



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

WRITTEN BY THE CHICOPEE BAPTIST FAMILY



2025



Welcome,

Before I got married in 1998, I had never heard of Advent. But since then, it has become one of the most meaningful parts of our holiday season. Advent invites us to slow down, reflect, and focus as a family on the true gift of Christmas—Jesus.

Each year, we place an Advent wreath with candles at the center of our dinner table. Most nights, we light a candle, read a short devotion, and pray together. These simple moments have become treasured memories—quiet pauses in the midst of the holiday rush that remind us of hope, love, joy, and peace.

I'm deeply thankful for this tradition and invite you to make time for it in your own home. This season, join our Chicopee family in celebrating Advent with a special devotional written by many familiar hearts and voices from our church. Let's make memories together and **keep Christ at the center of Christmas.**

Merry Christmas!

Clyde, Jayne, JayeAnna, Elyza, and Buddy Self.

¹⁴"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 1:14 (NASB)

WHAT IS ADVENT?

Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming” or “arrival.” The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus His First Advent (coming), and the anticipation of the return of Jesus in His Second Advent (coming).

It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, and of longing. All you need is **1 green wreath, 3 purple candles, 1 pink candle, 1 white candle, and a lighter**. The white candle goes in the middle of the wreath with the other candles on the outside of the wreath.

What does it all mean?

The exact meaning given to the various aspects of the wreath is not as important as the story to which it invites us to listen and participate.

- ◆ The circle of the wreath reminds us of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end.
- ◆ The evergreen of the wreath speaks of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, and of eternal life.
- ◆ Historically, the primary color of Advent is purple. This is the color of repentance and fasting, as well as, the color of royalty to welcome the Advent of King Jesus.
- ◆ The four outer candles represent the period of waiting during the four Sundays of Advent, which themselves symbolize the four hundred years of waiting between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ.
- ◆ The center candle is white and is called the Christ Candle. White indicates His sinless perfection and is traditionally lit on Christmas Day.
- ◆ The light of the candle reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world that comes into the darkness of our lives to bring newness, life, and hope.

Why Celebrate Advent?

- ◆ To pause amid the holiday rush and reflect on the real and deeper meaning of Christmas.
- ◆ To cultivate gratitude and anticipation, remembering the hope that Jesus brings.

Hope



DECEMBER 1

CHRIST THE SOLID ROCK

READ: Matthew 7:24-27, John 14:6; Psalm 18:1-2

Hope.

Edward Mote wrote about it in 1834:

My hope is built on nothing less
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
all other ground is sinking sand.
All other ground is sinking sand.

SCAN TO LISTEN



Can You hear that hymn being sung? Oh how I can hear it!!! Many of these hymns, such as this one, teach us in the universal language of music, that sound doctrine sung in any language has the same melody and the same meaning and when you hear it, even in another language, that sound doctrine is added on to our own faith foundation. Every time we sing those words, or hear them being sung, we build upon that solid Rock. We add another layer to that foundation with each verse. If we are south of Texas in sunny Mexico and hear that hymn being sung in Spanish, we know what it is!

It is the statement that is foundational to our faith that we, as believing Christians place our faith firmly anchored in the blood of Jesus by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. There is nothing that we can do to earn our salvation. There are no good works that will get us into Heaven. We cannot purchase a ticket into Gods presence no matter how much we give. We cannot have someone else pray us in to eternal life with the Father. There is only one way and that Way is through Christ our Lord.



Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except by Me" (John 14:6). So, if you ever hear anyone teaching that it takes good works to get to Heaven, you know that they are teaching false doctrine.

Faith without works is dead. When James teaches us this, he is absolutely speaking in truth with authority because in our faith we want to do good works. Because in the hope of things to come, in the glory that awaits the believer when he crosses over to the next life and while he still lives here and now, he wants others to see the shining Light that is Jesus, that they may know also the peace, love, joy and hope that goes with faith in the Lord Jesus.

When I close my eyes for the last time I know that:

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
O may I then in Him be bound.
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
all other ground is sinking sand.
All other ground is sinking sand.

Let the words of this hymn remind each of us today that Christ is the Rock beneath our feet. Christ is the anchor of our soul and the sure hope that will carry each of us safely home. All other ground is sinking sand.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for planting within us that hope. Thank you Lord that no matter what storms blow our way, no matter how high the hill is that we are having to climb, no matter the sorrow or struggle that we are encountering this day, this week, this month or this year, we have hope. Hope for a better tomorrow. Hope for an eternal glory long past this life.

Love In Christ,
Buddy Anderson



FAITHFUL HOPE

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” - 1 Peter 1:3

READ: Hebrews 10:23, Psalm 42:11

Hopeless.

