How could THIS have been God's plan. Yet it was.

Application: Think of some moments in your life when you felt like everything was going wrong and 'how could any of this be a part of God's plan?'. Knowing now the outcome of those circumstances, can you see how it was God's plan all along? We are so quick to question and slow to trust, God wants us to be the opposite, and trust that He knows what He's doing and that His ways are higher.

Prayer: Father, I pray that I grow to have faith that can just accept my circumstances, however uncomfortable or unlikely, and just trust that You have a plan. You were with Mary that night in her pain and in her fear. She may have felt alone, but she was exactly where she was meant to be in Your perfect plan. Help me to rest in the peace of fully trusting You and Your plans for me.



DAY 24

Scripture: "It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three, because the sun's light failed. The curtain of the sanctuary was split down the middle. And Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into Your hands I entrust My spirit." Saying this, He breathed His last. When the centurion saw what happened, he began to glorify God, saying, "This man really was righteous!" All the crowds that had gathered for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, went home, striking their chests." - Luke 23:44-47

"Jesus shouted again with a loud voice and gave up His spirit. Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was split in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked and the rocks were split. The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And they came out of the tombs after His resurrection, entered the holy city, and appeared to many. When the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, "This man really was God's Son!" - Matthew 27:50-54

Overview: The entire wrath of God was emptied out onto Jesus. The wrath that was meant for us. Jesus did nothing to deserve this, but in His great love he willingly gave himself, to take our place, and to take the wrath that was rightfully ours. In this moment Jesus joined the hands of God and man. The thick curtain that separated us from God was ripped from top to bottom! God took our punishment on himself and made a way for us to be together! God is no longer off limits to us. This sacrifice was the ultimate form of love God could show us. Our powerful God willingly chose to take our place because He knew we couldn't do it. Only He could, He closed the gap between God and man. He made a way!

Application: Wow! What a beautiful moment in history, truly the perfect picture of the unconditional love Jesus has for us. Without Him we are nothing, but through His love we are saved! This scripture really recognizes what He did for us so that we could have a relationship with Him. There is no obstacle that stands in our way with God on our side. Through this act of love He proved He is for us, and through Him we are more than conquerors! We are victors already on the winning side, and nothing can stand in the way of His love for us! He went through so much, all so we could be back in God's presence. Knowing this, how many times do we lose the intensity of what this moment in history really means? No one in history before this moment had been able to come into the presence of God like we can now. Yet, so often we want everything else in this world but that presence He gave His life for.

Prayer: Oh Jesus, thank You for literally going through hell for me. I'm sorry I lose the wonder of what You did for me. I'm sorry I take Your grace for granted, and want so many other things than what You died to give me. Help me to see that the things this world has to offer are only temporary and have no purpose or meaning. Show me more of the things that You died to give me, and help me live in those things everyday. Jesus thank You for loving a filthy heart like mine, and bringing me into a relationship with You. Please, help me further that relationship and be about Your purpose.



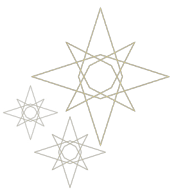
DAY 25

Scripture: "And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.'" - Luke 2:8-14

Overview: While Mary and Joseph were pondering this new turn in their circumstances, God was still at work. The Messiah was here! The time had finally come! Hundreds of years of prophecies have been fulfilled! And the first ones to hear the news were shepherds in a nearby field. Astounded, they lost no time in getting into Bethlehem to find the newborn King. At the arrival of the visitors Mary and Joseph must have been amazed indeed. How had they known? How had they heard? And then the shepherds told them that ANGELS had told them! (And they told others too! A most unlikely band of evangelists!) Mary, however, treasured up all of these words and pondered them in her heart. Everything the angel had first told her was all falling into place. She probably did not feel worthy. She probably did not feel ready. But the biggest, most important, chapter in history was unfolding all around her!

Application: It's so amazing to think that our Savior was once a tiny baby! However, when Jesus comes again it will be as the lion of Judah and a coming King! All of creation is still longing for His return. As we worship Jesus this Christmas, let's not forget that He is coming back for us, and that He has a huge plan that is unfolding, and we are a part of that plan.

Prayer: Father, Your ways are higher than ours. Your thoughts are higher than ours. Your plans seem to make no sense at times, but we can only see a tiny piece of the whole plan. Throughout all eternity You have relentlessly worked to bring fallen humanity back to You. Help us to be ready for when You come back for us, and bring us back to You forever. Thank You for Your perfect plan and Your perfect Son. Thank You for loving us with a sacrificial love.



