

*Light
out of the
Darkness*



Christmas Devotional 2015

How to use this devotional:

You can use this individually as a part of your daily quiet time.



Use this as a couples devotion to grow closer in your faith together.



Work on this as a family during meal times or in the evening before bed.



Merry Christmas!

It is with great joy and anticipation that we present this Advent Devotional to you. Our theme this year is “Light Out of the Darkness”. Jesus is the “Light of the World” and together we will celebrate His birth, His life, and His promises, while looking forward with hope to the day when He will come again.

As pastors, our hope and prayer is that you will linger in the passages presented within this Devotional booklet and be stirred to draw near to Him this Christmas season, while inviting Him to touch your heart in fresh new ways throughout the coming year.

We will be offering a Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at Swasey Chapel on Wednesday, December 23rd at 6pm. This would be a great opportunity to invite family, friends and neighbors to join you for a special evening of Christmas carols and to hear the Christmas story. At the close of each service, I will offer an invitation to a personal relationship with our Savior. We will also be having two services on Christmas Eve – 5 pm and 7 pm. Childcare will be provided at 5 pm for children ages birth to kindergarten. The message will be the same for all three services.

We are looking forward to an amazing year of shining light into a hurting world. We have four different mission trips planned and it is our hope that you and your family are giving consideration to how you can let your lights shine for Jesus! For some, it may be that you will prayerfully support the teams on mission; for some, it may be that you will financially support this effort; and for others, it may be that you will be on mission to reach the lost in the Middle East, Zimbabwe, the Philippines or Possum Trot, Texas. For all of us, our mission field is between our feet. Together, we can shine the Light of Christ and make a difference in our community, our nation and our world.

In Christ,



Pastor Tom

Sunday, November 29

Genesis 1:3-5 (ESV)

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

From the very beginning of the story of humanity we see that light plays a pivotal role. God says “let there be light”. It’s by this light that we see, it’s by the light that plants grow, the light makes life possible. Isn’t it amazing to know that God has called us to be the light of the world, following the example of Christ? This holiday season focus on being the light, bringing the light of Christ wherever you go.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray that you would recognize God in creation, that as you see the physical light of the sun you would give glory to the Son.
- Pray God would bring people across your path that are living in darkness so you can demonstrate for them what it means to be the light of the world.
- Pray for your own family, that in this season you could be a blessing, a ‘light bringer’ to them.

Monday, November 30

Genesis 1:14 (HCSB)

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for festivals and for days and years.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

From the very beginning God was intentionally placing signs in creation. What purpose does a sign have? It points to something, someone, or a location. Signs give direction for those who are in need. The lights from this scripture have a dual purpose; separating the day from the night, and as signs to guide people concerning time and seasons.

When you accepted the gift of salvation from God, He put His light in you. You are now one of His lights in this world. We are meant to be a light in the world. As Christ followers live holy and righteous lives they are separating light and darkness. Our lives, when lived in faith, also serve as signs to those around us. Your life is a sign that can direct someone towards Christ and the gospel. Personally commit this Christmas to "serve as signs" among those who are in darkness.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Ask God if you are living a life that is separate from darkness. Are you growing in righteousness or are there times where sin still reigns in your heart?
- Are you focusing on living a righteous life to gain God's blessing and favor, or to be a sign that directs others to Him?
- Pray that the people around you would see you as "different" and want to understand the reason you have hope. Pray for God to give you words to share the Light and the Truth with people in your life.

Tuesday, December 1

Exodus 13:21 (NASB)

The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Where does your direction come from? Each day brings with it a myriad of decisions - decisions of an almost uncountable number. What to wear, eat, purchase, tell, withhold, reward, pray about and surrenderYet, as believers in Christ, we are called to: “seek first the kingdom of God” and “stand firm in the faith”. Live life under God's ultimate, unlimited and uncompromising leadership. In this Bible passage we learn even in the seemingly daily grind of “travel through the wilderness of life”: God cares enough to offer His Presence - His guidance, His best for us!

Not only to our aid - but more importantly to keep us moving forward - pressing inward at all times - day and night! In all ways acknowledging Him by our side!! Oh that we may be a people looking for His light - to know Christ & make Him known!!