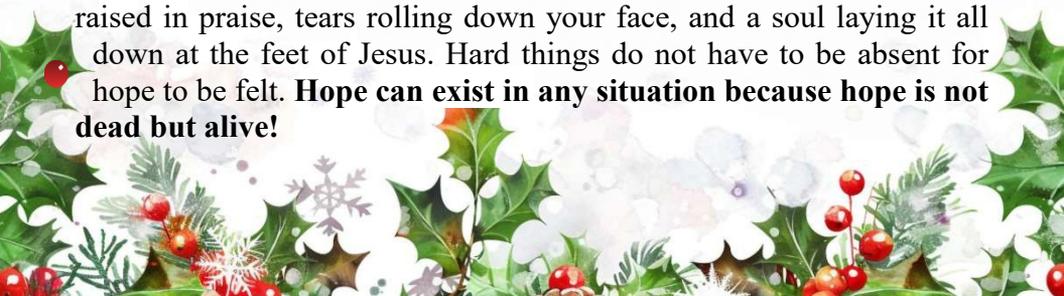
That’s how I imagine David felt as he asked his own soul why it was downcast. That must be how he felt as he wrote, “My tears have been my food” and “My enemies continually taunt me, saying, ”Where is this God of yours?” (Psalm 42:3). Hopeless. It’s that feeling of despair you get when you see no solution to your problems. It’s that lingering ache when you want to hope but don’t know how. What do you do when you hoped things would’ve changed by now? What about when you were hoping for a better answer or outcome? Sometimes circumstances leave us feeling discouraged and alone. Sometimes that hopelessness can lead to sleepless nights. How do we find hope when feeling trapped in hopelessness?

Author Jennie Allen said, “The enemy’s goal for you is hopelessness. This is his great scheme and plan, and he’ll use any tactic to take hope from you.”

Our enemy wants us to remain stuck in hopelessness, in thinking that hope is dead. But with God there is hope.

Hope.

I have witnessed **hopeless turn to hope because of Christ**. Hope feels like a release. It feels like excitement in expecting God to work. Hope feels like trusting God despite uncertainty. It feels like hands raised in praise, tears rolling down your face, and a soul laying it all down at the feet of Jesus. Hard things do not have to be absent for hope to be felt. **Hope can exist in any situation because hope is not dead but alive!**



1 Peter 1:3 tells us that “He (God) has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

When you confess Jesus as your Lord, you are born again, and **born into a living hope. Our hope is alive because Jesus is alive!** This hope does not come from ourselves or our circumstances but from Jesus Christ.

Hope.

Hope increases in our hearts when we **see who God is** and acknowledge His faithfulness. In fact, Hebrews 10:23 ties hope to the faithfulness of God.

Hebrews 10:23 “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”

We can cling to hope because God is always faithful! God is reliable even when life is not.

So how do we find hope?

Real hope is found in the faithfulness of God!

Lord, Thank You for revealing Yourself and Your love to us through Your Word. God, honestly I feel _____ (tell God how you feel).

God, You are faithful, You are my hope, and You are _____ (proclaim a characteristic of God) In Jesus' name, Amen.

May God give you more and more grace and peace,

JayeAnna Self

SCAN TO LISTEN



WHERE IS HOPE?

READ: Psalm 42:5-11; Isaiah 40:28-31; 1 Timothy 4:9-10

Where is the hope?

It can be very easy to look at the world around us and become very discouraged. We see a culture that has turned it's back on God and a society that is violent towards Christians and Biblical values that are clearly established in Scripture.

Where is the hope? It seems like every other week there is another shooting at a school, workplace, mall or church. We watch the news and see laws get passed that go directly against God's Word. We watch leaders in our government get rich off corruption and live their lives against God's teachings.

The sin that has separated us from the Lord has manifested itself in our world and has become very dark, ugly and hopeless. However, before we go too far down this dark tunnel, let's **be reminded of what God's Word tells us.**

“Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior, and my God.” - Psalm 42:5

“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” - Isaiah 40:31

Look at how the angel stated it to the shepherds:

“I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today, in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord!” - Luke 2:10-11



Put another, way, the hope of mankind came in the delicate, fragile and precious form of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who made Himself nothing, humbled Himself and came to this earth as a baby to restore our relationship with God that sin had broken and to give us a new hope!

Instead of allowing the world to get you down, be reminded of what Paul says:

“That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people!” - 1 Timothy 4:10

Where is the hope?

Chuck Colson summed up this thought over 30 years ago when he said, “I meet millions who tell me that they feel demoralized by the decay around us. The hope that each of us has is not in who governs us, or what laws are passed, or what great things we do as a nation. Our hope is in the power of God working through the hearts of people and that’s where our hope is in this country and that’s where our hope is in life.”

