



ALL I WANT FOR  
*Christmas* IS...

Christmas Family Devotional 2016

# 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.



**Tom Pound**  
**Senior Pastor**

*Nov. 27, Dec. 4, Dec. 11, Dec. 18*



**Pastor Tevis Austin**

Associate Pastor, Discipleship & Assimilation

*Nov. 29, Dec. 5, Dec. 12, Dec. 19*



**Pastor Mark Elliott**

Associate Pastor, Student

*Dec. 1, Dec. 7, Dec. 14, Dec. 21*



**Pastor Jeff Houghton**

Associate Pastor, Pastoral Care

*Dec. 2, Dec. 8, Dec. 15, Dec. 22*



**Pastor Gary Kirkpatrick**

Associate Pastor, Children & Global Missions

*Nov. 30, Dec. 6, Dec. 13, Dec. 20*



**Pastor Brad Pilkington**

Associate Pastor, Worship

*Nov. 28, Dec. 10, Dec. 17, Dec. 24*



**Pastor Jeff Smith**

Associate Pastor, Congregational Care

*Dec. 3, Dec. 9, Dec. 16, Dec. 23*



**Dan & Brittany Pound**

Preschool Co-Directors

*Family Activities pgs. 6-7, 16-17, 26-27, 36-37, 46-47*

# MERRY CHRISTMAS!

It is with great joy that we present our Advent Devotional Booklet to you again this year. Our theme – “All I Want for Christmas Is . . .” Hope, Peace, Joy and Love will be the weekly themes as we turn our thoughts to the gift of Jesus and all that He represents to this world and our families.

Our hope and prayer is that you will linger in the passages presented in this devotional booklet and be stirred to remain focused on Jesus throughout the holiday season, inviting Him to touch your heart and home in fresh new ways throughout the coming year. We have included some special family focused ideas for children as well.

We will be offering a Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at Swasey Chapel on December 23 at 7 pm. This would be a great opportunity to start a new tradition for your family or to invite friends and neighbors to join you for a special evening of music and to hear the Christmas story combined with an invitation to know Jesus personally. We will also be having two services on Christmas Eve – 5 pm and 7 pm. There will be one service Christmas morning at 10 am. Childcare will only be provided at 5 pm on Christmas Eve for children ages birth to kindergarten. We invite families to worship together during the other services. The message will be the same for all four services.

As we look to 2017, we are so excited to share the hope, peace, joy and love of Jesus with a hurting world as we continue our efforts “Going Global.” We have four different mission trips planned for 2017. I trust that you will support those efforts with your prayers, your gifts and your service as God leads you to participate. We keep our Mission Ministry information updated continually on the bulletin board just outside the Missions Café and we hope you will take a look from time to time. We are all called to participate in sharing the Good News of Jesus. We each have a daily mission to shine the Light of Christ and make a difference in our community, our nation and our world.

May you enjoy the Christmas season as we unwrap the messages of Hope, Peace, Joy and experience the greatest gift of all – the Love of Jesus.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom", written in a cursive style.

Pastor Tom

# How to use this devotional:



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



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



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

## Helpful Hints!

- **Scan the QR codes on the following family activity pages to access videos and other media.**

(At times it may be necessary to scan the code more than once in order for the QR code to properly connect.)

- **Sign up for RightNow Media!**



rightnowMEDIA

Scan the QR Code on the right or use the website link below for access to **THOUSANDS** of videos using your smart TV, computer, tablet, or smart phone:



**<https://www.RightNow.org/Account/Invitespringhillsbaptist>**

**\*\*\*There is no charge to you for access to these videos.  
There is also a FREE APP available!**

## How to celebrate Christmas this season with your Church Family?

1. Pack a shoe box
2. Deliver a Christmas Dinner Box
3. Attend the Spring Hills Family Christmas Gathering Friday, December 9
4. Sing in the Christmas Choir
5. Attend one of our Christmas Eve Eve, Christmas Eve or Christmas Day services and invite a friend, neighbor, or family member to attend with you, too!





ALL I WANT FOR  
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H O P E

# Christmas gives us

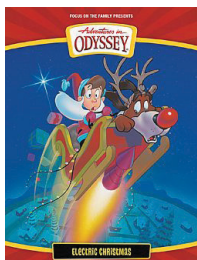
1. **Download a Free Advent Family Guide here**



2. **Advent Video - Hope**



3. **Adventures in Odyssey- Electric Christmas**



4. **Hope's Song Video:**



5. **Color the Advent Wreath**



# Hope!



## 6. What Is Advent? - Video



# SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27

## Scripture

*Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.*

- 2 Corinthians 3:12

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

The Christmas season is a joyous time of Hope. The blessed hope that comes as we consider that God sent His only Son to save us. The renewed hope that we receive as we spend time with friends and family and are reminded of how important those relationships are. 2 Corinthians 3:12 reminds us of a very important truth about Hope, hope should have an effect on how we live. The verse teaches us that hope should make us bold. Bold to smile and say Merry Christmas to all that we see, and bold to share with friends, neighbors, and family members about the Hope we find in Christ.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray that the Hope of Christmas will make you bold this year.
- Pray for all those you encounter to see Christ in you.
- Pray for those who have no hope this holiday season to find the hope of Christ.

# MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28

## Scripture

*For You are my hope; O Lord GOD, You are my confidence from my youth. - Psalm 71:5*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Children love the "magic" of Christmas! Everything seems to look, feel, smell, sound, and taste different during Christmastime. Add to that the mystery of Santa Claus...and the "hopes" of what he might bring... and you get quotes like "I wish it could be Christmas all year long." But there's a deeper hope that can last, not only all YEAR long, but all LIFE long. Psalmist: "YOU are my hope, O Lord God...my confidence from my youth." When young, we can learn to put our hope in God, and He will not disappoint. Confidence in Him grows as we live with Him day by day. Please notice: Psalmist's hope is not in what Lord God might bring him, but in Lord God Himself! "...and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." - Rom 5:5

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Think...What are you really hoping for this Christmas?
- Think...Whom are you hoping in this Christmas?
- Pray this: Lord God, I've hoped in things and circumstances and feelings and people; but this Advent season I'm deciding to hope in You. Let my confidence in You grow and grow as we walk together day by day. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



# TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29

## Scripture

*And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you.*

- Psalm 39:7

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Have you ever made a choice you wish you could do over? Maybe it was something you said or something you did. You wish you could take it back but the damage was done. The mess was made.

In order to deal with the mess, some people try to ignore the pain. Other people try to mask or cover up the mess with an addiction or by being busy. Some people accumulate more money to feel better. Some people even do things for others to make themselves feel better.

As David reflected on his anguish and the pain caused by his choices in Psalm 39, he realized that none of these attempts to deal with sinful choices worked. He realized that his only hope is the Lord.

As you prepare for Christmas and think about the birth of Christ, where do you put your hope?

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Give thanks to God for sending Jesus to rescue us from our sin.
- If you need forgiveness, place your hope in Jesus, and ask God to forgive your sin.
- Pray for opportunities to share the good news that Jesus came to provide forgiveness and hope.

## Scripture

*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. - Romans 15:4*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

HOPE: The aspiration of greater things yet to come - yes, positive change remains a continual possibility... for the believer it originates from the heart. It's an accepted expectation that we are not really in command, but rather God is - Therefore, things will turn out favorable in the end!! Hope, practiced daily and illustrated time and time again in the Scriptures.

Thus, for hope to be accessible and realized, it begins and ends with Christ's finished work. Jesus' life, purpose and motives enable hope in His followers. He came that we sinners may be saved [I Tim. 1:15]; that He may defeat the works of the devil [I John 3:8] and that He may display total obedience, honor and glory to His Heavenly Father [John 17:4]. Jesus... the author and living testament of all scripture [John 1:1] - offers life and light to those who claim His hope!

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Father we praise You that even knowing our condition: sinners by choice - You gave Your word and sent: the saving Christ, Jesus, to be our "Hope of Glory", the "Hope of His People"!
- Lord, may we be steadfast in hope as we face life's daily battles, trials and temptations. Yes, Lord draw us closer to You - that you may increase and we decrease; that Your word be a joy of our heart, relying on Jesus' presence wherever You lead!
- Savior, You are the hope of glory, the anchor of our soul. May we trust exclusively in You alone for all we need, desire and aspire toward pertaining to life & Godliness!

# THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1

## Scripture

*Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. - 1 Timothy 6:17 (ESV)*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

In 2011, the NYT reported that "The typical person in the bottom 5% of the American income is still richer than 68% of the world's inhabitants."\* The poorest of our poor live with more money than 68% of the world. We are truly a blessed nation. From Thanksgiving to Christmas it's easy to forget all that we have to be thankful for in our lives and to focus on what we don't have. The truth of today's scripture is that we need to be sure that we don't get caught up in what we've been able to provide for ourselves and been able to give ourselves and to look at the Giver of those gifts. The beauty of seeking the Giver, our Lord Jesus Christ, is that He knows exactly what we need. As you read that verse recognize that He not only gives, but with "all things to ENJOY."

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Spend time thanking the Lord for His provision.
- Spend time praying for refugees that are living in crisis for their faith in Christ.
- Consider how you can be involved in being God's provision to a refugee through World Vision or an orphan through Compassion International.

# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2

## Scripture

*In his name the nations will put their hope. - Matthew 12:21*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Hope. No hope. False hope. Which one of those words describes you?

If you answered "Hope" is your hope a false hope that won't or can't fulfill its promise? If it is a false hope how would you know it was a false hope? After all, if you knew it was a false hope you certainly would abandon it.

Maybe you answered "No hope." If so please know that God loves you and there are people all around you who genuinely care and are willing to come along side of you and walk through your darkness.

Is Jesus the one in whom you have placed your hope? If you truly have then you know He won't let you down. He won't disappoint you. He always does what is right and good and loving. He always comes through.

Put your hope in God.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Ask God to show you the true hope that is Jesus.
- Christmas is the happiest and saddest time of the year. Depression rates and suicides increase this time of the year. Pray for those you know who need to know the true hope that is Jesus.
- Thank God for the true hope that is Jesus.

# SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3

## Scripture

*"For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans for welfare and not for calamity; to give you a future and a hope."*

- Jeremiah 29:11

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

As we read this Scripture we are assured of God's hand on our life. It is one of God's beautiful promises. It offers full assurance of our future. Whatever our circumstances, God has it! God knows what is best for us. This verse also declares God's intimate relationship to us, His people. God isn't leaving us (His sheep) to be devoured by the enemy (the wolves). God is intimately involved in our lives and is creating a future for us. He will lead us in the direction of a new future. This assurance brings a perspective of hope.