PRAYER FOCUS

- Father, we understand You alone are worthy of providing direction for our lives! Let our thoughts be Your thoughts and words be Your words. Consume our minds with the mind of Christ. Lead us daily in Your paths of righteousness!!
- As described in Your Word - “It is the lamp to our feet and light to our path” - Therefore let us hide thy Word in our hearts that we may not sin - but rather honor You with lips of praise, thoughts of integrity and actions of love!!
- Channel Your wisdom into our hearts knowing “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”. Deepen our understanding and appreciation of You - our truth, life and way.... let each of Your 700 titles/names in Scripture drive us forward in boldness, love, courage and faith!!

Wednesday, December 2

Leviticus 24:2

Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil from beaten olives for the lamp, that a light may be kept burning regularly.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

To God it was important that a light be kept burning continually in the Tabernacle (and later, in the Temple). There were no windows in the tent, so the light did have a practical purpose. However, the symbolism here is of even greater value—the picture of God’s continual presence, the darkness never consuming the light. In the same way, if we think about it, the candles of Christmas can remind us God is always with us. We are never alone. Mary wasn’t alone; Joseph wasn’t alone. (And even Jesus, in his humanity, had Mary & Joseph to care for and to nurture Him; in His divinity, He had God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, to share the mystery of the Holy Trinity: 3 in 1.) This Christmas, in joy or in sorrow, please remember, and never forget: God’s flame is always burning in you, His forever child.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Make a commitment to notice the lights of Christmas this year, and to let them be a reminder that you are never alone; Emmanuel, God IS with us.
- As the High Priest tended the lamp in the Tabernacle, so make it a point to tend the Christ-Light in you. Be determined to be His light shining in the darkness this Advent season. You can help someone through, and out of their darkness.
- Meditate on lyrics from Kari Jobe’s “I Am Not Alone”:
“In the midst of deep sorrow
I see Your light is breaking through
The dark of night will not overtake me
I am pressing into You
Lord You fight my ev’ry battle
And I will not fear...I am not alone.”

Thursday, December 3

2 Samuel 23:4

He is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain that brings grass from the earth.'

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

One thing Ohioans learn is to enjoy the beautiful days we have and when the morning starts beautiful and cloudless, it offers hope for the day to be something great. 2 Samuel 23 highlights the last words of David as he spends his final moments considering the work of the Lord. How beautiful it is for us to contemplate our own lives and to know that the legacy we leave in Christ is as hopeful as a cloudless morning. The growth comes after a long night of rain. Though the rain through trials may not be welcomed, through trials we too can experience the joy of growth. "Though sorrow may last for the night, His joy comes in the morning" writes the Psalmist. Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Christ and the Hope for our souls.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray for celebration in times of struggle.
- Pray for those who may be grieving this Christmas to find the peace of Christ and to celebrate and have hope like the "cloudless morning."
- Pray that the Lord may use you, your family, to be instruments of His peace and light throughout the Christmas season.

Friday, December 4



Job 12:22



He uncovers the deeps out of darkness and brings deep darkness to light.



DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Job 12 is a powerful presentation of God's omnipotence and wisdom. Verse 22, ironically, yet appropriately, leaves questions in our minds; mysteries, if you will. What "deeps"? What "darkness"? What "deep darkness"? What does he mean? Psalm 90:8: "You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence." This is definitely a darkness that He brings to light. Our sins WILL find us out. Dan. 2:22: "It is He who reveals...profound and hidden things..." Ah, to know God's revelation, to have "darkness" uncovered by the Creator of light! Surely this could be another answer! 1 Cor 4:5: "...the Lord...will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts..." What? Not only what I DO in darkness gets exposed, but the inner motives of my heart, too? God, let me walk in Your light this Advent season.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Expose my dark deeds to Your light, O Lord. Let Your light consume them. Let me burn more and more brightly.
- As I draw near to You, Father of Light, let me know Your revelation; the things that only You can reveal out of deep darkness; things hidden from my own way of understanding. I need You.
- I recognize impurities in my heart, Holy God. In addition to the forgiveness I ask for my misdeeds...sinful acts, I boldly yet humbly ask that You work on my heart. It is too often (always?) turned toward selfish motives and other darkneses. Bring Your light exposure deep within, I pray.