My prayer for all of us this Christmas season and in our lives is one of Paul’s prayers:

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.: - Romans 15:13

Brian Carden



AS LONG AS THERE IS CHRISTMAS

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” - John 1:5

READ: John 1:1-14

Hope has a way of showing up in the quiet moments—those flickers of light that break through when life feels heavy, confusing, or uncertain. Scripture tells us that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5). That light is Jesus—our promised Messiah, the Hope of the world.

And isn't it true that some of the most powerful moments of hope come when we feel the most lost?

Ok, so no judgement, but one of my favorite childhood Christmas movies is “Beauty and The Beast: The Enchanted Christmas,” and there's one song from the film called “As Long As There's Christmas” that I always feel sums up the essence of “Hope” this time of year. The lyrics say:

“When I felt lost and lonely
Not a dream in my head
Your words lifted my spirits
I remember what you said
As long as there's Christmas I truly believe
That hope is the greatest of the gifts we'll receive...”

So often, God meets us not in the loud, the flashy, or the perfect—but in the quiet, humble, broken places. Just like He came quietly into a stable in Bethlehem. Just like He comes quietly into our hearts and our less than ideal situations today.



Christmas reminds us that hope isn't something we manufacture—it's Someone we receive.

Jesus is the hope that steps into our loneliness.

Jesus is the hope that whispers truth into our weary hearts.

Jesus is the hope that lights our path when we cannot see our next step.

And so the lyrics continue:

“As long as our guiding star shines above
There will always be Christmas
So there always will be a time
When the world is filled with peace and love.”

Christ is that guiding star—not just in December, not just when life feels festive or full—but always. His presence guarantees that hope is never out of reach. Even when our world feels uncertain, even when we don't know what's next, His light shines faithfully above us, before us, and within us.

This Christmas, let your prayer be simple:

“Lord, fix my eyes on the Hope that came for me. Let Your Word lift my spirit. Let Your presence be my guiding star.”

Because as long as Christ is with us—and He promised He always will be—

there will always be **hope**,
always be **peace**,
always be **love**.

That's the true gift of this and every season. That's the gift we never stop receiving.

Merry Christmas!
Dylan Duke

SCAN TO LISTEN



HOPE THAT HELPS

READ: John 17:17; Romans 8:38-39; Hebrews 6:19

As a Christian that was saved at a young age, these ideas have had a long time to be developed by God and damaged by worldliness. But, thank God that He guards what He is Creating until the day that hope is fully realized. So much of God's creation, concepts and words are diminished by this world that we may not fully understand and incorporate them into our lives such as . . .

Love, the world thinks love is mostly about your feelings or some deep nebulous concept that is too hard to understand, but reading God's word, it teaches us that it is the action of sacrificial service. Yes, compassion may and should accompany love, but love is a closer friend with sacrifice.

Patience is generally seen as a weak quality of people who do not want to deal with the present confrontation. However, biblical patience is standing firm without sinning during the noise of challenging circumstances, closer to Godly perseverance, like a soldier guarding there post.

Christmas is not about Santa Clause and Easter is not about a bunny hiding eggs. This brings me to hope...

Hope is another idea that is thought of as a weak concept and even a hopeless concept by the world. We may wish really hard that our football team wins or that we get something we have been wanting. Then there is the reality of need that spurs us to hope for repaired relationships, financial needs and health issues . . .

“God please save our marriage” - “I don't have enough money to pay the rent or eat.”

And then what might be seen as the direst of circumstances, serious health concerns, someone close to us may have cancer or do I have cancer. . . the MRI shows spots.



God's hope is more than throwing money into a wishing well and even more than fervently praying, it is a strong foundation. Even more than a foundation, it is a home established by God himself that He is preparing for us and preparing us for. This home is assured by the all powerful God.

Hope is built on a relationship with God through Christ, guarded by God himself.

John 17:17 *“Sanctify them in truth; Thy word is truth.”* (Jesus praying for his disciples)

Romans 8:38-39 *“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Hope is being guided by God's word, led by the Holy Spirit, our character being developed by this work until we are ready to be with Him forever.

READ **Luke 6:47-48**

READ **John 14:16-17**

God's concept of hope is you knowing at the end of the day that you are going to a great home where someone loves you (God) and your soul will be made ready for it.

READ **John 14:1-3**

God's hope is sure, not a practice of wishful thinking.

Hebrews 6:19 *“This hope we have as anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast one that enters within the veil”.* (Close to God)

That is real **hope that helps** us to not sweat the small stuff.

Your Friend,

Larry Judge



REMEMBERING GOD WITH US

READ: Matthew 1: 20-25; John 1:14

Suddenly, it was time to prepare for the Christmas celebration. A big reminder came when my daughter delightedly announced she was going to put her Christmas tree up – a big job for one by herself. Then my two busy kids offered to get my very large tree down from storage and decorate it. I said “NO” as I went over in my mind all the work that Christmas preparation required. These kids do so much already.

