



STONEBRIAR COMMUNITY CHURCH

GOD'S GIFTS TO YOU

A 25-Day Christmas Devotional
on Hope, Joy, Peace, and Love

The Christmas season is upon us, bringing with it a special warmth and a time to pause, to feel the closeness of God's love in every sparkling light and every familiar carol. It's a season that reminds us of the importance of hope, peace, joy, and love—the very gifts that Jesus brings into our lives. And as we journey through this holiday season, we're reminded that the greatest gift of all is that Jesus came to save us.

I warmly invite you to join me in reading our daily devotional, thoughtfully prepared by our staff to help us reflect on these powerful themes. Let's allow these moments to fill our hearts with gratitude and anticipation as we prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth. Together, let's make this a season focused on Jesus, the light of the world.

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GIFT ONE
HOPE



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ROMANS 15:13 NASB

DECEMBER 1

THE GOD OF
LIGHT

There was the true Light which, coming into
the world, enlightens every man.

JOHN 1:9 NASB

The Christmas season is busy! We meet more, spend more, sing more, and eat more. We enjoy Christmas carols, Christmas decorations, Christmas parties, and even (hopefully) plenty of Christmas eggnog along the way!

But as Christians, we celebrate Christmas with more than just songs, tinsel, and all that eggnog. As Christians, we celebrate Christmas better than anyone else. Why? Well, because Christmas is a season that God put on our annual calendar to remind us of the hope, joy, peace, and love made possible given the first Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ into our dark world.

Long before we came up with the idea of things like hanging Christmas lights on a tree, the Apostle John tells us that Christmas is about the arrival of the true Light into the world. Pause and look at those flashing lights hanging on your Christmas tree or around your neighborhood. They are proclaiming the same message John did all those years ago: the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. God entered our dark world personally that first Christmas. He did so to enlighten our dark lives with good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. As the Apostle John goes on to tell us, all who receive this Light become children of God (v. 12).

PRAYER

*Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son, the true Light, into the world to fill us with hope, joy, peace, and love. Please use these devotional thoughts to enlighten our Christmas season this year and draw us nearer to You.
In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

DECEMBER 2

THE GOD OF
HOPE

Therefore, brothers *and sisters*, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, *through* His flesh, and since we *have* a great priest over the house of *God*, let's approach God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let's hold firmly to the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

HEBREWS 10:19-23 NASB

The confidence we have as Christians does not stem from our own gifts, accomplishments, or achievements. It stems only from the person and work of Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest. **He** made a way for us to draw near to God! **He** has cleansed us and **He** has washed us and **He** has made us pure. **He** is true to His Word, and **He** is faithful. It is because of this reality that we confidently, boldly, and unshakably hold tightly to the hope of the Gospel.

Even though this world is full of frustration, disappointment, and challenge, we know how the story ends. Regardless of the brokenness around us (and in us), we know God is sovereign, good, and just. We wait with anticipation, fervor, and purpose because we know the One who has begun a good work within us will surely bring it to completion (Philippians 1:6).

As we spend the next few days seeing the hope offered in the Christmas story, be encouraged that our God still offers hope to us today.

PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for giving us hope. These days are frustrating and difficult, and we are hurting and weary, but because of Your complete faithfulness and goodness, we get to be hopeful! Knowing You are sovereign and knowing that through Jesus we are Your children forever gives us hope. Help us today to live confidently and hold unswervingly to the hope we have in Jesus.

In His name we pray, Amen.

DECEMBER 3

THE GOD OF THE
OVERLOOKED

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock at night.

LUKE 2:8 NASB

In the days of Jesus' birth, shepherds were looked down upon. Despite the important work they did, they were easily considered among the lowest in society. These Jewish shepherds were so dirty that they were considered too unclean for worship, and their fellow Jews did not like that they often worked with Gentiles. Therefore, these shepherds were often treated as outcasts of society.

But God does not think like man. Of all the people God could have chosen to be the first to hear of the birth of Christ, He did something unexpected by man's standards. He allowed the shepherds to be the first witnesses told of this miraculous birth, and they were the first to visit Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus. The shepherds were the first to see the fulfilled hope of the Jewish people. After their visit, they "glorified and praised God for all that they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:20). What a privilege it was now to be one of these lowly shepherds!

