

The Gift of Rest

23 Days of Experiencing Sabbath
Through Advent





“ —

WELCOME TO OUR 2023 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL!

Christmas comes but once a year, as they say in so many stories and poems, but there is a whole season devoted to preparation, reflection, and celebration of the coming of the Newborn King.

This season is called Advent, and this year we are going to focus on the power and gift of Sabbath.

Sabbath is a very churchy word, but it is a gift and a spiritual practice the Lord calls us to experience. We can lose sight of so much in the hustle and bustle of the season, and miss the fact that the Lord wants us to fully know that He is the Lord.

We hope this Advent Devotional, written by Susie Hoffmann, will be an inspirational guide and tool, as we explore the gift of Sabbath, and engage in practices of rest and reflection experiencing the Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love of Jesus Christ.

Let's dive in!

DECEMBER 3

First Sunday of Advent

Mary Trusted God

*“For the word of God will never fail.”
Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant.
May everything you have said about me come true.”*

Luke 1:37-38

When Mary was visited by the Angel of the Lord, she was told not to be afraid because she had favor with God. She was reminded that God’s word would never fail.

Mary could believe all of these things because she spent time with God. She had hope for the future because she trusted God. She knew there were going to be hard times, but God’s word could be trusted so she believed all that was said to her.

Mary could have hope and trust because her cousin Elizabeth, who was very old, was going to have a baby. What a miracle that was! Mary had a relationship with God and she knew what His word said and she knew she was blessed to give birth to the Son of God.

Mary held on to the positives along the way because she knew they would get her through the hard times.

When we have unwavering love for the Lord, then we can have hope and rest knowing God is in charge and we can trust Him to handle things. Let's think of what hope looks like in our lives and thank God for it. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Father God, thank you for the blessing and hope you gave to Mary. Help us to know we can have the same hope because of your love for us. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 4

First Week of Advent

Hope Helps Us Rejoice

“Mary responded, ‘Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!’”

Luke 1:46-47

When we read all the things about Mary and her life, it is hard at times to see how her spirit could rejoice over all the trials she was going to face.

The things we are looking at this week: hope and trust, made whatever Mary was going to face seem bearable. She knew that God was going to see her through and that when God was in control, she couldn't fail.

When we have hope like Mary, we can rejoice in difficult times. Trusting that God will always be here with us helps us to have hope when we don't see it right away.

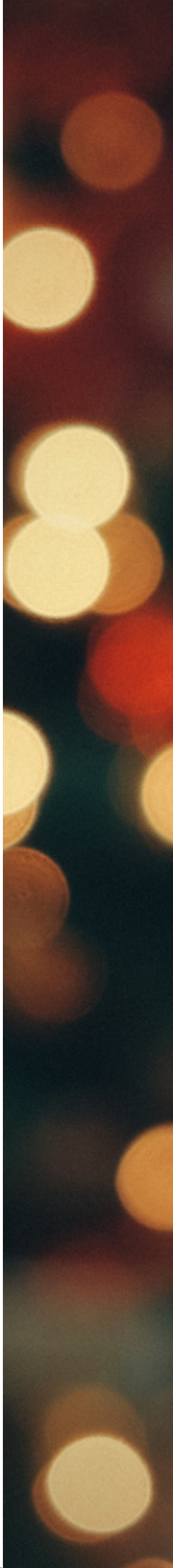
Mary is a great example of the blessings that come from resting and spending time with God. I'm sure that when the angel came to her, she could hear because it was quiet. She could ask questions and know that the answers could be counted on to happen.

What great hope she must have had when she knew she was giving birth to the Son of God. She trusted God to do as He said and give her the support and encouragement she needed. She truly was blessed to be chosen, even though she would have hard times.

Each of us have a calling for our lives and it is a blessing to have that. There will be hard times, but God will get us through. When we follow the path He has set before us, others will be blessed as well.Let's spend some quiet time with the Lord and see if we are on the right path. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Help us remember that He is the reason for Christmas. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 5

First Week of Advent

Open Your Eyes

“To open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God’s people, who are set apart by faith in me.”

Acts 26:18

Sometimes when I am overwhelmed and trying to hear or think, I close my eyes. Sometimes I close my eyes because I don’t want to see something that is on TV or something that is going on around me.

The problem with this is that with my eyes closed, I can’t move at all because I can’t see. I am stuck in the darkness.

When we are under the influence of Satan, he wants to keep us in the dark so we don’t see that there is a better way. When we are spending a Sabbath with the Lord, we can open our eyes and see what it is that He wants. We can see the sin we have committed and ask for forgiveness.

Sometimes we don’t open our eyes because we are comfortable in the place we are, even in sin. Also, we might be ashamed about what we have done so we stay in the dark.