Saturday, December 5

Job 22:21-30

Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you. Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored: If you remove wickedness far from your tent and assign your nuggets to the dust, your gold of Ophir to the rocks in the ravines, then the Almighty will be your gold, the choicest silver for you. Surely then you will find delight in the Almighty and will lift up your face to God. You will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will fulfill your vows. What you decide on will be done, and light will shine on your ways. When people are brought low and you say, 'Lift them up!' then he will save the downcast. He will deliver even one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands."

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

I remember going on a night hike when I was a boyscout. We were not allowed to use flashlights. At one point those in the front tripped over a cable hung between two posts strategically placed there to keep people out. Needless to say we could not see in the dark what would have been so obvious in the light. Job had a friend named Eliphaz who gave him some good counsel, except for one thing. The premise from which he is operating is that all these bad things have happened to Job because of some sin in Job's life. That false premise aside, the counsel given is worthy of consideration. Especially verse 28 where it says, "Light will shine on your ways". We don't have to walk in the darkness. God will show us the way!

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray for the wisdom to seek God's wisdom and direction from His word.
- Pray you will be able to see more clearly the path of life as illuminated by the word of God
- Be thankful that God hears your prayers...now be willing to follow His ways.

Sunday, December 6

Psalm 18:28-30 (ESV)

For it is you who light my lamp; the Lord my God lightens my darkness. For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Have you ever been in total darkness? The kind of darkness where there is no light, at all. I have. It was reassuring to know that after a few moments of experiencing pitch black darkness we were going to turn on our flashlights and make our way back out of the cave.

Do you realize that apart from Jesus Christ we live in total darkness? The god of this world blinds the minds of the unbelieving, said Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:4. Without the light of Christ we live in total darkness and we fumble our way through life like spelunkers who have lost their light and can't find their way out.

Do you find yourself walking in darkness and need light for your way? Maybe, just maybe God will lighten your darkness if you ask Him! Read His word consistently. His word proves true.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray and open your heart more and more to the light of God's truth in Jesus Christ
- Ask God to open your heart to the light and truth found in His word.
- Pray for those you know who are stumbling their way through life as if they were in a cave with no light.

Monday, December 7

Psalm 36:9 (ESV)

“For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.”

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Everything starts with God; everything. He gives us the very faith that is the expression of our decision to trust Him for salvation, eternity, and the best path for this life, as we are now bound by time and space. For those who never move “from darkness to light,” (Acts 26:18) who never come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, they never receive any subsequent light from God. An initial unveiling of light occurs at the moment of salvation, and that unveiling opens the door for more and more light from God to be recognized and received by the believer. “Indeed, Lord, in Your light do we see light; and apart from Your light, we see no light at all.” This Advent season, may the light dawn upon us, and may we see ever increasing light in His light.

PRAYER FOCUS

- If you have never received the initial light by confessing and repenting of your sins, believing in Jesus’ death on the cross to pay for your sins, and welcoming Him into your life as your personal Savior and Lord, do that now...and enjoy the increasing light that follows.
- Lord, help me to see more than the physical lights of Christmas this season; help me to see You, and the light You want me see... more and more. Enlighten me.
- Thank You, Jesus, for Your life and light. Simply that.

Tuesday, December 8

Psalm 43:3 (HCSB)

Send Your light and Your truth; let them lead me. Let them bring me to Your holy mountain, to Your dwelling place.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Send the Light!

Charles Gabriel's old hymn is still a powerful message today. It is still capable of stirring hearts. "There are souls to rescue, there are souls to save, Send the light! Send the light!"

It is that time of year when those who strive to follow the teachings of Jesus, celebrate the arrival of Christ on the Earth. Jesus taught that He was the light of the world; John 8:12. In this Psalm we hear the writer cry out "send out light." Today there are still millions in darkness that cry out for Light. God desires to send out His light through you. To whom is the Father sending you? Who do you know that is living in spiritual darkness? Consider telling someone why you celebrate Christmas and ask them to join you at a worship service during this season.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Make a list of five people you know that are living in spiritual darkness. Pray that they would be prepared to see Light and Truth in Jesus.
- Research places in the world that are still unreached with the Light and Truth of Christ. Gather your family or a few friends to spend an evening during the advent season in prayer for the people that live in these places.
- Pray that God will continue His sending work by "calling" Christians to go into the world to intentionally be light. Pray for those who are already serving in dark places to be strengthened spiritually.