What a burden all of this preparation would be. I would just order a small decorated tree from Amazon and... so it went. My list would not honor Christ - I did not even like the list or the tasks it represented. It represented exhaustion.

My Christmas list was daunting! My kids persisted and I resisted. Then as often – God spoke thru His Word! In Matthew, *Immanuel* refers to Jesus Himself, the One who is "*God with us,*" the One who took on human flesh and took up residence among His people (John 1:14). And... Just before His return to heaven, He promised His followers "*Surely I am with you always.*"

How amazing!! The Creator and Redeemer came to be with us. That means He is with me in celebrating His birth - What a difference "*God with us*" makes - we are celebrating together which means He is directing how I worship Him this Christmas with what I do. I am not deciding how to worship Him with how I want to celebrate or decorate. It means that what I do will honor Him. Now – I will do whatever the Spirit puts before me. Away with my list of exhausting tasks and how I want to do things.

Maybe my kids will offer again. No ordering a tiny tree from Amazon. My huge tree represents the difference Christ makes in my choices for Christmas. The difference is - He leads me in how I worship Him with how I celebrate Christmas. What a joy this season has become as

I follow His direction. It is definitely **God With Us** that makes the difference.

Loving His Way,
Nancy Bailey

Love



HE LOVED ME HOW MUCH?

“My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done” – Matthew 26:39

READ: Luke 2:1-7; 1 John 4:1-21

For so much of my life, I carried a broken picture of what family and love were supposed to look like. Because of the family I had, I didn't believe real love existed, not for me. I watched other kids at school get hugged, cared for, chosen... and I couldn't understand why I never was. Only one person ever told me “I love you” throughout my entire childhood, and she was taken from me far too soon. After that, I became convinced that **love was either a lie, or something everyone else deserved except me.** Why would I ever be worthy of it?

But God . . .

But then, **God** stepped into the places where no one else had ever gone. In the darkest moment, His light met me. His peace held me. His love covered me. And through a very good friend, God showed me a verse that shifted everything.

It was the moment Jesus was in the garden, terrified and overwhelmed, fully aware He was about to die the most painful death imaginable and He prayed:

“My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done.” - Matthew 26:39

The love Jesus had for us in that moment is beyond anything we can comprehend. He was and is God. He could have chosen another way. He could have walked away. He begged for another option... yet, He drank the cup anyway. Not because He was forced to, but because He loved us enough to. Loved me enough to. Loved you enough to.



And that changed how I see my own brokenness. It is okay to be wounded. The scars mean you're healing. It is okay not to know how to love or how to receive love. **God calls us His even when we don't know how to accept it.** Scripture says,

“In this is love not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” - 1 John 4:10

God has already chosen you. Even if your family didn't choose you... even if that relationship, that friend, that school, that job, or that moment of life didn't choose you... **God already has.** He calls you His fully, deeply, and forever.

Dear Heavenly and Gracious Father, Lord I lift up the soul who is reading this. Father I pray that you surround them with your love. Thank you Lord, for allowing them to come across this, because you can make the impossible happen. You love the unloveable. You want the unwanted. Father, when Jesus was begging for another way, for this cup to be taken from Him, thank you for sending your Son to have that cup. Father, thank you for the cup you have given this person. Lord, sometimes we have to broken, but you never leave us, you put the pieces back together and make them beautiful. You are the potter, we are the clay, if it is in your will that we be molded, even if it is painful, may Your will be done. Father thank you for your gracious love. Thank you for putting the person who is reading this on this Earth. Thank you for dying for them. Thank you for your overwhelming love.

Gracefully broken - mercifully restored,
Kailey G.



UNBRIDLED LOVE AT THE TABLE

READ: Mark 7:24-30; Matthew 15:21-28

Have you ever felt so lost... desperate... terrified... with nowhere to turn?

Could you imagine the desperation of this Phoenician woman—this outsider, this mother? Her child was demon-possessed, and she was powerless. She only had ONE place to turn. In bold, desperate faith, she fell at the feet of Jesus and begged for her daughter's healing. She believed His power was enough... even if she received but a crumb.

And in His unbridled, indiscriminate love, Jesus granted her request.

Not because of who she was.

Not because of anything she had done.

But because she believed.

Because she possessed **GREAT FAITH.**

Last year, I found myself at a crossroads of panic and fear. I could not catch my breath. My eyes were blinded by tears. Panic squeezed the air from my lungs. I was desperate.

“PLEASE!” I cried out as I gripped the steering wheel. “Help me breathe! I can’t do this alone! Help me see! Get me to work safely!”