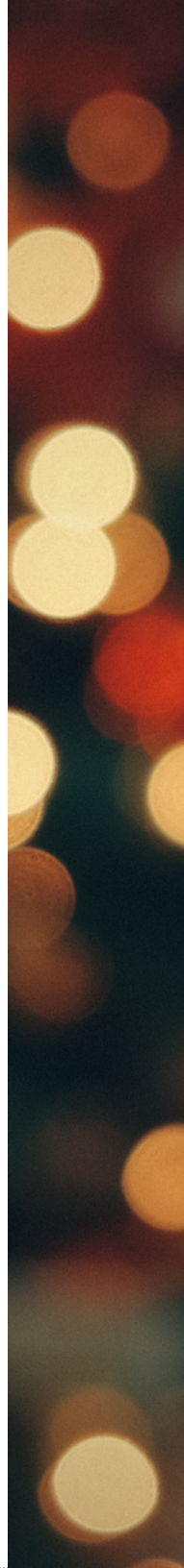
The reality is that God already knows what we have done and He is waiting for us to open our eyes and ask for forgiveness so we can put it behind us and follow Him.

Let's take some time to ask the Lord if there are things we are keeping our eyes closed to. Then we can open our eyes and see how God's way is so much better.

We will be glad we did. It is so much easier to celebrate the birth of Jesus when we are on good terms with Him.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for giving us an opportunity to open our eyes to what you have for us. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 6

First Week of Advent

Look to the Future

“So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.”

2 Corinthians 4:18

Sometimes we get so stuck in the day-to-day things of this world that it is hard to look to the future.

Jesus came to earth so that we would have the opportunity to spend eternity with Him. He brought hope for a future that looks good and where we will be able to sit at His feet and worship Him first hand.

God wants to spend time with us because He loves us and knows our potential. He isn’t helping us and guiding us just for today, He is doing it for a future with him.

God knows it is sometimes hard to look to the future because there is so much going on around us. We have so many responsibilities that we are just trying to keep up or for some of us, to catch up.

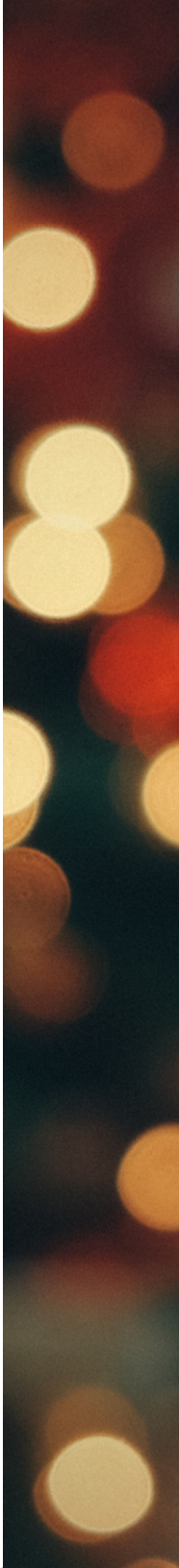
This is not what God had in mind for us.

When we take the time to quietly spend time in prayer, then we can set our problems down at His feet and listen for guidance. When we are quiet, we can hear what God is saying. We can look forward to a future with Him.

Let's take some time and think about the hope of the future God gives us. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for giving us hope for the future through Jesus Christ, your Son. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 7

First Week of Advent

A Sabbath Helps Us Focus

“How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!”

Luke 1:47

As we start this time of Advent leading up to Christmas, let's begin to focus on Jesus and what He has done for us.

It is hard to focus on the Lord when we are so busy with what we need to get done in order to celebrate Christmas. A time of rest and reflection helps us to put our focus where it should be; on the hope we have when we remember what Jesus has done for us.

When we take the time to be quiet and get close to God, then we can truly worship Him and appreciate what an awesome God He is. It gives us an opportunity to rejoice in God our Savior just as Mary did in this verse of scripture.

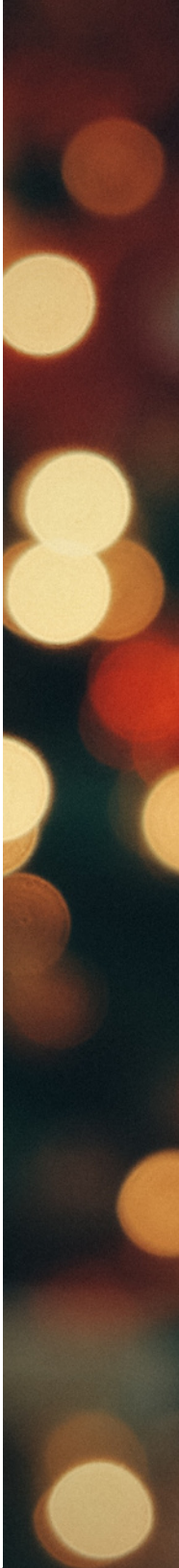
For me, the Sabbath isn't just about getting rest from working, it is about being sure that my focus is on the Lord and spending time with Him. When I write these devotions, God is reminding me as well as anyone who reads them, that He loves us and wants to spend time with us.

We often don't truly worship the Lord because we are so busy. As we put our focus on God, we are reminded what the true meaning is for celebrating Christmas in the first place.

Let's take some time and think about how we can better rest and focus on the Lord. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for giving us hope for the future through Jesus Christ, your Son. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 8

First Week of Advent

Building Trust in God

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.”