Wednesday, December 9

Psalm 112:4 (ESV)

Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; He is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

As we are reflecting about light this Christmas season, we must also reflect on the dark. The light reminds us of truth and righteousness, the darkness reminds us of spiritual blindness and sin. You have to make a choice to live in the light and a choice to shine, to dawn in dark places. Will you make that choice today?

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray that you would recognize your calling to connect with God's spirit every day.
- Pray for the people who surround us everyday who are spiritually blind, that this Christmas season God would open their eyes to the light of the world, Jesus Christ.
- Pray for your own family that in this season you could be a blessing, a 'light bringer' to them.

Thursday, December 10

Psalm 119:130 (ESV)

The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

The authority of the Bible has been challenged throughout history. Where there are people who do not know, understand, or submit to the Bible, as the inspired Word of God there will be confusion and conflict. Everyone has ideas and opinions on the important matters of life. What is the standard we are to live by? How can we know what is right and wrong?

As we celebrate Christ taking on flesh and living among us, we are reminded that Jesus spent much time “unfolding” the words of God for the first disciples. As He taught them from the Old Testament He gave them light and imparted understanding. This touched their hearts and their perspectives on life changed. When you study the Bible, do you understand that it is powerful to give light to situations that you are experiencing? Have you been sharing the Word with others who need understanding?

PRAYER FOCUS

- Do you truly believe that the Bible is God’s inspired and holy Word? Have you placed yourself in authority over your life by dismissing any of the teachings from the Bible?
- Read Isaiah 50:4-5. Ask the Holy Spirit to “awaken your ear to listen as a disciple.” Keep this in mind as you read and study the Bible over the next few days.
- Memorize a few important verses of scripture that you may have opportunity to use at a moment’s notice during the Christmas season. As you are out shopping or visiting with friends and family, you might be able to share a word that will shed light on a situation for someone.

Friday, December 11

Isaiah 42:6 (ESV)

“I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people; a light for the nations,”

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

God calls us in righteousness because He is righteous and just. He wants to use us, His people, to accomplish His purpose. God also takes each one of us by the hand as He keeps us, guides us, leads us, and protects us just as a Father protects His children.

God, the Father, gave His own Son, Jesus, as a covenant for us, His people, and we are to be a light to all people. We reflect the Light to all the nations. We are to tell all peoples about this new covenant, Jesus Christ, who God sent for His people to accomplish His purpose. I stand amazed to know that in me is the Light, and that through me others will come to know Jesus.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank God that He pulled you out of darkness into His light, the light of Jesus Christ.
- Thank God that He holds you by the hand as He keeps you, guides you, leads you, and protects you. You are His child.
- Spend time focusing on the mission God has given you to further His Kingdom.

Saturday, December 12

Isaiah 60:3 (HCSB)

Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your radiance.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

The book of Isaiah is full of references of God communicating His glory to all the people of the world! This passage prophesies that people of the world will be drawn to God's glorious light. In context, Isaiah is referring to Zion or Jerusalem. Jesus is that glorious light and He certainly draws people. Remember the wise men from Matthew 2? Tradition says they were kings. Certainly they were people of importance in their home country. These foreign dignitaries were drawn to Bethlehem by the brightness of a star that led them to the radiant light of the King of Kings!

Still today we are witnessing people around the world coming to Christ in incredible numbers! The nations are still being drawn to His light! May we be a part of God drawing people to Himself at Christmas and the rest of the year.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray that leaders of all nations would be drawn to the glorious light of Jesus Christ, as Savior of the world.
- As people come to America for opportunities and a hope for a better life, pray that God would use the local churches to be light, so that the nations may escape spiritual darkness.
- Revelations 21:23-24 - "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,"

Sunday, December 13

Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV)

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

We, as Christians, are lights of the world. We show others, by our instructions and examples, God’s love and desire for each of us to become His. Since many cities in Jesus’ time were built on hills, and their lights could be seen from afar, Jesus was able to show us that the eyes of the world are on us. We need to be seen by the world as true reflectors of the light of Christ. When we light a candle, we do not hide it, but place it where it may be of use. God has done the same with us. We are to be used to bring others out of the surrounding dark, wicked world and into the light of the one true Light, Jesus Christ. Let your light so shine.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank God that He brought you out of darkness into His Light.
- Thank God that He wants to use you to be a light to the world that has gone dark. Do not be afraid of the darkness, because you are in The Light.
- Spend some time thinking about your life as a light; a life that should be filled with pure conversation, faithful instruction, and as worship to our heavenly Father.

