

This Changes Everything

28 Day Advent Devotional

10 minutes. Please take more time with God, but let this devotion guide you through 10 minutes of focus on our King. The passages are not long so read them 2 times to start. Try to do it every day and let the words and prayers fill you throughout the day, rather than cramming in 5 at a time to get through it. That is not the goal. Rather, we hope for daily, continued anticipation of celebration and joy in our Savior. The one who shines light into the darkness that we used to live in and that sometimes surrounds us still.

Week 1 - Hope

(Sunday, 11/27 - Saturday, 12/3)

Hope. A light shining in the darkness. When we hope for something new we don't always understand fully what life will be like when that hope is fulfilled. Instead we often have short glimpses that are enough to fill our minds with anticipation. God's people were clinging to the glimpses of a Messiah given throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. They studied, waited, and watched. Through times of good kings and terrible ones, through exile and freedom they kept waiting and watching. Put yourself in their shoes as you read these passages this week.

Week 1 Day 1

Read: Isaiah 9:1-7

1. Which of the names in verse 6 do you picture Jesus as most often? Least often?

2. (Vs. 4) What are you yoked to (attached to) that would be nice to break during Advent?

Pray

Week 1 Day 2

Read: Isaiah 2:1-5

1. Of the things listed in this passage, which inspires the most hope for you?

2. (Vs. 3) How have you/have you not been walking on his path this season?

Pray

Week 1 Day 3

Read: Isaiah 42:1-9

1. In this passage, what does it say God's chosen one will do?

2. (Vs. 5) Re-read how beautifully God is described in vs. 5 and how he reaches out to us in vs. 6-7. (Not a question, just enjoy)

Pray

Week 1 Day 4

Read: Isaiah 11:1-9

1. This is the second day in a row talking about God's Spirit. What is listed that the Spirit will do?

2. Where do you see hope most clearly in this passage?

Pray

Week 1 Day 5

Read: Micah 5:1-5

1. Why do you think God chose Bethlehem as the place for the Savior to be born instead of a larger city like Jerusalem?

2. What is said of the coming ruler in this passage?

Pray

Week 1 Day 6

Read: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

1. 3 times the author uses the phrase "Restore us". Pray for continued restoration of the Church worldwide.

2. (Vs. 1) Try to think of 3 ways in which God is a shepherd to us.

Pray

Week 1 Day 7

Read: Jeremiah 33:14-16

1. Check out the genealogy in Matthew 1 to trace the lineage from David to Jesus.

2. 3 times “right” or “righteousness” is mentioned. With Jesus as your righteousness (vs. 16) what are some things you could do this next week to demonstrate that righteousness?

Pray

Weekly Wrap-up

Write a prayer for God to intervene and bring hope out of a situation in your life or the life of someone you know:

Week 2 - Peace

(Sunday, 12/4 - Saturday, 12/10)

Peace. Isaiah 9:6 gives many names to our Savior, one of them being Prince of Peace. God’s plan from the beginning was peace. Shalom. By the time Jesus was born Israel had been in and out of exile and were under Roman rule. They longed for a Savior that would bring them peace. In our world you cannot have complete peace if your neighbor does not have peace. The Prince of Peace did come to bring peace to Israel, but not only Israel - to the whole world. That Jews and Gentiles would all take part in His body. This week be thankful for the peace God has given you while making yourself more aware of those lacking peace in your family, neighborhood, and world.

Week 2 Day 1

Read: Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

1. How was Jesus different than the king they were expecting?

2. Why is it important that the king (highest in the land) defend the cause of the needy (lowest in the land)?

Pray

Week 2 Day 2

Read: Romans 15:4-13

1. What good gifts from God are listed in this passage? (Some at beginning, some at the end)

2. Is there a people group you would have a tough time rejoicing with? (vs. 10) Pray that God would give you the attitude of Christ (vs. 5-6)

Pray

Week 2 Day 3

Read: Isaiah 40:1-11

1. Do you see God as a giver of comfort? Why or why not?

2. What strikes you as similar or different between the way God is described in verses 10 and 11.

Pray

Week 2 Day 4

Read: Psalm 46

1. Is there anything that has given you fear in the last year? What does that fear cause you to do?

2. What words are used to describe God in this Psalm?

Pray

Week 2 Day 5

Read: Mark 1:1-8

1. What is interesting about the fact that John the Baptist is chosen to be the one who prepares the way for Jesus?

2. What was it about John that compelled so many to go out, see him, and be baptized?

Pray

Week 2 Day 6

Read: Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

1. When/how could you spend more time listening to God?

2. Thank God for his forgiveness and salvation.

Pray

Week 2 Day 7

Read: Luke 1:68-79

1. Who do you know living in darkness? How could you help them to see light?

2. (Vs. 73) Look back at Genesis 12:1-3 to read the covenant God made with Abraham.

Pray

Weekly Wrap-up

In Luke 1:79 Zechariah uses the phrase, “guide our feet into the path of peace.” Jesus is our Prince of Peace and he promises peace but we don’t always feel it right now. We don’t see it when we look at the world or even our own neighborhoods. Yet the Prince of Peace has given us his Spirit and we can join him as peacemakers. There is rarely a clear-cut way toward peace, but there is a path and with Jesus’ help we can walk it one step at a time.