Proverbs 3:5-6

Any time we are in a relationship with someone, we must build trust in them. No one wants to be in a relationship with someone they can't trust, and the only way we can know if we can trust them is to spend time with them.

The same is true for God. In order to know we can trust Him; we need to spend time with Him and read His word. The more we see Him active in our lives, the more we will trust Him and be more willing to follow Him.

It is a blessing that God reminds us that we need rest and quiet time to better connect with Him.

I love my quiet time in the morning so I can pray and I can hear God when he speaks to me. I can think through things He has brought to mind and there are no distractions.

Any time we are spending time with the Lord is never wasted time. There will always be good that comes from it.

Let's take some time and spend it in quiet time with the Lord, then write down what we got from it. We may be surprised how much we got from that time, and we will be glad we did it.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gift of guidance. Help us to see over and over that we can trust you. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 10

Second Sunday in Advent

The Gift of Rest

"Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.'"

Matthew 11:28-29

Have you every been so tired that you felt it throughout your whole body?

I think this is the type of tired Jesus knew we would need help with. We get so busy that some people don't eat and they don't get the amount of rest that they need.

What a blessing that God knew all of this long before we were born and He knew it would be such an issue that He talked about it more than once in the Bible.

In this Christmas season, when we get so tired trying to make things good for our families, we can remember that rest is one of the best gifts Jesus came to bring us. Rest is so important for us. If we were to study the effects of rest on our bodies, we would see how even the world knows it's important.

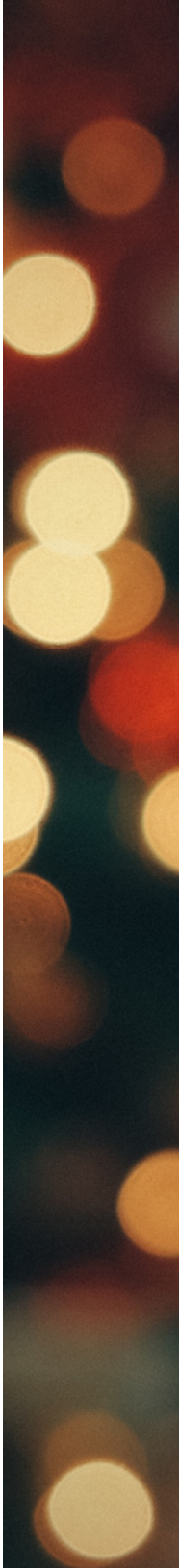
The example of Mary and Martha shows us how important Jesus felt sitting and listening to Him, resting in his presence, was to our wellbeing.

Martha was so busy and she was upset that Mary wasn't helping her. Jesus let her know that Mary was doing the right thing.

It seems there will always be one more thing for us to do, especially at Christmas, but Jesus is reminding us that He came to give us the gift of peace. He wants us to be the best we can be, not just at Christmas, but all year long. Let's take some time and think about how we can get more rest and, in that way, worship the Lord more. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gift of rest. Help us to use the gift and not just set it aside. Thank you for your love. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 11

Second Week in Advent

Our Source of Peace

“And he will stand to lead his flock with the Lord’s strength. In the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. Then his people will live there undisturbed, for he will be highly honored around the world. And he will be the source of peace.

Micah 5:4-5a

There is no doubt to me that this is one of the times when the Old Testament talks about Jesus.

It should give us comfort to see the scriptures are telling us Jesus is coming and He will have great strength, strength only God can give. He will be the source of peace.

What a blessing at this time of great upset in our world. Jesus did come to the world and he did bring peace. We need to get connected and stay connected to the source of peace – Jesus.

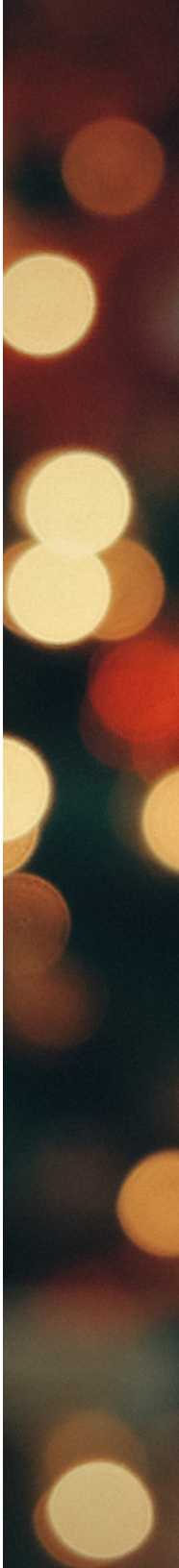
When I think of this peace, I think of having nothing to worry about, to know that Jesus has my back and there is nothing to be concerned about.

This is the kind of peace we all strive for, but few of us get there. Learning more about Jesus, especially at this time of year, will help us draw near to Him and help our new year to get off to a great start.

Let's take some time and think of ways we can eliminate the worry and draw closer to Jesus. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gift of rest. Help us to use the gift and not just set it aside. Thank you for your love. Amen.

NOTES:





DECEMBER 12

Second Week in Advent

Praise Brings Peace

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”

Luke 2:14

It is hard to be angry when we are praising God.