Monday, December 14

Luke 1:79

“To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Passionate, praiseful praying - “Consider the circumstances”... yeah - everyone has “circumstances”, right? Life happens: things, relationships, unexpected interruptions and the like. But in the midst of life, how often do we stop to consider God. His voice, His work and His path?? In this passage, Zachariah deals with his circumstances.... mute, dark, disappointed, and disappointing unto His God... unable in and of himself to accomplish his hearts desire: pronouncing the legacy of his names sake!! Yet, in these bleak “circumstances” he can only await God’s voice, God’s work and God’s path. In the end, he declares what God longs to hear - He alone is sovereign and worthy of all praise!! “Blessed” is our God [v. 68], He will “redeem” us [v. 68], He brought “salvation” [v. 69], He is “merciful” [v. 72], He “shines” over darkness/death [v. 79] and He “guides” us unto peace! [v. 79]

PRAYER FOCUS

- Lord, today we are caught in circumstances not of OUR choosing, but Yours. Thus, even in the darkest, most discouraging and unsettling of times, let us remember, “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” [Phil. 2:13]
- Yes, Heavenly Father, we come, broken, needy, repentant and hungry. Understanding: “all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.” [Isaiah 64:6]
- Come Father, send Your Holy Spirit. That in His presence we may be empowered to righteousness and convicted of sinfulness. Let us “Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” [I Peter 1:13]

Tuesday, December 15

John 1:4-5, 9 (NIV)

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it....The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

God's offer is life. God's desire is for you to be fully alive. This is so much more than going to church or trying to do right instead of wrong. You have tried that and it doesn't make you feel alive, not really. That kind of "light" gets snuffed out sooner or later.

There is a light that never gets snuffed out and is never overcome. John connects life and light and tells us both are found in Jesus. He reminds us that the light of Christ shines in the blackest darkness. The life of Christ gives life to the deadest soul.

There is no darkness and there is no death that God's light and life cannot change!

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray for those who are caught in the endless cycle of religion and doing right vs. wrong who still feel dead on the inside. Pray that the light and life of Jesus will penetrate deeply into their hearts and minds.
- Pray that God will use you to be the light of the world to someone you know who is living in darkness.
- Pray that your family can get past all the materialistic trappings of Christmas and focus on the true light of the world, Jesus!

Wednesday, December 16

1 John 2:8-10 (ESV)

At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him[b] there is no cause for stumbling.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Some of the most profound statements a man may make can be in his last moments of life. John is an old man at the end of his life when he pens these words and he is trying to convey his most important thoughts to his readers. The Jews understood the ten commandments and the Jewish law but John describes a new commandment. None of the other things we do will matter if we don't have love. There is an urgency for them to understand what Jesus describes as the second greatest commandment. Christmas is a time of hope, faith, joy, and peace. People are open to the gospel but we need to reach them in LOVE. Love becomes a gift that we can give to show our faith and to give Christ as a true gift!

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray that above all, you will LOVE, in a world that so desperately desires acceptance.
- Pray that the Lord will bring opportunities for you to show love and to be a light to those around you during this Christmas season.
- Pray that the Lord will bring opportunities for you to invite unsaved family/friends to Christmas services.

Thursday, December 17

John 12:35-36

So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

When they came out with LED Christmas lights, the one thing the creators of the energy efficient strands didn't anticipate was that the color of these cool white lights would affect their sale. After a couple years of flopped sales, manufacturers realized that people desired the warm yellow glow of the traditional lights to what they felt were “sterile white lights.” While this clearly feels like a #FirstWorldProblem, there's a great point to what people are communicating. If the Truth and Light that we present through Christ in our lives feels “cold” and “sterile” or even “religious”, we may find that our witness is as ineffective at creating an atmosphere of love and acceptance as the LED strands. As we call OTHERS into the Light through our example and drawing, may WE love others and forgive them with the same intensity and passion with which we ourselves were forgiven.