PRAYER

Dear Father, it can sometimes feel like I am forgotten or overlooked. Forgive me for the times I have compared myself to others and allowed those comparisons to steal the joy and hope I have in You. Thank You that You are the God of the entire universe, yet I know You personally because of the belief and faith I have in Jesus Christ.

It is in His name I pray, Amen.

DECEMBER 4

THE GOD OF
REJOICING

And she gave birth to her firstborn son;
and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid
Him in a manger, because there was no
room for them in the inn.

LUKE 2:7 NASB

What love Mary must have felt as she held her newborn baby. Like any good Jewish mother, she lovingly wrapped her new baby in linen. This was done not only for warmth, however. Many Jewish mothers believed swaddling in linen would ensure the limbs of their baby would then grow strong.

Little did young Mary realize the foreshadowing that was occurring as she held her baby on this precious night. Time would pass quickly, as any parent can attest, and there would come a day when her baby would be once again wrapped in linen. This time, it would be the linen grave clothes.

But on this night, Mary could rejoice and just bask in her baby, listening to His coos and soft breathing. The heartbreak she would one day witness as her Son would lay down His life for man would be short-lived. She would know rejoicing once more as she gazed on the resurrected Messiah.

PRAYER

Dear Father, thank You that You made a way for salvation. Believers all over the world rejoice in this Christmas season because of what You have done. Thank You that Jesus made a way for me to be reconciled to You. In His name I pray, Amen.

DECEMBER 5

THE GOD OF
FAITH

Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph,
O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is
coming to you.

ZECHARIAH 9:9 NASB

There is a significant amount of time between the end of what we know as the Old Testament and the beginning of what became the New Testament. In those 400 years, Israel had not heard from God or a prophet of God.

Israel was certainly discouraged and must have been close to losing hope. Had their faith, ceremonies, sacrifices, and cultural traditions all been in vain? The political culture of the day was not favorable towards Jews, so they could find no fulfillment there. Where was their promised Messiah? Surely He would soon come on the scene and conquer all their political foes to bring lasting peace.

Their Messiah did indeed arrive, but not at all how they expected. The Jews were familiar with the many Old Testament prophets who proclaimed their coming King, but most did not expect Him to be a baby. In a time where they must have felt discouraged and forgotten after so many hundreds of years of silence from God, the Messiah arrived, just as was promised.

PRAYER

*Dear God, remind me of Your faithfulness when I am discouraged. You always bring Your promises to fulfillment, and I pray I can trust and hope in You more. In times of doubt or loneliness, remind me that You are with me and that I have a glorious future in Heaven with You to look forward to.
In Christ's name I pray, Amen.*

DECEMBER 6

THE GOD OF THE
IMPOSSIBLE

Now after these days his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months.

LUKE 1:24 NASB

Elizabeth, who had faced the pain of barrenness and childlessness, finally conceived, beyond childbearing age. Rather than immediately sharing her joy, Elizabeth chose to keep herself in seclusion for five months to reflect on the Lord's graciousness for the miraculous conception and fulfillment of His promise through her son, John the Baptist, who would prepare the way for the Messiah.

In the season of waiting, Elizabeth's hope was fulfilled through God's intervention in an impossible situation. Elizabeth's actions teach us the value of quietly reflecting on God's work in our lives. In this fast-paced, technologically driven world that rushes to announce every event, Elizabeth reminds us of the necessity of solitude and reflection through life's blessings. By taking the time to pause and meditate on God's faithfulness and promises, we can deepen our trust in His perfect timing.

PRAYER

Dear Father, forgive me for ever doubting You in impossible and unimaginable situations. Your graciousness in dealing with me brings me comfort. Thank You for never giving up on me. Give me the courage to trust You more in seasons that seem bleak, to praise and thank You in seasons of joy, and to help others see the impossible as possible because of You. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

DECEMBER 7

THE GOD OF
PROMISE

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She did not leave the temple grounds, serving night and day with fasts and prayers. And at that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak about Him to all those who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

LUKE 2:36-38 NASB

As a prophetess, part of Anna's job description entailed having the special gift of declaring and interpreting God's message. A predecessor of Simeon, Anna did what was required of her. As an 84-year-old widowed woman, she dedicated her entire life to the service of the Lord. She was an obedient woman whose life reflected her hope in the Lord. Day and night, she was disciplined in prayer and fasting in hopeful expectation of the coming Messiah.