When we are spending our time telling others what God has done for us, then we are closer to having the peace we are looking for. When we are telling others about Jesus, we are thinking about Him and this will bring us peace.

When praising God, we are also focused on the important things of Advent: hope, peace, joy and love. All of these are things that Jesus came to earth to give us. They are gifts like no other.

No matter what age we are or what mistakes we have made in our lives, we can have peace that only God can give us.

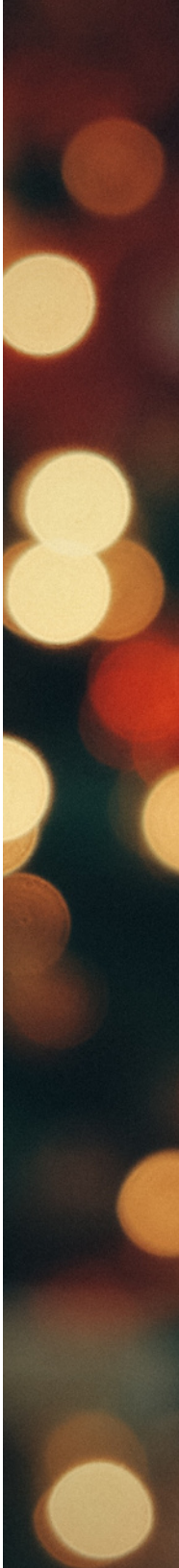
When we are praising God and telling others what He has done for us, we can't help but glow with the peace of God in us. That peace will flow from us and others will see it and feel it too.

Let's take some time and praise the Lord for the things He has done for us and through us. We will be glad we did.

Remember: when we are praising God and thanking Him for His Son Jesus, we will show others what they can have too.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the things you have done for us and through us. Help us to spend more time praising you and less time being overwhelmed by the world. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 13

Second Week in Advent

Focus on Jesus

"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

Christmas is all about Jesus. We have been taught that since we were small children.

Many families take the time to read the Christmas story to their children and we go to church on Christmas Eve to remember what Christmas is about.

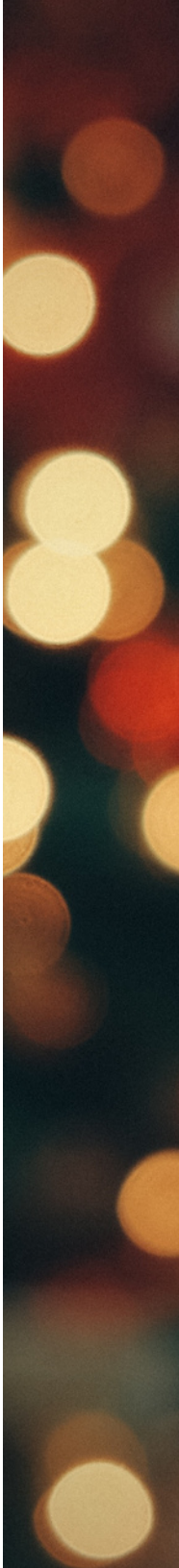
We have also seen that Christmas is about presents, decorations, cooking, and making things nice for our family and friends. Those things are not bad things, but they should not take more time than focusing on Jesus takes.

There is plenty of time in our lives when we have to focus on the hard times. That can't be helped. So, let's take this Christmas season to focus on Jesus more and rest more so we can be at our best and be a good reflection of Him.

Let's set some time each day to focus on Jesus and celebrate Him. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for coming to earth as the perfect example for us and our lives. Help us to remember to spend time with you each day and in that way put our focus in the right place. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 14

Second Week in Advent

Praise God for His Peace

“Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you His peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all.”

2 Thessalonians 3:16

What a wonderful thing it is to have peace and rest, especially at this time of year.

We get so busy trying to make the Christmas season good for our families and those around us that we forget we need rest and peace.

Peace and calm is a great gift from the Lord. When we rely on Him for everything, then these things come to us.

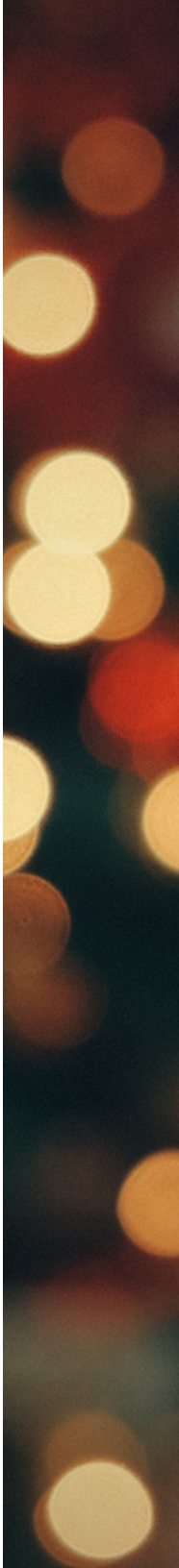
It is not always easy to remember that Jesus is what Christmas is all about. Sometimes He gets lost in the shuffle. This scripture reminds us that we don't just get peace, we get God's peace, a peace so great that it is hard to understand.