Write down 3 (or more) ways you could be a peacemaker during advent. Think of people or places that could use some peace. Pray for the Spirit to guide you in these steps.

1.

2.

3.

Week 3 - Joy

(Sunday, 12/11 - Saturday, 12/17)

Joy. When you've been walking in darkness and have been given a hope of rescue and peace, joy will follow. Even though it may not be fully realized, we have the promise that one day a Savior will lead us. We will no longer be led through sorrow but on a journey of joy. As we live in this joy, let us fix our eyes on Jesus and also continue to see others who have not heard this message of good news that causes great joy.

Week 3 Day 1

Read: Isaiah 35:1-10

1. To what kind(s) of people does this passage give hope?

2. Can you think of anyone that exhibits the type of joy described here?

Pray

Week 3 Day 2

Read: Psalm 146:5-10

1. What kind(s) of people might get frustrated with this passage?

2. Which of these verses gives you the most joy?

Pray

Week 3 Day 3

Read: Luke 1:46-55

1. Take a moment to look back at the previous 2 passages and see how Mary's song echoes them.

2. What in this past year has given you the most joy?

Pray

Week 3 Day 4

Read: Zephaniah 3:14-20

1. (Vs. 17) Do you often think of God as a rejoicing God? Why/why not?

2. Have you experienced great joy by helping or serving someone - either in a large or small way?

Pray

Week 3 Day 5

Read: Isaiah 61:1-7

1. What is one situation (in your life or one you know) where you would love to see joy replace mourning?

2. (Vs. 7) Shame and disgrace are real. But they have no place next to joy. As we move toward the light of Christmas, consider sharing feelings of shame with another to find forgiveness, healing, and joy. Who could you talk to?

Pray

Week 3 Day 6

Read: Psalm 126

1. This is one of many passages this week where joy is tied to harvest. Why do you think they are intertwined?

2. When was the last time you sang with joy?

Pray

Week 3 Day 7

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

1. Are you lined up with God's will for you as described in verses 16-18?

2. Which of these three do you do most often? Least often? (Rejoice, Pray, Give thanks)

Pray

Weekly Wrap-up

The joy described in these passages turns things around. Sadness and sorrow are erased. This doesn't always happen all at once and many in our world are awaiting that joy in their lives right now. In Luke 1, Mary is able to see God's promise and rejoice even though she is in a tough cultural situation as unmarried pregnant teenager. She holds to the promise God has revealed to her with joy. As we move through Advent, we can find joy and cling to that joy in the midst of tough circumstances. Make a list of some things that give you joy.

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Week 4 - Love

(Sunday, 12/18 - Saturday, 12/24)

Love. This is where it's at. Christmas displays to the world a deep love that is far beyond the love we typically think of. In this world-changing event, the God of the universe comes to be with his creation. We call it incarnation which means, "to put on flesh". God reveals his heart to us in that though he creates us and does so many things for us, all of this stems from his desire to be *with* us. Immanuel means "God with us" and that is what we celebrate this season.

Week 4 Day 1

Read: Isaiah 7:10-16

1. Has anyone shown you love simply by being near you when you needed it? Who?

2. Have you shown love to anyone by being near him or her when they needed it?

Pray

Week 4 Day 2

Read: Luke 1:26-38

1. Describe some feelings Mary might have during and after this experience.

2. Have you had to trust God in circumstances where you know it might cause people to look at you different?

Pray

Week 4 Day 3

Read: Matthew 1:18-25

1. Describe some feelings Joseph might have after this experience.

2. How did Joseph show love to Mary in this passage?

Pray

Week 4 Day 4

Read: Luke 1:39-45

1. Where is God mentioned in this passage and how does it describe how he works?

2. Who do you know well enough to share joys and struggles? Do you do that often enough?

Pray

Week 4 Day 5

Read: Luke 1:46-55

1. According to Mary, how does God treat humble people?

2. Why do you think God chose Mary?

Pray

Week 4 Day 6

Read: Romans 8:35-39

1. Has anyone/anything tried to separate you from God's love for you in Jesus?

2. Spend another minute sitting and enjoying this great love that has broken in to be *with* you forever. Read the passage again if that helps.

Pray

Week 4 Day 7 - Christmas Eve

Read: Luke 2:1-20

1. What amazes you most about this story?

2. Where in this passage do you see Hope?
Peace? Joy? Love?

Pray

Weekly Wrap-up

Jesus came so many years ago to be with us then, now, and forever. After his death, resurrection, and ascension he sent his Spirit to be with us. With this Spirit inside you, enjoy this Christmas season (which doesn't just end tomorrow) and share hope, peace, joy, and love with those you are with. Take time to be with others, listening to them and enjoying time with them today, tomorrow, and the rest of the season.

Christmas Day!

Merry Christmas! Bonus Devotional: Read Isaiah 9:6-7 and on this beautiful day spend a few minutes thinking about how these verses were taught at camp this past summer. Merry Christmas!