Upon seeing Jesus, Anna immediately recognized Him as the long-awaited Messiah. Her decades of waiting had finally culminated in this very moment. Deeply moved by what had transpired, Anna began praising, giving thanks, and telling others about the Good News and hope that had finally arrived.

Anna's story reminds us to cultivate a heart of joyful expectation in the waiting seasons. While the answers to the waiting seasons may be unexpected, worship and prayer help keep us focused on His promises.

PRAYER

Dear Father, thank You for Your patience. Thank You for reminding us to remain steadfast in Your Word and Your promises. Give me the courage to eagerly await Your answers with joyful expectation. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.



GIFT TWO
JOY



Always be full of joy in the Lord.
I say it again—rejoice!

PHILIPPIANS 4:4 NLT

DECEMBER 8

THE GOD OF
JOY

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 PETER 1:6–9 NIV

There is a children’s song that says, “I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart, down in my heart,” and despite being unbelievably catchy, there is something else that stands out about this song—where joy is located!

Joy is not a fickle feeling, but rather it is a byproduct of genuine, tested, heart-knowledge faith in Jesus Christ and trusting in His saving work. Joy is not something that comes and goes depending on the weather or what we ate for lunch; it stays with us and belongs down in our hearts, because we have a Savior who lives and has changed us from the inside out.

Over the next several days, be blessed as you read of various aspects of joy found in the Christmas story.

PRAYER

*Dear God, thank You for Jesus and the joy we can have in knowing our Savior lives! We rejoice because we know that Christ lives. We have been forgiven, we are free from the bondage of sin, and we are made alive in Christ! God, please help us to let this inexpressible joy be visible and evident in all we do. Help us to put on display a contagious joyfulness—not something grounded in circumstance, but grounded in the unchanging, eternal truth of the Gospel.
In Christ’s name, Amen.*

DECEMBER 9

THE GOD OF THE
UNEXPECTED

Can anything good come from Nazareth?

JOHN 1:46 NLT

Reputations matter. In biblical times, cities had reputations too. Nazareth was not a place that was regarded highly. In our day, we would say that Nazareth was on the wrong side of the tracks. Knowing that, could anything good come from Nazareth?

Actually, the best thing to ever happen to mankind came from Nazareth. Jesus spent so much of His life there, He was referred to as a Nazarene, fulfilling Old Testament prophecy as stated in Matthew 2:23.

This highlights a biblical principle that only God can achieve. We are told in 1 Corinthians 1:27, “But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong.” God can use anything in any way to fulfill His plan, and a majority of the time, it is done in a way that we could never imagine.

PRAYER

*Dear God, thank You that You are a loving God capable of doing the unexpected. Your ways are certainly not our ways, and for that we are so grateful. When circumstances do not make sense in our eyes, remind us of who You are. Your greatness brings such joy.
In Christ's name, Amen.*

DECEMBER 10

THE GOD OF
GIVING

After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

MATTHEW 2:11 NASB

The wisemen could have never guessed the significance of the gifts they brought to bestow on the newborn baby Jesus. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh represented so much more than polite gestures of congratulations.

The gift of gold was certainly fit for a king. The wisemen gave this gift to the King of kings Himself. Frankincense was a very common way for priests to be anointed and prepared for their duties in the temple and in worship. This was another fitting gift, as Jesus is our Great High Priest as noted in Hebrews 4:14. Finally, myrrh. This spice was commonly used in times of death. Myrrh was placed on the body before it was buried in a tomb.

These three simple gifts told the story of our King and High Priest who would one day be buried before conquering death. God gives us the joy of seeing glimpses of His plan of salvation long before Jesus ever laid down His life for us.

PRAYER

Dear Father, details like this show Your heart before man ever understood Christ's work on the cross. Looking at these small facts in the Christmas story help to show You are in control of all things, big and small. We are so grateful. In Christ's name, Amen.

DECEMBER 11

THE GOD OF
DETAILS

Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

LUKE 1:8-9 NASB

At this time in Temple history, there were many thousand men who had been trained as priests, fitted for temple garments, and assigned various duties in accordance with how King David originally organized the role and rotations of the priests (1 Chronicles 24). But on this specific day, it was finally Zechariah's turn. This likely could have been his one chance to be the priest assigned to the inner court of the Temple. This privilege most likely did not happen twice.