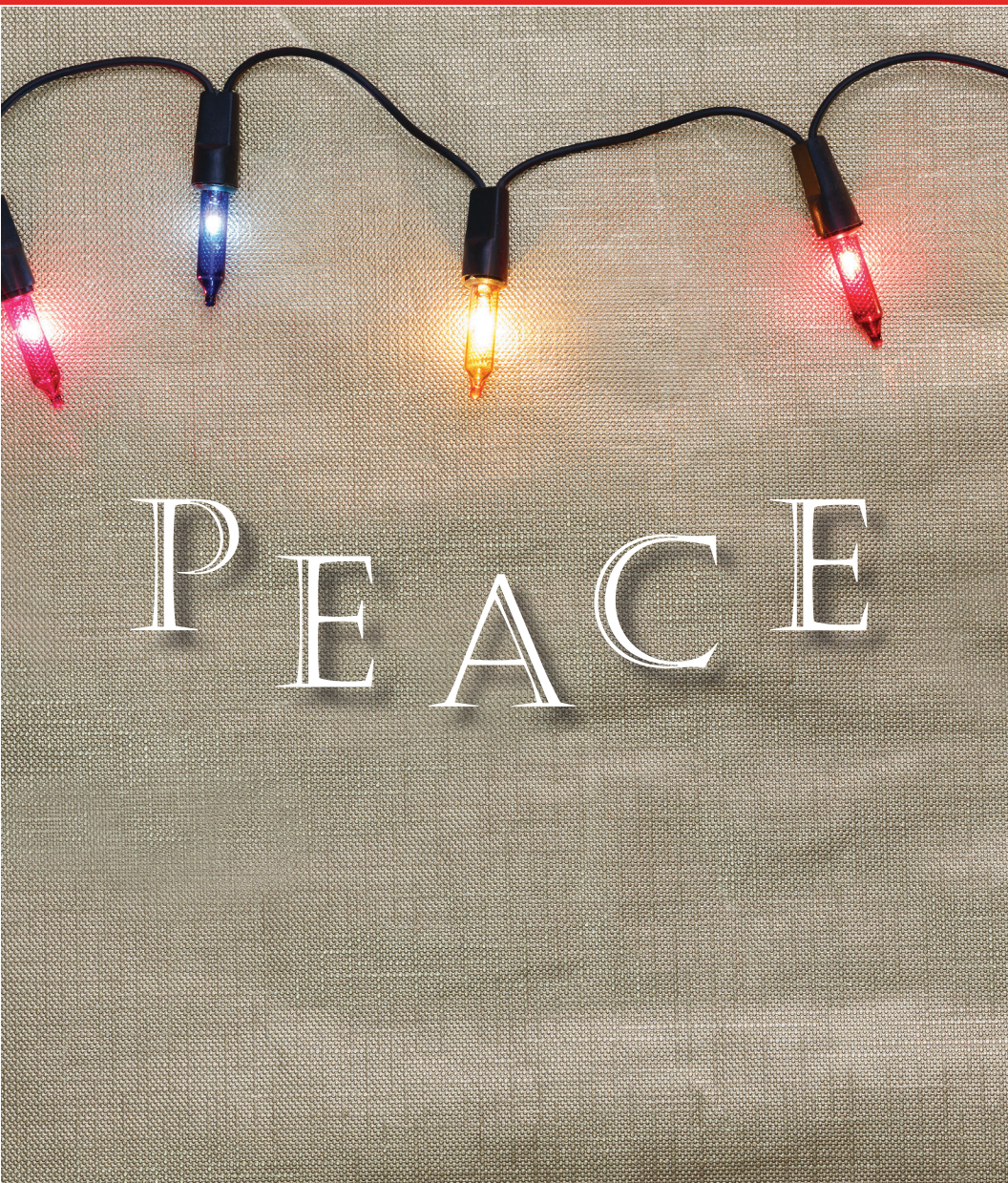
God is saying to us, "Trust me, I have everything under control. I know what hardships you are facing and I am here to help you. I know what I am doing. I have your best interest in mind, 'For I know the plans that I have for you.'"

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank the LORD for His plans for your future.
- Give the LORD total control of your future as your sacrifice to Him.
- Make a commitment to keep this verse near to your heart as you continue to relinquish control of your future.



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# Christmas gives us

## 1. Advent Video - Peace



2.