No matter what we are facing, we can have God's peace. This is one of the gifts we receive from the Lord and we focus on those gifts especially at Christmas. Jesus came as a baby to show us how to build our relationship with God from the beginning of life.

When we live knowing this then the peace of God can come over us and we will be able to accept it. Let's take some time and praise God for His gift of peace to us. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for coming to earth to show us how to live our best life. Help us to feel your peace in hectic times. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 15

Second Week in Advent

Wrapped Snugly in the Arms of the Lord

"In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe."

Psalm 4:8

I think one of the best things that give me comfort is to be wrapped in a warm blanket and sitting in a chair reading. At night when I go to sleep, I pray and then remind myself that God has kept me safe all the other nights and he will do it again.

I am sure it is comforting to imagine being wrapped in the arms of God. When this happens, we are safe and protected. This brings a peace like no other and then we can get good rest.

David reminds us in this scripture that he can lie down and have peace because He knows God will keep Him safe.

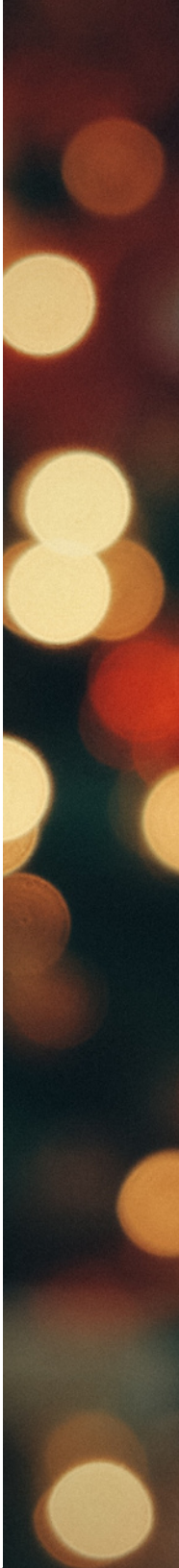
This is in the Bible, so we can count on it also. It can give us the same peace when we have faith that God keeps His word.

Let's take some time this Christmas season to feel the peace of being wrapped in the arms of God. We will be glad we did.

Let's take some time and spend it in quiet time with the Lord, then write down what we got from it. We may be surprised how much we got from that time, and we will be glad we did it.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gift of guidance. Help us to see over and over that we can trust you. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 17

Third Sunday in Advent

Joy and Feasting

Then He told the people to sit down on the grass. Jesus took the five loaves and two fishes, looking up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, He gave the bread to the disciples, who distributed it to the people. They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers. About 5,000 men were fed that day, in addition to all the women and children!

Matthew 14: 19-21 (Feeding of the 5000)

At Christmas there are a lot of times when we gather to eat.

I love to have people at our house at Christmas. I like to serve desserts; mainly cookies, then sit and get to know people better. This is a time to relax and enjoy the company of those you might not know that well.

It is also a good time to enjoy friends and family that you just don't take the time to get together with through the year.

There is truly joy in eating with others. A lot of time, eating is an icebreaker when you don't know someone well. It is also a time to laugh and have fun.

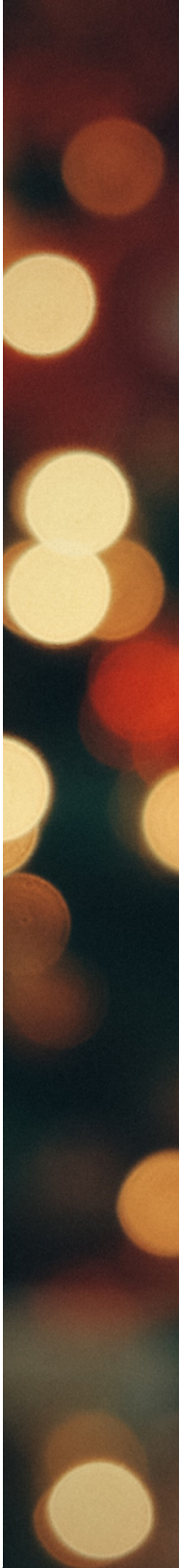
When the grandkids are in town, I love to find games to play and fun activities to do with them. It gets the whole family involved.

When we sit down with others over food, it is a time to rest and breath and get away from the hectic time of Christmas.

Let's take some time and think of things we can do to find joy and feasting together with others. It can be very simple and doesn't cost a lot. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for giving us examples when you fed others and the joy it brought to them and to you. Help us to find that joy this Christmas and show your love to others. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 18

Third Week in Advent

Pursue the Joy of Jesus

"I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him."

Romans 15:13

I have learned that very seldom do things that are worth having just drop in our laps. We must work for them and go after them.

It is the same with real joy in our lives. This joy only comes from Jesus. We need to pursue Jesus in order to find a joy that is hard for us to understand, but is the best thing ever!