PRAYER FOCUS

- There may be people in your life that you need to forgive this Christmas who may not even deserve forgiveness. But give it as a gift, recognizing that our love is to be warm and inviting.
- Ask the Lord to help you reach out in love so that others may feel the warmth of Christ's love through your actions and attitude.
- As a family, think of ways to reach your neighbors for the Gospel and to bring them the Light of Christ.

Friday, December 18

Acts 9:3 (ESV)

“Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.”

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Saul of Tarsus is not in the Christmas story. But he is in the “Light” story! A persecutor of early Christianity, in agreement with rounding up and even with executing Christian believers (such as Stephen), he had a sudden conversion to Christianity when a bright light from heaven blinded him to all physical sight, but opened his spiritual eyes to the Lord of the universe, Jesus Christ. “Who are You, Lord?!” he asked after he had fallen to the ground. “I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting.” With the help of the obedient Ananias, Saul was baptized, regained his physical sight, and began immediately proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God! What was your conversion to Christianity like? Was it sudden, or gradual? Either way, I’m sure you would agree that when you placed your faith in Jesus, it was like the “lights were turned on!”

PRAYER FOCUS

- Reflect on your conversion experience and thank God for the people and circumstances He used to bring you to the Light, or the Light to you!
- Think of someone you know who needs to see the Light. Pray that the illuminating light of Jesus would shine on them this Advent season, allowing them to have spiritual sight to see the truth of the Gospel, and why we celebrate Jesus’ birth.
- Ask God to shine the “light from heaven” into and onto your life this Advent season.

Saturday, December 19

Acts 13:47

For this is what the Lord has commanded us: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

I am a gift giver. It brings so much joy to my heart to see others' faces light up upon receiving even the smallest gift. One of the things I have learned is that it is easy to spot the person who puts no time whatsoever into giving those gifts. When Luke penned these words in Acts, he is telling the 1st century Jews that they have the unique opportunity to bring salvation to the rest of world. Not only did Jesus pave the way for worldwide salvation but He would use His chosen people to do it! It's up to us to continue that work of sharing the Light of Christ not only through our love, but through the unique gift of evangelism in our homes and to the ends of the earth. Christ came as OUR light so we can spread it to others and receive joy.

PRAYER FOCUS

- There are people that are unique to your circle of friends that Christ has called YOU to reach. Pray that you choose to share His light with them.
- Pray that the Light of Christ shines brightly in you to family that may be unsaved.
- Pray for our 2016 SHBC Missions Teams to be able to raise the funds needed to take the gospel locally to Possum Trot, TX, to Jordan, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe, Africa.

Sunday, December 20

Romans 13:12 (ESV)

The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

As you enter this devotional time, pray God would speak to you. While moving into this Christmas season, honestly, my thoughts were not on Christmas - the first coming of Christ. I've been much more focused on His second coming. Romans 13:12 reminds us: "The night is far gone; the day is at hand." I'm sure we all agree we are closer to His second coming than His first. So what do we do? Again from Romans 13:12: "...cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." That's your lesson for today, cast off any remaining works of darkness, any of the sin that so easily entangles (Hebrews 12:1) and put on the armor of light. We are in a battle, put on your armor (Ephesians 6). As you shop, as you eat Christmas cookies, as you see family, put on the armor of light.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray that this Christmas season you would pause to focus on both the birth of Christ and the return of Christ.
- Pray for the people who surround us every day who are in spiritual darkness, that this Christmas season God would open their eyes to the light of the world, Jesus Christ.
- Pray for strength as you cast off the works of darkness this season.

Monday, December 21

2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV)

For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Our devotional today focuses on one of my very favorite verses, 2 Corinthians 4:6. This verse connects the beauty and power of creation with the beauty and power of salvation. In the quote that follows, C.S. Lewis connects the reality of creation with knowledge of Jesus Christ.