## Prince of Peace

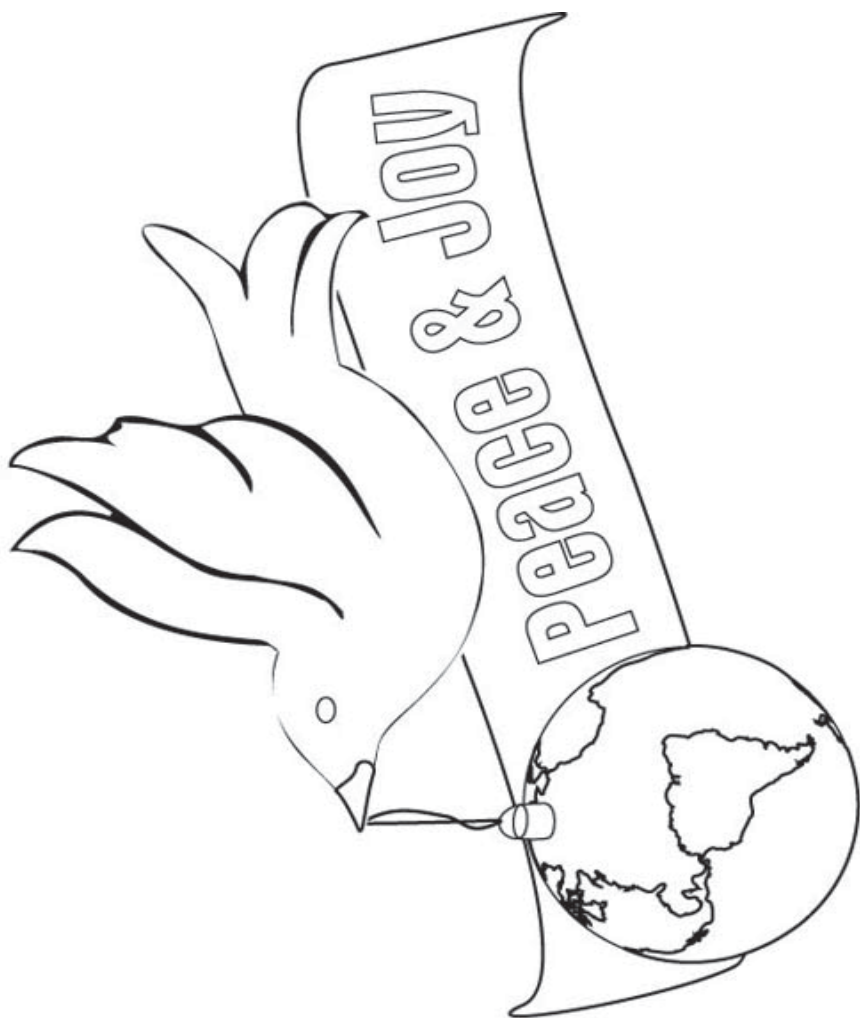


## 3. Color the dove

## 4. Silent Night Song Video



# Peace!





# SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4

## Scripture

*"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* - John 16:33

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Peace. One of the great moments of the Christmas story comes as the angels burst forth and declare to those terrified shepherds - "Peace on earth, good will toward men." Peace is certainly an essential theme of Christmas. In John 16:33 Jesus said "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace..." As we live in Christ we should have peace. Do you? Are you living with the permeating peace of God? We know what we have in the world, Jesus clearly said it: "In this world you will have trouble." So here is the truth: all of us will find trouble, anxiety and difficulties because we live in this fallen world.

Because Jesus came to earth on that blessed night, because of the promise of Christmas, we have a new possibility - Jesus says "take heart! I have overcome the world."

Will you overcome your trouble, anxiety and difficulties by living in His peace?

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Cast all your cares on Him because He cares for you. Please lay down your burdens and accept His peace.
- Pray that you might carry the message of His peace with you today wherever you go.
- Pray that God might use you today to remind others that Jesus has overcome the world.

# MONDAY, DECEMBER 5

## Scripture

*“Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.” - Luke 2:14*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Why is it that Christmas can actually feel like one of the least peaceful times of the year? There is the stress of dealing with long lines at stores or just trying to determine the right gift for someone. There is the stress that may come from dealing with family or the pain of going through the holidays without someone you love. Then there is the reality that our world can seem anything but peaceful.

Christmas can easily become something we just want to get through and survive. And this is pretty ironic since Christmas is also the time of year when we sing so many songs about peace. With all the energy we spend singing about peace, this can be the time of year when we seem to have the least peace.

In the midst of the Christmas season, don't miss the peace the angels spoke about when they appeared to the shepherds. Don't miss the peace in the songs you sing. Jesus came to provide a way to have peace with God. Jesus paid the price for sin so you could experience a peace that lasts for eternity.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- What areas of your life need peace? Who do you know that needs to experience the peace that Jesus brings?
- Ask Jesus to provide you with peace and pray for those who need peace.
- Ask God to help you bring the peace of Christ to others this Christmas season.



# TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6

## Scripture

*For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. - Isaiah 55:12*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

PEACE - We all desire it, need it and find strength with It. It effects every aspect of our being - body, mind, soul and strength. Yet, it can be more elusive than any other Christian virtue, coming and going with the change of thought, blink of an eye or passing of a second. The same peace, that once was stolen away - must now be reclaimed through an inner acknowledgement that right here, right now, I accept a condition beyond myself, yes, I am placing myself unto and into Christ's ever-present love, joy and peace. For "every yes is found in Him" [II Cor. 1:20], "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto You." [John 14:27], that the "Peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ." [Phil. 4:7]. Yes, let us take up our "shoes of peace", because Jesus overcame!

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Lord, we praise You for being our greater peace. Oh that the things of this world may never replace your prominence, priority and position as first love, conquering king and He that fulfills all! Yes Jesus, we take your yoke upon us today!
- Father, deliver any thought or posture that pulls us away from You. May we remember, Your words of peace: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in Me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from Me you can do nothing" [John 15:5].
- Lord, as each day unfolds, place Your peace upon us! That in Your presence, we will have fullness of joy, inner calm and sustained trust. Continually bring to mind Your words; "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear;" [I John 4:8]

# WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7

## Scripture

*"For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility."*

- Ephesians 2:14

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

"I'm moving to Canada if \_\_\_\_\_ becomes president." Remember hearing that in November? Well, elections are over, did anybody *really* move? The problem with placing your Peace in a person is that it spurs us on to make these kinds of declarations. If our peace is in Christ, then come what may, our peace and resolve cannot be shaken because Christ, not the POTUS is our hope and strength. We don't have to agree with all that is going on in the world or even in our own nation, but we *should* be filled with Christ's Love and Peace, not hostility and anger. I *love* Christmas because it's a time of good cheer and glad tidings, so be resolved in *your* own heart to do the same. Rather than protest, *pray*, Christ came to bring Unity and Peace to *all* who believe in Jesus Christ.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray for our government and it's leaders.
- Pray that God will use you/your family as instruments of His Peace
- Pray that God will bring PEACE to those living in exile and under persecution for their faith.

# THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8

## Scripture

*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. - Romans 14:17*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

I can think back to a time when I told God to leave me alone and go get somebody else to be his servant. I did that for a couple of reasons. One, I was not interested in living right. Second, I was having too much fun by not living right! I guess you could say I believed that God was the cosmic killjoy who makes you go to church all the time and takes away all your fun. I definitely was not interested in letting the great killjoy steal all my fun.

Look at our Scripture for today. The kingdom of God is all about righteousness, peace and joy through the Holy Spirit. I gave up my "fun" in order to know His joy. I gave up my right to rule my own life to live in His kingdom. The result? Instantaneous peace.

Need some peace? I suggest surrender.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Are you lacking in peace? Have you evaluated your surrender? Where Christ rules there is peace. Pray that you will give up all your false notions about surrendering to Him.
- Are there "unrighteous" things in your life that are robbing you of peace? Pray that you will be willing to surrender these to Jesus.
- Are you experiencing the true peace that is in Jesus? Take some time to thank God.

# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9

## Scripture

*"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."*

- John 14:27

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Don't we all want to have peace in our lives? God promises His believers that we will have peace. Peace is knowing that we are His and cannot be snatched away. Peace is knowing that we are no longer His enemies, but live in harmonious relationship with Him. This peace is not promised to the lost, but to us, His children. It is a peace that comes from living according to His will. It is a peace that we experience when we allow the Holy Spirit to direct us. How many times have we been in situations that were anything but peaceful, yet we felt the Lord's peace? We can walk fearlessly knowing that the Lord is with us always. What a wonderful gift! What a gift only God can give! Let us walk in the peace that He has provided to us, His followers.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Ask yourself if you are experiencing the full peace that the Lord has for you. Ask the Lord to show you how you can receive that peace.
- Thank the Lord for His free gift of salvation, a gift that is priceless. We do not need to live in fear or be troubled because we are His.
- Praise the Lord for the peace that He gives, a peace that passes all understanding, a peace that comes through the Holy Spirit.

# SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10

## Scripture

*Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. - Psalm 85:10*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

From Creation, the problem had been unfolding: sin, the separator. Holy God exposed man's missing the mark by providing the Law (10 Commandments, etc.). A temporary fix, needing yearly, bloody sacrifice, seemed to be the norm, and some even thought, it might go on and on like this. And many missed the crucial intersection... that of lovingkindness meeting truth; of righteousness meeting peace. Peace...a word that springs to many minds when Christmas approaches. Is peace a snowy, quiet night, with colored lights sparkling on a dying or fake evergreen tree, with a fire crackling in the fireplace and Perry Como crooning from the Bose system? No, peace has little to do with outward settings. Peace is when the PROBLEM has been solved. When lovingkindness of Holy God says "I will pay the price." When the angels announce "Glory to God in the highest and on earth...peace"...yes. This Christmas...discover peace. You can.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Think...How deeply rooted is my peace?
- Think...what does it mean to me that righteousness and peace have kissed each other? That lovingkindness and truth have met together?
- Pray...Jehovah-Shalom, Lord our Peace, help me not to settle for external peace, which is really no peace at all. Help me to plant myself at the intersection of righteousness and peace, of lovingkindness and truth, until I get it. The problem has been solved. You have paid the price. Peace.



ALL I WANT FOR  
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# Christmas gives us

## 1. Advent Video - Joy



2.



## Bugtime Adventure: Joy to the World



## 3. Color the Joy banner

## 4. Joy to the World Song Video

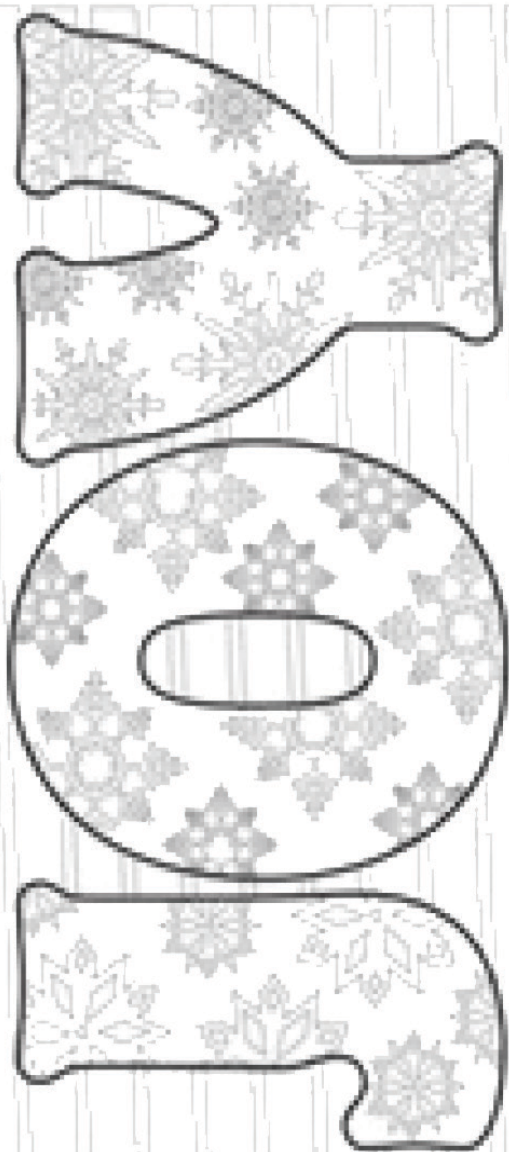


## 5. Family Activity: Spread Christmas JOY!

Take time as a family to make Christmas cookies and deliver them to someone special or a community helper.