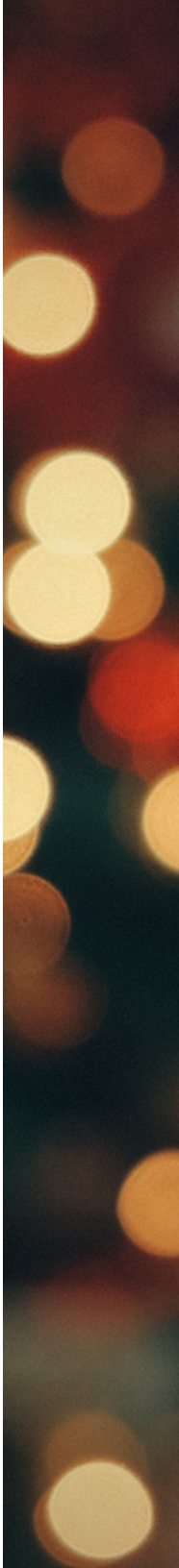
Just as Jesus pursues us, we need to go after Him. He has given us the opportunity to live with Him in eternity. He died for our sins. He came to earth to save us. That was His specific reason for coming.

He wants us to have a joy that is hard to understand here on earth, but is real. Only when we have a relationship with Him, do we have the chance of feeling that abundant joy. We are not asked to change so we can have a relationship with Him. We can go to Him just as we are and He will accept us.

What a blessing that is. Let's take some time and think of ways we can pursue Jesus in this Christmas season. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for showing us what it looks like to pursue someone. Thank you for pursuing us. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 19

Third Week in Advent

Do Not Be Afraid

"But the angel reassured them. 'Don't be afraid!' he said. 'I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior-yes, the Messiah, the Lord-has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!'"

Luke 2:10-11

One of the best things about the story of the birth of Jesus is the reassurance not to be afraid.

This is great news as this world is scary and it is not unusual to feel afraid. We are comforted over and over not to be afraid because Jesus is coming. He is coming to save us and so there is no reason to be afraid.

The same is true for us today; Jesus is here in our lives and so there is nothing to be afraid of. We can enjoy our lives and pursue what we are called to do because Jesus is with us and He can handle anything. We can rest easy knowing that there is nothing to fear.

In this Christmas season, let us remember that Jesus is here and that is why we are celebrating. It would be very difficult to celebrate if we were afraid all the time.

Jesus came so we could have a relationship with God. That is His gift to us. What a great gift!

As we rest and spend time with the Lord, we need to remember what a great gift Jesus is to us and that we can have peace because of Him. Let's take some time and thank God for the gift of Jesus. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gift of Jesus. Help us not be afraid to live our life bringing honor to Him. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 20

Third Week in Advent

Sabbath Time Brings Joy

"I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow."

John 15:11

One of the things that Christmas brings to mind for many of us is joy.

It might bring us joy when we sing Christmas carols or when we see the front of the church decorated so beautifully. Seeing the families who need help get the gifts their children want can bring joy to our hearts. We can be filled with joy when we play with our children or grandchildren.

There is also the quiet joy that is brought on by time with the Lord. This joy is knowing that in the midst of one of the busiest times of the year, we can take time to sit quietly with the Lord and listen to what He has to say.

It brings joy to know that we are pleasing God when we want to spend time with Him and we make that a priority.

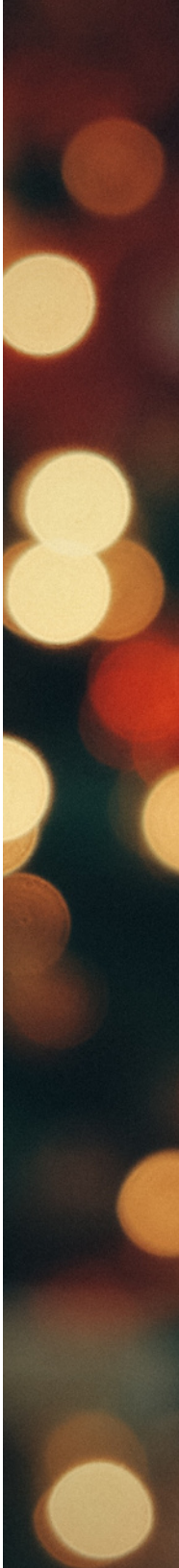
God wants us to be filled to overflowing with joy as the scripture says. The way to have this joy is to follow the example that Jesus has set.

Joy in spending time with the Lord is knowing that we have been blessed and we want to thank God for those blessings.

Let's take some time and think about what joy means to us and thank God for it. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for showing us what real joy can be. Thank you for never giving up on us. Help us to feel your joy during this Christmas season and beyond. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 21

Third Week in Advent

Children Are Joy

"The Savior-yes, the Messiah, the Lord-has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize Him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

Luke 2:11-12

I have been so blessed lately to be around babies. They are so much fun! They laugh and try to talk and they just seem filled with joy. The same goes for children. Little things make them laugh and they get so excited. That is pure joy.

I love the video on the computer of the father just ripping paper and the baby laughs so hard he falls over. It always makes me laugh.

I also see joy when I am playing a game with kids where they hide things and I try to find them. They get so excited that they can hardly stand it and sometimes they tell me where it is because they can't hold in the excitement anymore.

