

# ADVENT

# DEVOTIONAL

DEC 10-16 SECOND WEEK

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In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made;  
without him nothing was made that has been made.

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.

(John 1:1-5)



As a society, we know how to prepare for Christmas. Children write Christmas lists. We shop and buy presents. We choose and decorate a Christmas tree. We take family photos and send out Christmas cards. We bake cookies. We get together with friends and family. We listen to Christmas music and watch Christmas movies. All of these are wonderful, and all of them can serve as a reminder that we can prepare for Christmas in other ways too.

This devotional is an opportunity to meet with God each day in the Advent season—to prepare our hearts to see and hear God in new ways as we meditate on the fact that Christ our Savior was born in Bethlehem, that the Holy Spirit is here with us now, and that Christ is coming again. Advent is a time to remember some of the gifts that Jesus brings to us: Joy, Peace, Light, Hope, and Love. We hope your heart receives these gifts in greater fullness throughout this Christmas season.

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## **December 10, 2017**

*He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. (Mark 4:39–40)*

*They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?" (Luke 8:25)*

Before Jesus woke up, the disciples were afraid of the winds and the water. After the storm, they were afraid of Jesus.

We might think of peace as peace of mind during a tough time, or a quiet moment to put our feet up and breathe, and sometimes it is. But here we see peace as the powerful in-breaking of the rule of God into our world, setting things right and turning our understanding of the world upside-down in the process.

*"Who then is this... ?!"*

How would you answer the disciples question?

Is God's peace coming to you in a way that is unexpectedly uncomfortable?

This Christmas, what kind of peace are you looking for?

**December 11, 2017**

*... the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. (1 John 1:2–4)*

*that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus. (Acts 3:20)*

Jesus is here as our source of refreshing and makes our joy complete when we spend time with Him, yet we often try other things first.

What are some ways you refuel?

Do you find it satisfying and long lasting?

A few ways to draw close to God include prayer, Bible study, and worship. How do you connect with the Lord?



## **December 12, 2017**

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.*

*And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. (Isaiah 9:6–7a)*

Seven centuries before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote these verses. It's the most remarkable promise, a flame of hope. But the people of Israel waited hundreds of years before this promise was fulfilled.

Advent is an opportunity to remember that in God's promises, waiting plays a prominent role. It may be uncomfortable for us, but waiting is the natural order of things, and we shouldn't be surprised by it or think we need to DO something to rush the process, or to make things happen.

What are you waiting for in this season? Are you experiencing despair? Disappointment? Expectation? Confidence? Consider asking God for a verse or an image to hold onto while you wait. He might

even have something for you to do in the season of waiting—ask Him.

## **December 13, 2017**

*Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance... (Romans 5:3)*

*For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. (2 Corinthians 1:5)*

*... In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)*

Jesus is here to comfort and support us in our suffering. We can rejoice that He is our source of strength and helps us to overcome.

We sometimes think of suffering as punishment, failure, or the result of a lack of favor with the Lord. How do the above scriptures challenge this perspective? Think of an area of suffering in your life. Offer it up to the Lord and receive his comfort.



**December 14, 2017**

*As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:10–11)*

*Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. (Hebrews 11:1)*

In this darkness as winter approaches and we wait for the celebration of Jesus' birth, I would encourage you to light a candle and trust that the light that has been promised to you, the hope that has been promised to you, the dream that has been conceived in you, is all coming. It is on its way.

What has God spoken to you? What has he promised? Take some time to write down promises God has given to you. You can do this in a journal, or you could write them on pieces of paper and put them in a box or a jar. Leave those promises with Jesus with a trust that those promises won't fail, that his words will accomplish their purpose. Remember how Israel waited and be encouraged that God's purpose will come to pass in your life.



## **December 15, 2017**

*"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail." "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:34–38)*

Faced with a life-changing situation, Mary responded with humility. How do you respond to the unexpected? Are there ways that God is asking you to adjust your thoughts and attitudes toward situations you are facing?

Spend a few minutes imagining Mary's encounter with the angel. Consider how young she was and all she had at stake. Her reputation was on the line. Can you relate to this in any way? Imagine how you might face challenging situations as Mary did — with humility and with obedience.



## **December 16, 2017**

*Gideon said, "Help me, Lord God! For I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face." But the Lord said to him, "Peace be to you; do not fear, you shall not die." Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it, The Lord is Peace. (Judges 6:22–24)*

*I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world! (John 16:33)*

Gideon lived under the persecution of Israel's enemies. He was just trying to make it. He wasn't looking to be a hero. But God chose him to deliver Israel. After his encounter with the angel of the Lord, he built an altar and called it, The Lord is Peace. Uh...wait a minute

Gideon, you haven't even had the battle yet, let alone won it.  
Shouldn't you wait until after the battle to have the peace party?

Jesus says, he has *conquered* the world, past tense. He says in Him we *have* peace, present tense. And yet in the same breath he says in the world we *will* face persecution, future tense. Huh?

How are we meant to experience the effect before the cause, the end before the means, the peace before the battle?

Is there a situation in your life where you need to build an altar and call it peace before you see the circumstances change?