Suddenly, a wave of calm washed over my body. Air filled my lungs as if I were breathing for the very first time. My vision became crystal clear. The suffocating pain in my chest softened into an ache.

Right there in my car, God met me. With faith no bigger than a mustard seed, He calmed the storm raging inside of me. **In that moment, I believed in Jesus.**

The day before, the evil of this world collided with my naïve, predictable life. Hatred in someone's heart took the life of my friend and others, and the shock sent me spiraling. Panic gripped me the next morning as I drove my children to the one place I thought they were safe.



Stopping for breakfast, Chick-fil-A staff members saw the angst on my face, gathered around me, and prayed fervently. Their prayers, full of compassion for a stranger, could not calm the raging storm.

I walked my children up the empty ramp to the locked school doors, clinging to them as tightly as I could as I pressed the call button. Releasing them felt like tearing my heart apart. I stumbled back to my car, drowning in my inner hurricane.

But in that moment of raw desperation, *I sought the Lord...*

And He heard.

And He answered.

And that is why I trust Him.

Love like Jesus this Christmas season.

This Christmas, let your table of love and grace abundantly overflow with welcome for every soul in your presence. Reach out to those you might instinctively judge, avoid, dismiss, or label as unworthy. While Jesus' first mission was to Israel, His unbridled love refused to stay within boundaries. It was never meant to be rationed or limited. His love surpassed cultural lines, religious barriers, and social expectations.

He saw faith in the eyes of a desperate outsider, and He welcomed her.

He loved her.

He drew her near.

She never looked back.

Jesus, thank You for loving without borders. You have changed our lives and protected our children in ways we never could. We long to sit at Your table pouring out the same abundant love and grace You have gifted us. Make our hearts expansive, generous, and welcoming just like Yours. Tear down any walls in us that whisper we are unworthy. In Your mighty, gracious, and loving name I pray, Amen.

Grateful Child of God,
Jessica Edwards



DECEMBER 9

GOD'S TRANSFORMATIVE GIFT OF LOVE

"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."
- John 4:10

READ: John 4:1-42

In the late 1980's, while attending college, I had an invite to participate in a Campus Crusade for Christ event. I went, it was fun, I had heard the stories before when a childhood friend invited me to VBS at his Church. The message was the same that I had heard and seen when visiting with my Grandparents in South Georgia.

I had avoided the option to go to church and had convinced myself that I was not good enough.

The reality of what I had heard and remembered did not truly move me until I was saved, during a spring revival that I attended with my wife. The message that the visiting pastor gave was targeted for me, he was speaking to me...Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, changed my heart and my life....my eternity.

My journey reminds me of that Samaritan woman at the well. She went to the well during the worst part of the day, she was ashamed, she felt unclean; and when she got there, she met a man. A Man that already knew her story, and He asked her for a drink (John 4:7). When she responded that she was a Samaritan woman and knew that Jews did not associate with them, Jesus replied:

"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water" - John 4:10



After she continued her conversation with Jesus, she recognized that He possibly was the Messiah...she left her water jar, returned to town and told them,

"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"- John 4:29

“ . . . and many Samaritans believed because of her testimony.”
-John 4:39

God's gift of Love, through Jesus, is transformative.

It changes you, it saves you; and through you it will change others.

Pray with Me.

Heavenly Father, during this holiday season, our prayer is that those that may not know you be filled with your Holy Spirit and receive your gift of love...no matter their circumstances. Once they receive your saving love, we pray that they will grow and share the good news with others - Amen

Transformed by Christ,



Hugh Raiford

Want to know how to become born-again?

Do you need a resource to help you lead someone to Christ?

Visit <https://www.chicopeebaptistchurch.com/jesus>



DECEMBER 10

TO LOVE AND OBEY

READ: John 14:15-31; Psalm 63

When a husband says he loves his wife, how do we know he does? Perhaps we know by the way he looks at her with adoration. Perhaps he speaks to her always with kindness. Perhaps he buys her thoughtful gifts or takes her on regular dates.

When a wife says she loves her husband, how do we know she does? Maybe we see it in the way she looks adoringly at him. Perhaps she encourages him on his most challenging days. Perhaps she respects him truly and regards his leadership of their home.

We could of course anticipate similar characteristics identifying love between a parent and child, between family members, and between friends. I suppose the ways we express love are vast and varied. Some ways are visible, and some are known only in the heart. Sometimes love is received in kind, and other times it can be unwelcome or even rejected. Love offered from any person is never perfect.

Such uncertainty can easily discourage us from loving others or each other. In a similar way, we may stop short of loving God because we are uncertain of Him or His response. What does He want? I will certainly fall short and not love Him completely. How would I know how God receives my incomplete love with all its faults? What if He is disappointed with me? How can I know what He is like or even know for sure how He feels? It is easy for it to seem prudent to keep Him at a distance.