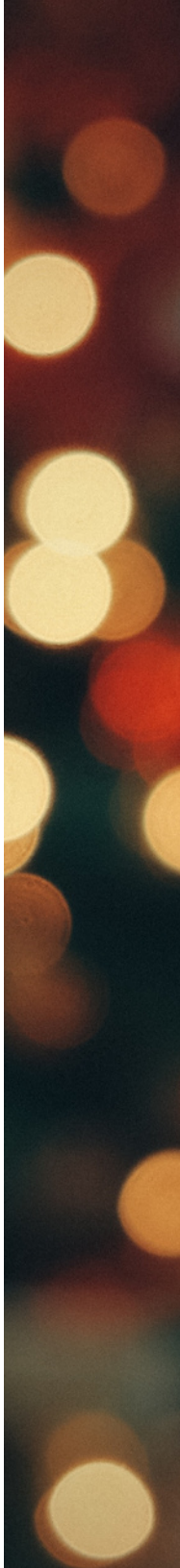
This is what joy looks like to me. Even in the midst of hard times, we can laugh and have fun because of the pure joy Jesus brings into our lives.

Jesus came to earth as a baby to guide us as He grew and show us what we need to do, then He died to save us. He showed us pure joy in different things He did. I am sure there were times when He laughed. He could feel real joy no matter what because of His relationship with the Father.

We can have that too. Let's take some time and think about what pure joy looks like to us. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for coming as a baby to show us how to grow in our relationship with you. Thank you for children and their laughter. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 22

Third Week in Advent

Filled With Joy

"I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow."

John 15:11

I have learned that the only way we can be filled with joy is to be confident that no matter what happens, God is active in our lives. He is in charge and He can handle anything.

The God who made the world and everything in it, is never surprised with what is happening in our lives.

We all want to be filled to overflowing with pure joy. It is a process to get there. One of the ways to do that is to spend quiet time with the Lord. We can set aside our busy schedules and sit at His feet and learn from Him.

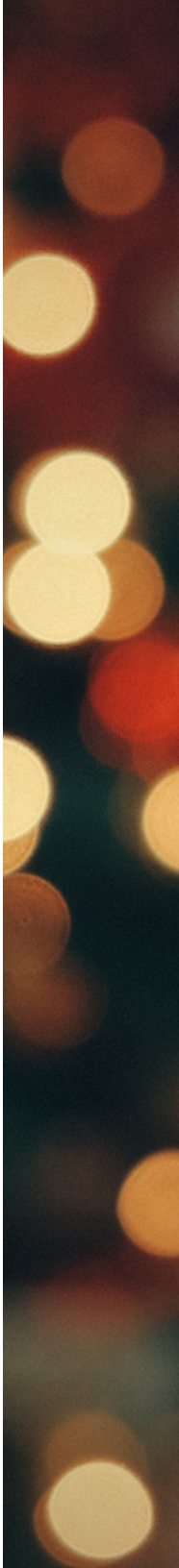
We need to show our children and those around us that we can be calm and get rest in this Christmas time. We can show them what it is like to be filled with joy no matter what. Each of us has a purpose in this world and we all need to lead by example.

If you know your purpose, then do it. If you need rest, then take it. If celebrating this year is about the people we are with and not the party we throw, then we have more of a chance to have pure joy knowing that we are pleasing God.

Let's take some time and think about what we can cut back on to spend more time with the Lord and with those we love. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for giving us the opportunity to be filled with your joy. Help us to find ways to truly celebrate your birth the way you would want us to. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 24

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Jesus - The Perfect Combination

"So the Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son."

John 1:14

On this Christmas eve, we pull it all together to see that Jesus is the perfect combination of hope, peace, joy and love.

He never sinned and yet he loved us so much that He came to earth to be the example of these things to all of us. Later, He died on a cross for our sins so we could spend eternity with Him.

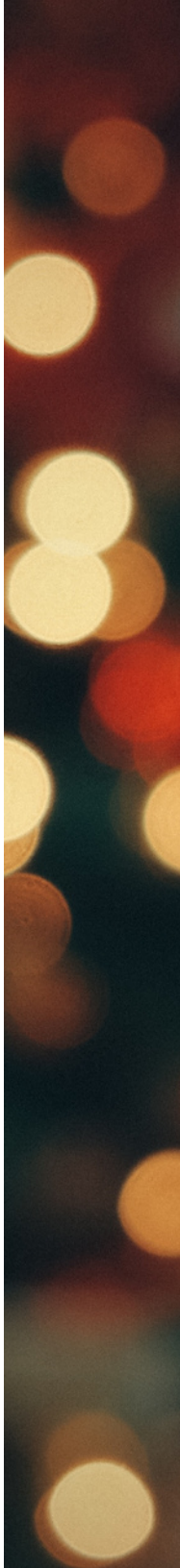
Jesus lived with us on the earth to show us what God is like and how much He loves us. I think sometimes God's heart must hurt because He loves us so much and we continue to treat Him badly.

There are things that we want and a lot of the time we voice these things at Christmas. At Christmas, God is voicing what He wants; He wants us to follow Him and to spend time with Him.

Let's spend some time this Christmas looking for things we can do to be better at following God and showing his love to others. We will be glad we did and so will the Lord.