This was a God-ordained appointment, for it was in this sacred area where an angel of the Lord would appear to Zechariah and tell him of God's plan to give him and his wife, Elizabeth, a long-awaited baby. This joyful news was so shocking that Zechariah did not initially believe it to be true. But just several mere months later, the little baby John would be born. He would eventually be known as John the Baptist, who paved the way for the coming Messiah.

PRAYER

Dear Father, this passage reminds me of Your sovereignty, which brings me endless comfort. Thank You that You know every detail of my life and that I can trust in You. You orchestrate events I would not even know to pray for, and I thank You that You have a plan for me and my life too. Give me boldness to share with others the truth of Your Word.

In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

DECEMBER 12

THE GOD OF
PROCLAMATION

Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.

MATTHEW 2:2 NASB

Excitement fills the house as children eagerly wait for Christmas decorations to be unboxed. Soon, the home will be filled with garland and tinsel, gingerbread men and nutcrackers, candy canes and ball ornaments. After everything is in its proper corner, the most anticipated moment occurs: the placing of the star on top of the Christmas tree. Joy erupts at the pleasant sight as the final piece completes the array of Christmas cheer.

Just as children wait in anticipation for the final decoration to be placed atop the Christmas tree, so the Israelites had lived their lives in anticipation of the final piece: the coming of Messiah. His coming was the culmination of anticipated waiting, which would fill their hearts with joy.

In great creative fashion, God placed the final piece. He announced by way of the sign of the star to Magi from the East that the King had come. This star was evidently no ordinary star, for it was significant enough to cause the Magi to journey west to worship the newborn King.

For the believer, Christmas is a joyful occasion, for with it we recall the announcement of the birth of the King. Our response this season must be, as the Magi, to worship Him!

PRAYER

Dear Lord, allow our hearts to be filled with joy this season, recognizing the birth of the promised Messiah, Jesus! With the joy that fills our hearts because of His coming, let us respond in worship to Him.

In Christ's name, Amen.

DECEMBER 13

THE GOD OF
FULFILLMENT

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

LUKE 1:47 NASB

As a response to Elizabeth's greeting, Mary burst into praises and thanksgiving. Mary's song of praise, known as The Magnificat, expresses the gratitude for favor blessed upon her and her people, as well as God's faithfulness, power, and mercy. Mary's response was not a fleeting emotion that dissipated, but rather a response to God's fulfillment of His promises.

Much like the rest of humanity, Mary was not sinless. She was an ordinary person in need of a Savior. Her declaration "my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" brings about her recognition of the redemptive work of God in her life. God was not only bringing salvation to her people, but through the Child who was to come.

Like Mary, Isaiah echoed the same sentiments of joy rooted in God's abounding grace, salvation, and faithfulness: "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exalt in my God" (Isaiah 61:10).

PRAYER

*Dear Father, thank You for the gift of salvation.
Thank You for your continued faithfulness
throughout all generations. Help us to rejoice in
Your promises and to share that joy of salvation
as we continually delight in Your ways.
In Jesus' name, Amen.*



GIFT THREE
PEACE



And let the peace that comes from Christ
rule in your hearts. For as members of
one body you are called to live in peace.
And always be thankful.

COLOSSIANS 3:15 NLT

DECEMBER 14

THE GOD OF
PEACE

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:7 ESV

It is easy to get the wrong idea about peace. If we are not careful, peace can be seen as soft or weak, but this is not the biblical understanding of peace.

God's Word identifies peace as one of the key military tactics deployed in the spiritual battle for our souls. The word used carries the idea of a guard, entrusted to use whatever means necessary, offensive or defensive, to protect, secure, and keep safe that which has been entrusted. This is what God's peace does to our hearts and minds! This type of strength is unexplainable according to human standards, and nothing on earth could ever contend with the mighty peace of God.

There are many aspects in the Christmas story that point us to God's peace, as we will see in the next few days. May we walk with confidence and hope knowing that, because of Christ Jesus, our hearts and minds are guarded with a serious, strong, and active peace.