Joy!



# SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11

## Scripture

*He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth... - Luke 1:14*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

The words of the angel in Luke 1:14 are referring to John the Baptist, but that could also easily apply to his cousin Jesus. He will be a joy and delight to you, the verse begins; I agree Jesus is a joy and a delight. This Christmas season is a joy and delight. Take a moment and think through all the reasons why you love the Christmas season. Time with friends and family, a break from a hectic schedule, all the amazing holiday food, I could go on and on. But let me ask you this, in this season is Jesus a joy and delight to you? Just Jesus? Are you growing closer to Him this December or is all the busyness and the shopping and the holiday get togethers pulling you away from Christ? Stop-Breath-Pray.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- As you pray remember that Jesus is a joy and delight.
- Pray that as you go about your day the presence of Christ would keep you in perfect peace and overflowing with joy.
- Pray that you might be the light of the world today as you interact with a lost and lonely world.

# MONDAY, DECEMBER 12

## Scripture

*The wise men left Herod's chambers and went on their way. The star they had first seen in the East reappeared—a miracle that, of course, overjoyed and enraptured the wise men. The star led them to the house where Jesus lay. - Matthew 2:9-10 (The Voice)*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Finding joy can be a real challenge. Our culture seems to be in continual pursuit of joy. People look for just the right gift to buy or they hope they receive a the gift that will bring them joy. People attend Christmas parties, family gatherings, and look forward to the joy that comes from their favorite Christmas dessert. There are even people who attend church looking for joy. People long to experience joy.

Real joy isn't a goal or an achievement. The gift you had to have doesn't produce real joy. It only lasts for a short time. Real joy is a response to something that happens to you.

When the star reappeared, the wise men were filled with joy because they were about to witness the very joy they longed to experience. They recognized Jesus was the Messiah, the very one God sent to provide what the world needed.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Where do you turn for joy? Give thanks for the joy that comes through the birth of Jesus.
- Who do you know that needs joy? Pray for those you know who need to experience the joy that comes from Jesus.
- Pray for God to provide you opportunities to share with others the joy you have found in Christ.

# TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13

## Scripture

*Honor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his place.*

- I Chronicles 16:27

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

JOY - that Supernatural delight in the promises, people and person of God. Yes, "...say evermore, "Great is the Lord, who delights in the welfare of His servant." [Psalm 35:27]. For you - a good, loving and gracious God find such delight in us, Your created image-bearers, that even in the midst of tumultuous and impending dismay - we are to be hopeful and victorious through Christ who strengthen us! As: "The seventy returned with joy saying, "Lord, in Your name even the demons submit to us!" [Luke 10:17] So, we too, are to encounter every battle in mind, body and spirit with engaging joy... knowing "Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning." [Psalm 30:5] - Yes, Jesus: our "Bright and Morning Star", has delivered us from darkness into the light of supernatural delight! "Amen! ...glory and ...honor ...be to our God forever...!" [Rev. 7:12].

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank You Jesus, our sanctuary. Let us continually retreat to You - our sacred place, for You are right here now, Closer than a breath, interceding before the Father ,... Longing to offer joy abounding beyond imagination to those who draw near!
- Heavenly Father, let us find the person of Jesus as our solace, strength and significance - Let us find the people of God as our communion, confidant and cord not easily broken - and let us find the promises of God as our "joy and delight of the heart"!
- Come Holy Spirit, we welcome You here.... instill a God-given hunger and thirst for Your righteousness, God-ordained appointments throughout our day and God-pleasing words, thoughts and actions. All of which display Your continual fruit of joy!

## Scripture

*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.*

- James 1:2 (NASB)

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

The last thing I want to do when I am struggling is to "consider it a joy." It feels more obvious that trials produce more *complaining* than they do *praise*. Most of the time it's because our focus is off. If the purpose of this world is to provide endless pleasures, then I rate this planet a D+.

On Amazon, they give reviews of products that have withstood the test of time. This period of usage is what will make the product more valuable because it is able to withstand time and trial. These reviews are a great way to figure out if something is really WORTH the investment you've made. For us, we are told to consider trials of faith as JOY because it reveals the true nature of our faith and upon what foundation it has been built. Knowledge of God's enduring Grace gives us true joy.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray for strength and wisdom for trials that you may be facing.
- Does your joy inspire others? Ask the Lord for joy during these times that your faith may be an encouragement to *others* who are struggling.
- Pray for the persecuted church in China that they may continue to have joy through their trials of faith.

## Scripture

*For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. - Hebrews 12:2b*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

A woman endures the pain of childbirth in order to experience the joy of loving a baby. Every loving parent knows there is pain to be endured over the course of raising children. On some level the argument could be made that pain is the price paid for loving. Because that is true some choose to not love. They protect their heart from the pain but they lose the joy that comes from loving.

God did not choose to protect his heart from pain. Because He loves He created knowing there would be great pain. Jesus bore the brunt of that pain. He endured the cross because there was a joy he could see. He focused on that joy as He hung on that cross. Do you know what that joy was?

It was you!

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Are you lacking in joy this holiday season? Pray that God will enable you to take the risks of loving and allow yourself the joy of seeing others blessed because you did!
- Do you avoid painful or difficult circumstances? You just might be avoiding opportunities to experience greater joy. Pray that God will open your eyes to the joy of enduring painful circumstances.
- Know someone who could use a little more joy? Take some time throughout your day to pray for them.



# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16

## Scripture

*For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.*

- Psalm 30:5

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

How often have we experienced the truth of this verse? I know there have been nights that I have wept over situations in my life, even after I had totally given the situation over to the LORD. Other times, I have been under attack, and all seemed hopeless as I cried out to the LORD for strength, for peace. At last sleep comes. Then I awaken in the morning to a totally new perspective. What was it that seemed so hopeless? Why was I so helpless and despairing in the night? Things do not look the same. I still feel sad, but it seems more endurable. In fact, I feel a sense of joy in my heart. A burden has been lifted. I am now in the morning of joy as the LORD has shown His light into my heart.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- As you pray, ask the LORD to show you times you have wept during the night. Then allow Him to show you those times He has ministered to you and you have awakened with joy in the morning.
- Ask the LORD to show you areas where you are currently struggling. Give them to Him.
- As you walk through this season, remember the promise the LORD give His people, "weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning."

# SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17

## Scripture

*"Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones; Praise is becoming to the upright. " - Psalm 33:1*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

God has our best interest in mind. He knows the path of hope that leads to peace and joy. Have you ever wondered why music and singing is such a big part of Christmas? Why we continue to sing old songs and continue to write new ones about God so loving us that He sent His only Son into the world to save us? What's your favorite Christmas song? Do you sing it with gusto and verve? If so, good for you! If not, why not? There are many reasons why we should sing praises to God for joy. Here's one you may not have realized: God says praise looks good on you; that singing for joy in the Lord makes you look better. It positively affects countenance. When people see/hear joy in you, they wonder what's up! And that gives you a chance to tell them about your joy.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Think...Would people consider me a person of joy?
- Think...Does my countenance reflect the hope, peace, and joy I have in my heart, mind, and life?
- Pray...Saving God, my heart is full when I think of what You have done for me! It makes me want to sing...and so I shall! This Advent season...no! Today...I will sing for joy in You, Lord. I want to look my best. I want my countenance to reflect You to others. Sing... "Joy to the world, the Lord is come..."



ALL I WANT FOR  
*Christmas* IS...



LOVE

# Christmas gives us

## 1. Advent Video-Love



2.



## Red Boots for Christmas



## 3. The Little Drummer Boy - Christmas Song Video - Christmas Special Carol - Popular Melody



## 4. Color the picture of the manger

## 5. Family Activity: A Pound Family Tradition

One of our favorite Christmas traditions is to have our kids take turns sharing the Christmas Story. On different nights they tell the Christmas story using a favorite



# Love!

Nativity book or Children's Bible. They love the responsibility of sharing the Nativity in their own words. This is a wonderful way to keep Jesus at the heart of Christmas.

# JESUS



**...and you shall call His name Jesus,  
for He will save His people from their sins.  
Matthew 1:21**

# SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

## Scripture

*Let all that you do be done in love.* - 1 Corinthians 16:14 (NASB)

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Take a moment away from the busyness of this holiday season and focus on this verse of scripture. 1 Corinthians 16:14, "Let all that you do be done in love." I am praying for you today that you remember the birth of Christ in relation to this truth, Jesus did everything because of Love. You are called to love. One of the greatest tragedies of the Christmas season is that this season of love can become so busy, so crowded, so overwhelming that we forget to love others. We can get short with our families, we can get impatient with coworkers, we can even be rude to strangers. Pray this today- that all you do could be done in love.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray this today- that all you do could be done in love.
- Pray for someone you know is struggling this holiday season.
- Pray for the opportunity to show someone today the love of Christ.

# MONDAY, DECEMBER 19

## Scripture

*May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. - Ephesians 3:19 (NLT)*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

We use the word love a lot. People love Christmas time. People love carols. People love cookies, candy canes, their iphone, their car, dog, or sweater. It is easy to use that word, but really hard to back it up with action. Really loving people, everyone, is pretty difficult. Yet God comes to us, Immanuel, God with us. Through Jesus, God's love had a face. God's love had action. God's love becomes real, tangible, something we can see.

The birth of Jesus was so significant. The reality of what the birth of Jesus meant feels incomprehensible at times. Even the magi, the shepherds and Joseph and Mary didn't fully understand the love that was displayed through the birth of Jesus. Yet it was His birth that displayed God's incredible love for us and ultimately his plan of salvation for our sin.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- As you celebrate the birth of Jesus this Christmas, may you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully.
- Give thanks for God's love displayed through the birth of Jesus.
- Ask God to help you display God's love by the way you love others through your words and actions.

## Scripture

*And our brothers and sisters defeated him by the blood of the Lamb's death and by the message they preached. They did not love their lives so much that they were afraid of death. - Revelation 12:11*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

LOVE - that act of the will that seeks another's highest good. It overcomes, it endures, is never wasted and it takes away fear and hopelessness. Love reigns supreme, as Jesus said: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." [Matt. 22:37]. God, who is love [I John 4:8], further says: "Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins." [I Peter 4:8]. Yes, love conquers all, covers all and captures all... it is the essence of God Himself. We then, are called to love Him in return: "but anyone who loves God is known by Him." [I Cor. 8:3] Oh that we may choose to love the One who gave all "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." [John 10:11]

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Father, let us cherish life *in* Christ more each day. That as we *abide* in Your love, we may know the height and depth of Your pinnacle love... Jesus! For only by His sacrifice, His stripes and His scars we are redeemed, beloved of the Father!! Thank you, Jesus!
- Lord, thank You that all we need is found in Jesus. Yes, He who layed down His life and took it back three days later - He who knew *no* sin, that became sin - and He who conquered, such that the gates of hell will not prevail!
- Lord, we acknowledge the flesh is weak, but Your spirit is strong. Yes, we are in desperate need of Your truth and wisdom. That even in the demise of a fading life - knowing only 120 years are allowed: we take solace in Jesus, conquering sin and death *forevermore*!