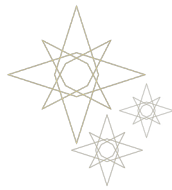
DAY 26

Scripture: "The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.' Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever, his kingdom will never end.'" -Luke 1:28-33

Overview: The birth of John the Baptist is foretold, followed by the foretelling of the birth of Jesus. An angel comes to greet Mary who is just a teenager at this point. She is instantly filled with fear when the angel comes to her. The angel tells her not to fear because she is beloved by God, and He has selected her for this magnificent purpose. She is to become pregnant with a son and she is to call him Jesus. The meaning of the name Jesus is "the Lord saves." Jesus will be called the Son of the Most High which explicitly identifies Jesus as unique and exalted! This verse alludes to Isaiah 32:15 which predicts that God will restore His people through the line of Jacob and David.

Application: I can only imagine the terror Mary felt being greeted by an angel and then being told she would have a son. In the culture of that day, to have a child without being married would have been a great dishonor. In most cases they would even be stoned to death. Fortunately, God had everything set up to work out perfectly. How brave Mary is! I hope that when God reveals to me my purpose that I am just as brave and will completely obey. Mary had no clue at first how God was going to work everything out, but she chose to trust and believe in Him anyway. He is a faithful Father!

Prayer: God, You are a good, good Father! I am constantly amazed in Your power and glory. Thank You for Your Son Jesus who did come to restore His people and the world! When I am filled with fear, help me look to You and know that You will work everything out to my good! Help me to be brave in fulfilling the plans You have for me. You have found favor in us and love us more than we know. Everyone can fulfill their magnificent purpose if only they choose to trust and believe in You!



DAY 27

Scripture: “After hearing the king, they went on their way. And there it was—the star they had seen in the east! It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed beyond measure. 11 Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and falling to their knees, they worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.” -Matthew 2:9-12

Overview: These wise men who were lead to Jesus during this time, were widely known for their study of the stars. In fact they worshipped the stars, practicing what we know today as astronomy as their religion. These wise men were sinners, men who were from the east and not a part of the people of God. Men would not be expected by anyone to believe in the Messiah's coming. But God made a way for them to meet Jesus, just as God has made a way for us all to meet Jesus. When these grown men saw this toddler, they fell on their face at His feet and worshipped Him. These sinners who had no hope, saw the Son of God and He was enough for them!

Application: How much more should we worship God after getting to have a relationship with Him every day! This is how we are supposed to react when we meet with Jesus, when our hearts are so overwhelmed with joy to the point where we can't contain it all because we've seen Him. Our Savior deserves so much more than showing up on a Sunday, or raising your hands once in a while. Our God is the creator of the universe and He cared for us enough to send Jesus to save us! We should worship Him with everything we've got and not hold back, because He hasn't held anything back from us, He gave it all to be our Savior. No matter who we are or what we've done God has given us the greatest Christmas gift of all in Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, I'm sorry I don't show You the kind of worship you deserve. Help me to not care what other people think when I worship You, teach me how to surrender my heart completely to You in worship and to just focus on You. Help me to see Yours is the only opinion of me that matters. Thank You for even giving me admission into Your presence, and removing the veil so that I can just come into Your presence anytime. You are so amazing! So beautiful! Bring my heart into full amazement of who You are!



DAY 28

Scripture: But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." Mary asked the angel, "How can this be, since I have not been intimate with a man?" - Luke 1:30-34

Overview: How overwhelming this must have been for a young girl. Mary thought she knew where her life was going. She was still living at home, being a good girl. She was engaged to be married. She had a life plan. And then, in steps an angel. Yet she doesn't doubt, doesn't complain, doesn't refuse. Mary answers "I am the Lord's servant, may your word to me be fulfilled." She doesn't even say "But please give my Dad this memo because he is going to be all undone." God had told Isaiah hundreds of years before that a virgin would bear a son, and now here He comes!

However, a few verses earlier the angel Gabriel also visits Zechariah, who is professing John the baptist's birth. His response is much different than Mary's, "How can I know this?" Zechariah asked the angel. "For I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years." The difference here is asking 'How can I know this?'

Application: If we were faced with the same situation Mary was in would we be so accepting of what was happening? How many times has God asked us to do something, or told us something was going to happen; but we doubt whether or not it's going to happen and we want all the little details associated. There is a difference between asking God for clarity, and asking Him for certainty.

When we ask for certainty, we are doubting what God says, and not trusting in His plan. However, when we are asking for clarity, like Mary did in the verses following her meeting with the angel, we aren't doubting what God is saying, but simply asking for a little more detail to be revealed to us. God won't bless asking for certainty about something He says, Zechariah was asking for certainty of whether or not God was going to do this, and because of his questioning God silences him until his son is born.

Prayer: Father, truly Your ways are beyond our ability to understand. But all Your ways are good. Mary had to have been overwhelmed and terrified, but You had a good plan for her and for all of humanity. Help me to have a heart like hers, to just choose to accept Your will for my life with thankfulness, and not question whether or not Your going to do what You say Your going to do.