PRAYER

*Dear God, thank You for giving us peace. This world, our families, even ourselves are impacted by the chaos and havoc that sin wreaks. We are desperate for Your peace to overwhelm us and guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Help us to be a church family that not only models peacefulness in our own lives, but also rightly extends peace to those who need it.
In the name of Jesus, Amen.*

DECEMBER 15

THE GOD OF
PROVISION

And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

LUKE 1:80 NASB

While for many, Christmas is a time of celebration, for some, it is a time of mourning. Perhaps this is because of an empty seat at the table or the obvious absence of someone's presence. Those who lament might see celebrating Christmas as pointless. But God is one who provides peace, even for those who cannot find the strength to be cheerful.

The life of John the Baptist is one of lament. He was born to parents well advanced in age. John also had a strict dietary restriction to follow. When he observed his friends' parents, he might have wondered why his own parents couldn't run and play like other parents. Or maybe as a child, he perhaps didn't understand why he could not eat the same foods as his friends.

It is likely that both parents died while John was a young boy, leaving him orphaned, living in the deserts. However, the hand of the Lord was with him. God provided John with His perfect peace so that he would one day proclaim salvation and the shining light upon "those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79).

In Christ, God's provision of peace has come. His light shines in the darkness of our mourning, and His presence is ever with us regardless of our circumstance.

PRAYER

*Dear Lord, thank You that Your hand is with those who mourn. In Your Son, You shine Your glorious light for those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, providing the peace for all.
In Christ's name, Amen.*

DECEMBER 16

THE GOD OF
EXPECTATIONS

For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths lying in a manger.

LUKE 2:11-12 NASB

Have you ever had your heart set on a specific gift, but when you unwrapped what was handed to you, it was not what you wanted? We know “it’s the thought that counts,” and we should be grateful for whatever gifts we might receive. But oftentimes, when we create expectations in our hearts, we are left disappointed when reality does not meet those expectations.

This is what happened at Christ’s incarnation. The people of Israel had certain expectations as to what the Messiah would look like. They expected a conqueror, perhaps wrapped in armor, who would bring peace. Instead, they received an infant wrapped in cloths, lying in a feeding trough. While they expected a war general who would overtake Rome and give Israel peace from all their enemies, they were given instead one who would be the perfect sacrifice to satisfy God’s wrath.

Although He didn’t come in the manner that many thought—thus, not meeting expectations—Christ’s advent certainly exceeded them, not by rescuing us of our present troubles, but by offering us peace with God.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, we often fail to set our hearts on You, and we create idols of our expectations. Allow us to remember that Your work is beyond ourselves, for You gave Christ to bring us peace. We are so thankful. In Christ’s name, Amen.

DECEMBER 17

THE GOD OF
REMEMBRANCE

He has given help to His servant Israel,
In remembrance of His mercy, Just as
He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham
and his descendants forever.

LUKE 1:54-55 NASB

Our Lord never fails. Our God will always make good on His promises, even if those promises were made thousands of years beforehand.

God promised to Abraham that all people would be blessed through him, and God made sure that promise was brought to completion. Jesus was the long-awaited descendant of Abraham who was sent to be the specific fulfillment of that promise.

We, too, can hold firm to the promises of God regardless of how bleak things may look in the moment. How comforting and peaceful it is to know that we follow a God who is merciful and trustworthy and remembers His people. Let us call to mind God's faithfulness and His promises, and let us enjoy His kindness and love towards us.

PRAYER

*God, thank You for the gift of Jesus. He alone is our only way to be reconciled with You. He alone is our only hope for salvation and rescue. Help us to notice and celebrate Your faithfulness. We praise You for Your mercy and kindness and Your promises, God!
In Christ's name, Amen.*

DECEMBER 18

THE GOD OF
GLORY

Glory to God in the highest, And on earth
peace among people with whom He is pleased.

LUKE 2:14 NASB

It is hard to imagine a multitude of angels, singing in unison, praising God. The shepherds were treated to a small glimpse of Heaven with the sights and sounds of these angels, whose wonderful song of praise alerted these shepherds to go seek out the newborn baby Jesus.

Could the shepherds even begin to imagine the peace that this little baby would one day bring? It is only through Christ that true peace can ever be achieved. Believers in Christ have perfect reconciliation and peace with the Father, and our sin is no longer held against us. We are seen as righteous, as though we have never sinned at all.