God does not desire to be distant from us. In the Gospel of John, chapter 14, Philip asks Jesus to “show us the Father.” We know from the context of that passage that Jesus had been teaching that He and the Father are one. In Christ’s extensive answer to Philip’s question we learn much about what it means for us to love God, and we learn of a wonderful promise from Jesus about loving Him.



In John 14:21, Jesus says: “He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.” That means that love for Jesus and obedience to His Word are mutually bound to one another. How would I have Christ’s commandments? I have to seek them in His Word. Then I demonstrate my love for Him by obeying them.

The question that often comes to my mind is which comes first? Do I obey Him first and that means I love Him? Or do I love Him first and that means I obey Him? I don’t know. However, they clearly sound mutual! So much so that I believe if we are having trouble obeying Christ, we should pray to love Him more. Likewise, if we are having difficulty loving Christ, we should pray to obey Him more.

In either case, when we do love and obey Christ, we have a beautiful promise from Him in the words that follow:

Vs 21 continued: “And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” What? If I love and obey Jesus, then He and the Father will in return love me by revealing Christ to me? Yep - exactly! When He reveals Himself to me we will be even closer. I will see and know Him more for who He is! When I do, then the obvious result will be that I love Him more. That greater love for Him will be accompanied by greater obedience. Then the promise of Him revealing Himself continues, and we learn to love and obey Him more.

Do you struggle to obey Christ or to love Him? If so, pray that He helps you do both that you may know Him more so that both your love and your obedience grow!



2 INGREDIENT CHOCOLATE MOUSSE RECIPE

Love and obedience served together produces something much deeper and richer than each on their own, much like this simple dessert made with chocolate and whipped cream.

Lyn and Veronica Burkhalter

GOD LOVES YOU

“God so Loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”
– John 3:16

READ: Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-40

God loves us so much He sent His son for us to be saved so we could be with him and He could be our Father. God gave him to us at our known time as **CHRIST**mas. A time for giving and sharing love one to another.

As a child, I remember my Christmas at our house. There was my daddy, mama, my 3 brothers and me. My mother would have the house all decorated with lights and a tree. We were so excited the night before Christmas that we had trouble going to sleep due to the anticipation of Santa coming. The morning of Christmas all of us kids would wake up and peak in the living room to see if Santa had brought the gifts and then we would run in our parent’s room and wake them up. We all would go in the living room and my mother would open the Bible and start our Christmas by reading us the story of Jesus’s birth. Matthew 1:18-25 or Luke 2:1-40 and reminding us why we celebrated this day. She reminded us of God’s Love, His son Jesus Christ. And because of Him and love we could have everlasting life. Then we would open our presents that was given to us in love from Santa.

As we grew up and had our own children, my mama always shared the Christmas story of God’s love to her grandchildren and great grandchildren. All the family would come to her house on Christmas Eve and she would dress them up as the characters in the story (Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus, Shepherds, wisemen and then tell the story as they acted out the parts as she planted God’s seeds of love in their hearts. And then all the families would bundle up and we would all go door to door singing Christmas songs to our neighbors and spend some loving time with them. My mama and daddy have now gone to



be with God the father. All of my family still carry on this tradition with our families so our children and their children will always know God loves all of us.

A good way to feel God's presence is in song. One of my favorites is Silent Night. Listen or sing it and know God loves you and wants to know He is among you.

Read 1 Corinthians the book of Love and 1 John 4:7-12 Love One Another

Now join me with prayer.

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving me so much that You sent Your son to save me so that I may be with you one day. And thank you for the holy Spirit and Your word to teach us of Your love during this Christmas season so we may share Your love one to another and not to forget what this season is all about. Let us spend time with family and friends, giving you praise and glory for what You have done and are doing in our life. Please let Your light and love shine through us that others may know you and know you will never leave us and we are never alone. Amen

May God Bless You Today,
Karen McGinnis

Silent
night
Holy Night

SCAN TO LISTEN



TRANSFORMING POWER OF CHRISTLIKE LOVE

"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him." - Psalm 103:11

READ: Romans 12:1-21 (Love in Action)
1 John 4:7-21 (God is love)

Love is the distinguishing mark of the Christian life. Jesus made this unmistakably clear when He said,

"By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another" (John 13:35, NASB 2020).

Love is not merely an emotion; it is a Christ-enabled manner of life that demonstrates the heart of God to the world.

The Bible says God Himself is the source and standard of love.

"We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19, NASB 2020).