## Scripture

*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. - Romans 5:8 (ESV)*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

October 2nd, 2006 an astonishing act of forgiveness and Love was displayed towards the family of Charlie Roberts. He took his own life after shooting 10 Amish girls and yet, the families of these children were moved with compassion and forgiveness and went to bring comfort and forgiveness to the family of the very man who was the cause of their own grief.

We marvel when we hear stories and wonder what kind of love we would be able to show under those circumstances. Yet Jesus Christ is our example. Long before we were made aware of our offense towards God, long before we even committed our first sin, over 2,000 years ago, Christ died to bring forgiveness. Grace was shown, love given, even as we were enemies of the Cross. True love means giving up our own entitlement to feelings of anger and revenge to simply, forgive.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- If there is anyone you have been hesitant to forgive, consider what first steps you need to take in order to reconcile with them.
- Ask the Lord to give you strength to show love in the midst of difficult situations and tragedies.
- What act of kindness can you show this Christmas to "Love your neighbor as yourself?" Make a plan with your family/friends to bake some cookies or a treat to share.

# THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22

## Scripture

*"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love." - John 15:9*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Think about something you love. No doubt there is enjoyment and delight wrapped up in that love. Now think about how the Father loves the Son. Surely there is pure joy and the utmost delight. Now think about how much the Father loves you. According to Jesus He loves us in the same way, or as much as, He loves Jesus. Look at the Scripture for today. Somebody needs to know this. No, many somebodies need to know this. Not only does the Father love you...He loves you just as much as He loves Jesus. Stay with that. Let it sink in. Don't deflect it away. Remain in His love.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Throughout your day whisper a simple prayer thanking the Father that He loves you.
- Perhaps there is someone you know that has a hard time believing God loves them. Take a few moments and pray for that someone.
- Do you have doubts about God's love? Ask God to help you overcome those doubts.

# FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23

## Scripture

*"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." - John 15:12-13*

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

Jesus commanded us to love one another with a love so great that we are willing to lay down our lives for our friends. Yet Jesus did not stop there. He laid down His own life for us, so that we could be in relationship with the Father. Jesus not only told us what to do, He did it. That is God's love. That is God's character. If we were asked to describe God with one word it would be "love."

God's love sees the need, and fulfills the need. We are called to do the same. The motivation of our hearts should be that as Christ loved us unconditionally, we in return as His children, should show unconditional love to others, especially our brothers and sisters in Christ. This love is without limitation in that we would make the supreme sacrifice for another, just as Christ did for us.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank your Heavenly Father for His gift of love, through His Son, Jesus Christ. Meditate on the supreme sacrifice God made for you.
- Ask the Lord to show you people in your life whom you can share the love of Jesus with. Show them sacrificial love, expecting nothing in return.
- Thank the Lord that no matter what, you are His. Allow His goodness and His grace to fill you. Share that goodness and grace with others.

# SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24

## Scripture

*In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

- 2 Timothy. 4:8

## DEVOTIONAL MESSAGE

So this is a twist on the word "Love" during Christmas. We usually think of how God loved us enough to send His Son into the world to save us from our sin, which is a good thing for us to do! The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy that we should "love His [Jesus'] appearing." It made me think of the relatively few who loved His first appearing when He was born in Bethlehem. The shepherds loved it. The wisemen loved it. Simeon and Anna loved it. I wonder...will we love His second appearing? Are we eager for it? Are we living our lives in light of the fact that Jesus could return soon? John wrote that we love because He first loved us. We can love the day of His appearing because we KNOW that He loves us.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- Think...Am I looking for Jesus' return?
- Think...Am I living as if Jesus may return today?
- Pray...Maranatha! Lord, come quickly. I am so thankful that you appeared in Bethlehem so many years ago, to give your life to save me from my sins. I long for your second appearing, when peace, joy and love will reign in You! Help me to love Your coming, Your advent.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25



Merry Christmas!

# Christmas gives us

## 1. **The Legend of the Candy Cane - The Candymaker's Gift - Video**



### **Candy Cane Poem**

Look at the Candy Cane  
What do you see?

Stripes that are red  
Like the blood shed for me

White is for my Savior  
Who's sinless and pure!

"J" is for Jesus My Lord, that's for sure!

Turn it around  
And a staff you will see  
Jesus my shepherd  
Was born for Me!

## 2. **Family Activity: Christmas Outreach**

Use the Candy Cane Poem above to make Christmas postcards. Tape mini candy canes



# Jesus!

to each postcard. Each family member memorizes one line to share the poem at local nursing homes, offices, or at a family celebration. This is a wonderful opportunity to minister together and share the true meaning of Christmas.

### 3. **Color the picture of the candy cane**



# JOIN US FOR CHRISTMAS!

December 23..... 7pm

## Christmas Eve Eve Candlelight Service

Swasey Chapel, Denison University

*No childcare provided. Please enjoy worshipping together as a family.*

December 24..... 5pm & 7pm

## Christmas Eve Service

Spring Hills Baptist Church Worship Center

*Childcare provided 5pm service ONLY for children birth-kindergarten.*

December 25..... 10am

## Christmas Day Service

Spring Hills Baptist Church Worship Center

*No childcare provided. Please enjoy worshipping together as a family.*

## SPRING HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH

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