And we have the joy of knowing that, one day, Christ Himself will rule and reign in the most peaceful kingdom of all. The little baby the shepherds set out to find was the King of kings, Lord of lords, and Prince of peace.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, You deserve all glory and praise. Forgive me for the times I have not worshipped You like I should have. Forgive me for sometimes taking my salvation for granted. Give me Your heart for those around me, and help me to share the Gospel of Jesus with everybody I can. I am thankful for the peace I have because of Him. In His name I pray, Amen.



GIFT FOUR
LOVE



Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1 JOHN 4:7-8_{NLT}

DECEMBER 19

THE GOD OF
LOVE

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world would be saved through Him.

JOHN 3:16-17 NASB

Above all other aspects of God's character that is displayed within the Christmas story, it is His love that abounds. God's perfect love is put on full display through sending Jesus. It was He who first loved us, and despite our sinful rebellion, it is He who planned our rescue and redemption.

God's love is active, sacrificial, generous, gracious, tender and fierce, completely perfect and overwhelming. It is only because of God's love for us that we experience what true love is. We have hope, peace, and joy because of the saving work of God through Jesus Christ. This is true love!

PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for loving us by sending Jesus to pay the price for our sins, so that we might be reconciled to You through Jesus. Help us to be people who live in light of Your great love, putting it on full display as we proclaim the goodness of the Gospel message! Help us to be reminded of Your great love constantly, and let Your love shape the way we think, speak, act, and treat others. Because of Your love towards us, help us to grow in our love towards You and towards others. In the name of our Savior Jesus we pray, Amen.

DECEMBER 20

THE GOD OF
FAVOR

And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings,
favored one! The Lord is with you.”

LUKE 1:28 NASB

Christmas traditions are usually centered around family gatherings, sharing a wonderful dinner, and exchanging gifts. Consumers rush department stores and websites with the intention of finding the perfect gift to give their loved ones. The excitement of unwrapping presents is always a special moment, because one feels loved by being a recipient of an unearned gift.

In the announcement of Christ’s forthcoming birth, we find God giving gifts. When the angel Gabriel appears to Mary to announce that she will have the great honor of being the mother of the Messiah, she is called “favored one.” This title is a passive verb indicating that Mary received this gift of favor without merit. She was not favored by her accomplishments, but because God chose to give her His favor. Not only this, but God’s presence would also be with the young virgin, enabling her to bear her important task. So, in giving His Son, Mary was a recipient of God’s favor and also a recipient of God’s help.

The apostle Paul tells us some decades later that we who have believed in Him are also favored ones in Jesus Christ, for we are recipients of God’s unending love (Ephesians 1:6).

PRAYER

Dear Father, what a wonderful gift You have given us in the incarnation. Through the Son, Jesus Christ, we have become recipients of Your divine favor and love. Allow us to remember that it is not because of us, but because of who You are. In Christ’s name, Amen.

DECEMBER 21

THE GOD OF
SACRIFICE

And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two pigeons.”

LUKE 2:22-24 NASB

There’s a classic story of a young couple who were so in love but very poor. For Christmas, they each want to give the other a special gift, however, each one sacrifices their prized item for the other. The wife cuts and sells her hair to buy her husband a chain for his watch. Meanwhile, the husband sells his watch to buy his wife a comb for her hair. On Christmas, they are both saddened that the gift they chose for their spouse was now useless, but they come to recognize that each demonstrated their love for the other by their personal sacrifice.

In Christ’s incarnation, we see sacrificial love. When the days of Mary’s purification were completed, she and Joseph brought baby Jesus to the temple to present Him. The custom was to bring a lamb to be sacrificed for atonement, but for the poor, it was acceptable to bring a pair of turtledoves or pigeons. Jesus’ family was part of a lower class, having to offer the alternate sacrifice. Meanwhile Jesus, the Lamb of God, would one day be sacrificed to atone for all who would believe in His name. In this, God demonstrates His love for us!

PRAYER

Dear Lord, what wonderful love You have shown us that we would become pure by the sacrifice of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Remind us of His lowly state—that He would give of Himself so that we could be spotless before You. Through Christ, Amen.

DECEMBER 22

THE GOD IN
FLESH

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.

ISAIAH 9:6 NASB

What marvelous news to know that God lived and walked among us—fully human and fully divine. This Child, born to us, a baby who grew into a man, carried the weight of the entire world upon His shoulders. Mighty yet meek, loving but firm, born as a King, humble in all respects. He was both God and man.