God's love is unconditional, sacrificial, and unwavering. It does not originate from our strength or ability but originates from His initiative. The more we grasp God's love for us, the more **we are transformed into people who love like Him.**

Paul describes this love so beautifully:

"Love is patient, love is kind, it is not jealous; love does not brag, it is not arrogant... it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7, NASB 2020).

These things do not come naturally to us; they are the fruit of the Spirit working within us. When we yield our hearts to God afresh each day, He enables us to show patience, kindness, forgiveness, and grace, even when circumstances are challenging.



Jesus demonstrated perfect love when He laid down His life for us. He calls us to that same radical lifestyle:

"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you" (John 15:12, NASB 2020).

To love as Christ loves means choosing humility over pride, compassion over judgment, and service over self-centeredness.

Take time today to reflect on the depth of God's love toward you. Let His love reshape your attitudes, strengthen your relationships, and guide your actions.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will empower you to love others with a love that reflects Jesus, one that is steadfast, gentle, courageous, and selfless.

May your life bear witness to the truth that God's love changes everything.

With Love,
Ben Edwards

How has God's love for me changed my thinking and attitude over time?

How should my conduct change to reflect God's love better?



DECEMBER 13

CHRISTMAS IS EVERYDAY

“The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease.”
- *Lamentations 3:22*

READ: Lamentations 3:22-26; John 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 4:18

As I was growing up, Christmas was always a very special day that I looked forward to all year. It was very special to me in those days because I was excited to see what presents would be under the tree for me. Within a day or two, the excitement and happiness that I experienced on Christmas morning faded back to normal daily life.

The toys that looked so great in the commercials on TV were usually a disappointment and they soon ended up broken, lost or delegated to the back of my closet. The novelty and excitement of whatever was new this year was gone in a few days. Obviously I'm a slow learner because I always expected it to be different next year. Next year was always about the same as the previous one and the one before that too.

As the years went by, I slowly began to grasp how fleeting and temporary the “gifts” of the world really are. True joy and satisfaction can only come through God's infinite love. Infinite love is a difficult concept for us to understand. As Jeremiah discovered and wrote about in Lamentation 3:22-26, God's love is never ending and His mercies are new every morning. Those are true fulfilling gifts that God will give each of us each day if we will only ask for them and be willing to accept them.

Pray With Me:

Father God, thank you for all the great and amazing gifts that you give to us each day. Thank you for having such great love for us that you sent your perfect Son Jesus to die on the cross so that we may experience Your infinite love today and every day forever. In Jesus Name, Amen

Your brother,
Mark Bailey



Joy



REJOICE: YOUR FAMILY IS A GIFT FROM GOD

“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.” - Luke 1:41

Read Luke 1:34-45

Growing up in rural Maryland, Caroline County, and being an only child, meant that when you had time with your extended family, you enjoyed it. I will always be grateful for my cousins, they were the closest thing I would have to siblings. Living hundreds of miles from where you grew up is difficult, and while that distance is not ideal, I cherish every opportunity to spend time with my family, immediate and extended.

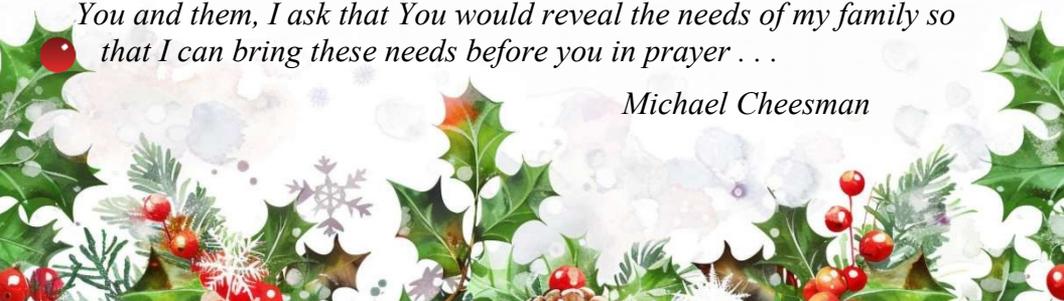
I love to read about the interaction of Mary and Elizabeth and how the Holy Spirit led each of these women to bless each other and Praise God. It is so easy to get caught up with all the events going on in the lives of those around us. When we are focused on the events, we are not focused on our family. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, gives us a great example that she is focused on the person, Mary, and giving glory to God for the work He is doing through Mary.

My challenge to us this Christmas season is to take the circumstances of Elizabeth and Mary and create your own, God inspired version.

- ◆ **Enter the Presence of Jesus and Rejoice:** Read Scripture and worship during your quiet time.
- ◆ **Give Thanks to God for your family:** Your family is the one that God put into your orbit, make time to spend with your family.
- ◆ **Pray for your family:** Pray for members of your family by name and by need.