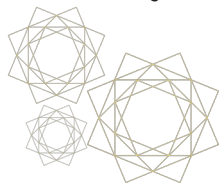
DAY 29

Scripture: When they saw Him, they worshiped, but some doubted. Then Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." -Matthew 28:17-20

Overview: JESUS IS ALIVE! He has risen! His resurrection has completed our salvation. Our God is NOT dead He is ALIVE! He is the champion of heaven! Here, Jesus gives us this commandment of sharing the message of His love to the world. To let others know about the great love He has for them. As we have been made disciples of Jesus it is our purpose to make more! To teach others about how He made a way. So that all will have the opportunity to see and know Him. The greatest form of love that we can show to someone is telling them about Jesus.

Application: We can't be afraid to tell people about the gospel. Jesus is with us always and He makes us brave. He gives us His strength and courage to spread His word. All we have to do is take the first step and Jesus will give us what to say and do when the time comes. We just have to trust in Him and submit ourselves to His commandment. Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit in His place as one who is in equal in power and is with us constantly. He is always with us even when we turn away from Him. When we feel like we are not able to face God the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, and reconciles our heart with God. Jesus commands us to go and share His word, we can't let fear hold us back. We are the ambassadors of Christ, and we represent Him to all the people we encounter. Trust Him and have faith that God will give you the boldness you need and share the truth of His love.

Prayer: Jesus, I'm sorry for not following Your commandment in telling the world about You. Forgive me for being fearful, and letting my convenience come between someone's eternity. Help me to realize telling someone about You is the greatest gift I could give them this holiday season, and that there is nothing more important. I want to be useful, obedient, and follow Your command, help me to do this and give me the boldness to follow through. I love You Jesus, please help me to show You that I love You by following through with the purpose You have given me.



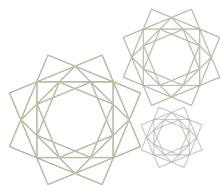
DAY 30

Scripture: "Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot—yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. He will delight in obeying the Lord. He will not judge by appearance nor make a decision based on hearsay. He will give justice to the poor and make fair decision for the exploited. The earth will shake at the force of his word, and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked." -Isaiah 11:1-4

Overview: The prophet Isaiah foreshadows the coming King of Israel! This King will be different from the ones they've had previously. He will be fair and full of wisdom! He will look out for the poor and treat all people equally. He will also be powerful and destroy the wicked! What an amazing King that is to come, but Isaiah didn't even scratch the surface of all this King would go on to accomplish (at least not in these verses)! I'm sure this is encouraging news to the Israelites who were facing oppression. It should be encouraging for us too! That King did come and is still here with us! He has delivered us from our own oppression from sin and death and will continue to do so until the end of this world.

Application: It is overwhelmingly amazing how God works and maneuvers events in their perfect timing! It is also amazing how the Word applies on so many different levels and is still applicable throughout generations. It literally is LIVING! Jesus not only was everything this verse talks about, but He continues to be that plus more FOREVER! His birth and His resurrection are the most joyful moments ever experienced in human history. God has given us the ultimate gift of a relationship with Him through His son Jesus. He is the reason that we can be joyful and hopeful in every moment, in every tough situation, throughout every day!

Prayer: Lord, thank You for Your Son Jesus! He is the ultimate King and an example of who we want to be. Even to this day we cannot completely understand the magnitude of what You have done for us, and the huge sacrifice Jesus made in order to free us from our chains and bondage. The Israelites were expecting a human king and they got that along with a whole lot more! Your gifts and blessings are always above and beyond anything we could ever imagine. We are Yours God, and that is the greatest gift to ever receive! We can rejoice with thankful hearts no matter the circumstance, because we know that no matter what the situation You are with us.



DAY 31

Scripture: For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of host will accomplish this. -Isaiah 9:6-7

Overview: Again, in 700 BC, Isaiah was talking to the people before the exile about the soon-coming king Hezekiah, who would lead the people back to God. In the deeper layers, he was also talking about the coming of Jesus.

In the Hebrew Bible none of the names above are capitalized because the Jews did not see them as relating to deity or the coming of Jesus. However, in the Christian Bible they are, (again, with twenty/twenty hindsight) it is clear to see that Jesus makes these scriptures reach full fulfillment.

Application: Jesus is all of these things to us! Our Wonderful Counselor who we can go to for anything, a Mighty God who is in control of everything when everything seems so out of control, an Eternal Father that is constantly looking out for His children and giving unconditional love, and the Prince of Peace that gives peace to our hearts while we are suffering through this world. God who became flesh and dwelt among us and suffered with us so that we could have a relationship with Him.

Prayer: Father, I praise You because Your ways are always better, higher, and impossible to understand as compared to our ways...I am so sorry I doubt Your love and doubt Your goodness. Even when goodness is all You have ever given me. Thank You for giving us Your very best and thank You for bringing us back to You, where we were always meant to be.



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