His birth is the epitome of it all. Without His coming, there would be no salvation, and we would be people devoid of hope.

The depth of God's love is revealed in His titles:

- **Wonderful Counselor:** He will give supernatural wisdom that will carry us through all of life's challenges.
- **Mighty God:** His power is demonstrated as He delivers us from sin and death.
- **Eternal Father:** He cares for us with everlasting love.
- **Prince of Peace:** He will bring restoration and reconciliation to this broken world.

During this Christmas season, let us reflect on the love that compelled Him to take on flesh. Jesus is pure love—a love that surpasses all understanding and invites us into a relationship with God.

PRAYER

*Dear Father, thank You for Your Son, Jesus Christ. Your love brings us hope and salvation. Help us to understand the depth of Your love and to share it with others.
In Jesus' name, Amen.*

DECEMBER 23

THE GOD OF
MERCY

And His mercy is to generation after generation
toward those who fear Him.

LUKE 1:50 NASB

In Luke 1:46–55, we read words of praise that Mary sang. Often referred to as The Magnificat, this passage shows Mary’s deep reverence for the Lord. She references many Old Testament passages, and her heart seems to be filled with words of humility and blessing as well as words that speak to how great and powerful the Lord is. She worshipped the Lord, knowing He alone deserved all praise and that she was merely His servant.

The Lord is indeed mighty yet merciful, and powerful yet tender with those who know Christ as Savior. If we have placed our faith and trust in Christ, He has rescued us from our sinful ways and spared us from the judgment we deserve.

We fear Him out of reverence for who He is and what He has done. Yet we also find comfort in Him as our loving Savior who has redeemed us.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank You for being so merciful towards us. We do not deserve Your goodness and grace, yet you continuously lavish them on us. Give us hearts to know that You alone deserve all praise, and we are merely Your servants in every situation. We love You. In Christ’s name we pray, Amen.

DECEMBER 24

THE GOD OF
PROPHECY

Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.

ISAIAH 46:10 NLT

Prophecy is God's loving way of telling us what will happen long before events actually occur. In the case of Jesus, there were more than 300 specific prophecies mentioned in the Old Testament about our Savior that Jesus perfectly fulfilled in His first coming. From being born from a virgin, having a Bethlehem birth, being in Egypt for a time, being a descendant of David from the tribe of Judah, and so much more, God told us exactly what to look for so there would be no mistake who He was when He arrived.

Knowing this should bring you great joy and comfort, as the Lord will also perfectly fulfill the remaining prophecies regarding Christ's return, Satan's final defeat, and our hope of eternity. There is nothing to fear, because our all-knowing God is in complete control, just as He has always been. There is nothing that takes Him by surprise or happens without His notice. We can trust Him with our future. Our loving God wants to reassure us that He knows the end from the beginning and the story isn't over yet.

PRAYER

Dear Father, only You are able to share future events with the readers of Your Word. How loving it is that you prepare us in advance for all that is to happen, while reminding us that You are the author and perfecter of our faith. Grow our trust in You. It is in Christ's name we pray, Amen.

DECEMBER 25

GOD WITH US!

Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name “Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”

MATTHEW 1:23 NASB

Christmas brings out many emotions. For some it has been a season of busyness running from one event to another non-stop every day. For others, such as children, it is a season of fun. What child doesn't like getting overly sugared-up, watching movies non-stop, being off school, and staying up late? But for others, the season is anything but merry. The absence of loved ones to share it with hurts. Whatever your Christmas season turned out to be, God has a message of comfort for you today.

The message arrived first to Joseph amid his own shock and hurt at Mary's pregnancy. It was a message that had been wrapped up for him from the days of the prophet Isaiah . . . wrapped up for more than 700 years! The message came in the form of a name—a baby name—the name of a little boy that was to be his. But it takes some grammar to appreciate the comfort it brought him then and us today. The name was Immanuel. It means God with us.

We should get excited at the sight of the word *with*. God *with* us. God is not “*against*” us, God is not “*over*” us, God is not “*beyond*” us. Rather, God is **with** us. He is *with* you. What a Christmas message from God!

Rejoice in that truth today, whether you're tired, fired up, or a little sore in your heart. God is *with* you!

Merry Christmas.

PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, thank You for being with us this Christmas.
We love you, Amen.*

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