“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” - C. S. Lewis

My challenge for you this Christmas season is to see everything through the light of the knowledge of Christ. Christmas shopping, the temptation to accelerate the pace of your life in December, even giving and receiving gifts. I challenge you to see everything through the lense of Christ.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray that this Christmas season you would see through the light of Christ.
- Pray for the people who surround us everyday who are in spiritual darkness, that this Christmas season God would use you to reach out and bring the light of Christ.
- Pray for our Christmas Eve services, that people who don't often come to church would be stirred to pursue Christ every day of the year.

Tuesday, December 22

Ephesians 5:8-9, 13-14 (ESV)

“For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true). But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

At one time we did walk in darkness; as we were not in the light of the Lord. But, as believers in Christ, we are now in the light of the Lord. Light is the emblem of happiness, knowledge, and holiness. So as we came into the light we saw the evil of sin for what it truly was and the beauty of virtue and holiness. And the fruit of the Light (the Holy Spirit) produces goodness, righteousness, and truth.

The light exposes those things in our lives that need exposed for what they are, sin. The light lets us see the true nature of our actions. In the dark, we cannot discern the true form and nature of our actions. We need the light of Christ to truly see things clearly. Let Christ shine into your life.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank God that He has made you a child of the Light.
- Thank God for His mercy and grace.
- Allow the light of Christ to shine into those areas of your life that are in the dark. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal those areas that are in darkness.

Wednesday, December 23

Philippians 2:15 (ESV)

“...that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Since we are now children of the Light, we are to act like children of the Light. We are called to be blameless and innocent, without guile, injuring no one, giving no one occasion to complain of us. This charge is not easy, in fact it is impossible without Jesus Christ. We must rely on Him as we are in the midst of a crooked and perverse world. This world is full of those who complain, find fault, and pervert what we do and say. They seek every opportunity to stop the cause of truth and righteousness. But as the light we are to shine the love of Christ. We are to hold fast to the faith.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank God that we are children of the Light.
- Thank God that we are living in the world, but not of the world.
- Ask God to shine His light into our own lives as we examine all of our ways.

Thursday, December 24

1 Thessalonians 5:4-8 (NIV)

But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

That to which you belong is your master. I do not speak of membership to some club or organization. I speak of ownership as to whom or what you belong. We see in 1 Thessalonians that believers are children of the light. We do not belong to the night. Darkness and its prince is not our master!

We belong to the light and there are some clear implications that come with this reality. Belonging to the light means we put away those things that belong to the darkness for they are inconsistent with our true identity here described as light.

Are there areas of darkness in your life that need the light of truth to penetrate? Since we belong to the light, let us put on faith and love and the hope of salvation!

PRAYER FOCUS

- Ask the Lord to show you areas of darkness in your life.
- Pray for the grace and wisdom to be able and willing to find God's help in overcoming these areas of darkness.
- Pray for those whom you know to walk in the light of Jesus Christ.

Friday, December 25

Revelation 22:5

“And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.”

DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Uncloaking the darkness!! Imagine a world of eternal daylight. Never again will darkness settle, bringing uncertainty, anxiety of the unseen, unknown and unwelcome. Well, as we speak - heaven is that place! “Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him. As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.” [Ezekiel 1: 27,28] God in His infinite glory, majesty, power and might is our light of Life, Love and Hope - come fall before Him!!

PRAYER FOCUS

- Lord, let Your truth which declares Your grandeur and unspeakable glory bring us to realize we first must face up to our posture - sinners; before we can become face down to Your position - Savior!! “And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down,” [Joshua 5:14b]
- Yes Lord, “there is no other God besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except me” [Isaiah 45:21b] “To the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” [Jude 1:25]
- Today Father, we declare Your splendor....”For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” [Romans 1:20] We have no excuse... You alone are giver of Life!

Our Pastors & Contributors to this Christmas Devotional

Please enjoy these Christmas devotional messages and prayer focus points written by our Pastors as a gift to you and your family this Christmas season.



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Associate Pastor, Student
December 3, 16, 17, 19



Pastor Jeff Houghton
Associate Pastor, Pastoral Care
December 5, 6, 15, 24



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December 1, 14, 25



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November 30, December 8, 10, 12



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