Prayer: Lord God, thank you so much for loving us with unfailing and unending love. Help us to show that love to others. Amen.

NOTES:



DECEMBER 25

Christmas Day

Jesus Brought Gifts

"The Savior-yes, the Messiah, the Lord-has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!"

Luke 2:11

When a baby is born, it is always a gift to us. We also give gifts to the parents so they get off to a good start having what they need and to welcome the child into the world.

When Jesus was born, He was the gift and He brought gifts with Him.

He brought hope for the future because He brought us an opportunity to spend eternity with Him in heaven.

He brought freedom from the punishment of our sins that would have kept us from God.

He brought peace to all who believe in Him and this peace gives us the ability to rest and be refreshed.

He brought joy at the fact that we can now have a purpose and be a part of God's plan for our lives. We get the chance to help others experience this joy also.

Best of all, He brought the gift of love. God loves us so much that Jesus came to earth and brought that love to us. He later gave up His life to show us that love and give us the opportunity to have a relationship with Him. He showed us God's love over and over again and He continues to show that love to us today.

In this Christmas season, we need to pass these gifts on to others. Let's take some time and think of ways we can pass these gifts to those around us this Christmas. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you so much for all the gifts you brought to us when you were born. Amen.

NOTES:



Further Advent Reading

Sabbath is Made for Healing

“And He answered, ‘If you had a sheep that fell into a well on the Sabbath, wouldn’t you work to pull it out? Of course you would. And how much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Yes, the law permits a person to do good on the Sabbath.’”

Matthew 12:11-12

Whenever we are sick, one of the things the doctor tells us is that we need rest. The body heals when it is at rest.

I think one of the reasons God gave us Sabbath, a time to rest, is that we all need healing at least once a week. We need that healing rest most of all at Christmas.

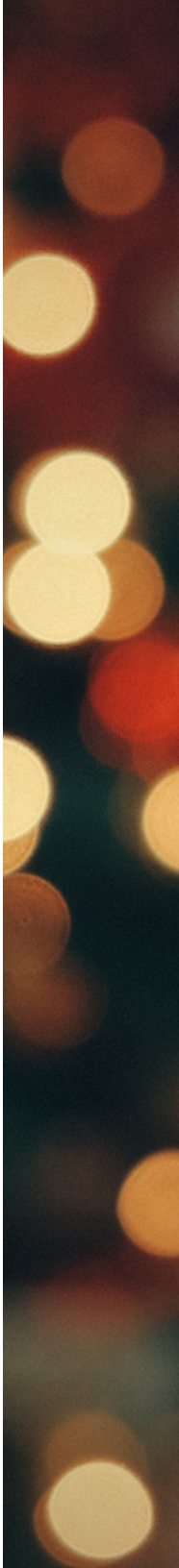
Connecting with the Lord and worshipping Him on the Sabbath, helps Him to heal us and get us back on the right path. For some families Sundays or the Sabbath day that works for you, is the day the family gathers. That often makes this a time for healing for the family as well.

Taking a day to honor the Lord and rest is one of the best things we can do for ourselves and for others. Christmas is one of the best times to do this because we see people that we haven’t seen for a while. Families often get together with those who live further away.

I think we need to remember the reason for Christmas and stop worrying about the details. Let's take some time to think of just one way we can make Christmas simpler and celebrate Jesus more. We will be glad we did.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for showing us in different ways why a time of rest is important. Help us to show this importance to others. Amen.

NOTES:



Further Advent Reading

Love and Rest

“Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have 6 days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God.”

Exodus 20:8-10

These verses are part of the Ten Commandments. God is telling us what the guidelines are for us to lead a life that brings glory to Him.

In Genesis 2:2-3, God tells us that when He was done creating everything, He took a day of rest. It took me a while to realize that God was leading by example and showing us what we need to do.

God didn't need to rest. He is God, but He knew what we needed so He rested too. In order to be our best selves, we need to rest. If you read about the things that help with any disease you may have, they tell us that rest is one of the most important things we can do.

If it was important to God then it needs to be important to us. This is just one of the ways God showed His love for us. One of the things we can give our family and friends this Christmas is to show them how important rest is and that we love them so much that we want them to be the best that they can be.

Further Advent Reading

What Love Looks Like

“He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when He was insulted, nor threatened revenge when He suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.”

1 Peter 2:22-23

In this Christmas season, the word love is used a lot. We love Christmas lights and decorations. We love cookies and presents. We love the church services and we love singing the Christmas carols and some of us love Hallmark Christmas movies (this is one of the few times they talk about God and pray on TV).

This is not the love that Jesus came to show us. He came to show us what being a Christian like Him looks like. He showed us that He never lied to anyone. He didn't try to get even when He was hurt or wronged. He forgave people when they accused Him of things He didn't do or turned away from Him when the going got hard. He didn't judge, but left the judgement to God.

These are all things that we need to do also. When we forgive others, healing begins. When we open ourselves up to love, chances are we are going to get hurt.



**Growing Followers of Jesus who are
Rooted, Formed, and Flourishing.**