Father in Heaven, I thank you for my family and as I spend time with You and them, I ask that You would reveal the needs of my family so that I can bring these needs before you in prayer . . .

Michael Cheesman



DECEMBER 15

GETTING READY FOR CHRISTMAS

“Now Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of Bethlehem, because he was of the house of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was pregnant.”
– Luke 1:4-5

READ: Luke 2:1-7

The preparation for Joseph and Mary to make that long trip to Bethlehem had to be daunting to the first time expectant mother and young couple.

How do I prepare for Christmas? Do I think mostly of all the things that need to be done - - - presents to be bought, cards to be sent, decorating to be done, menus to be decided upon?

What about the things that need to be done within me, in my relationship with Christ? Spiritually, am I preparing for the coming of the Christ?

Am I filled with holy anticipation of celebrating Christ’s birth or mainly seeing how many things on my to-do list I can mark off?

May the miracle of Christ’s birth bless our life with special joy this season - and always.

Heavenly Father, the gift of hope comes through Jesus Christ alone. Thank you for reminding us that preparation without and within is vitally important. May I live today as one with eternal hope! In Jesus Name. Amen.

Love,
Anne Baggett



DECEMBER 16

NOT A CIRCUMSTANTIAL FRUIT

"You will show me the path of life; In your presence is fullness of joy; At your right hand are pleasures forevermore"

- Psalm 16:11

READ: Psalm 16:11; John 16:24

"Don't lose your joy. You will never get it back."

Ten words that were intended to be "Final Thoughts." Fourteen days later, everything got worse.

Incalculably, immeasurably worse.

There was no hope. No light. No reason. And definitely, no joy.

But...

Psalm 16:11 "You will show me the path of life; In your presence is fullness of joy; At your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

We've all been there. A time in our lives when we feel so low we're convinced that things can't get worse. Then <BAM>, they do get worse. It's easy to moan and complain:

"Things never go right for me."

"I can't catch a break."

"One thing after another."

Looking at the cares and concerns of our daily lives, it's terribly easy to see our happiness draining away. As fleeting as snow in summer.

When this happens, stop for a moment. Consider this:

Joy Does Not Equal Happiness.



Happiness depends on what is happening. Joy does not!

Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit that comes from GOD! It is not something you create. You can't manufacture joy.

Joy Comes From The Lord!

Those 10 words from earlier were wrong. Joy wasn't gone. It wasn't lost. It's always there, but you have to instruct your heart to see through the trials and miseries you're enduring. Remember that happiness is temporary and related to your experiences. Joy is a gift from God and He wants it to be as vital to you as oxygen.

John 16:24 “Until now, you have asked nothing in My name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

Are you ready to live in Joy?

On your mark:

Ask the Lord for the wisdom to know happiness is not joy.

Get set:

Allow the joy of the Lord to permeate every part of your life.

Go!

Accept and surrender to His guidance as He leads you in His understanding.

Pray with me now my prayer for you:

Romans 15:13 “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

*Prayers from,
A loving church family member*



JOY AS STRENGTH

“...Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

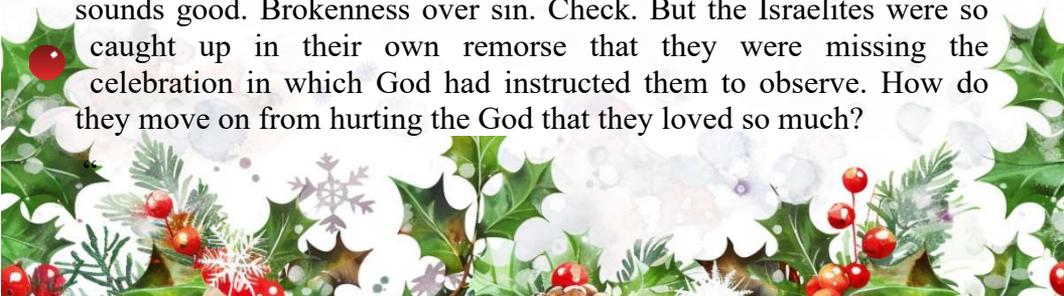
-Nehemiah 8:10

READ: Nehemiah 8:1-12; 1 Chronicles 16:7-36

If you spend time with me, you will discover that I love to laugh. Some may even say that I have a weird sense of humor. That is true. The weirder something is, the funnier I find it. I recall times in high school, playing sports when I would get injured. The pain would be intense, but either a teammate's comments cracked me up or I would look at the way I was awkwardly sprawled across the floor and start laughing. I would laugh so hard that tears rolled down my face, so much so that the referees, in their concern, would ask, "Are you OK? Are you laughing or crying?" To which I would shrug and simply reply, "Both". To this day, there is nothing more refreshing to me than a big belly laugh where I laugh until I cry.

That type of laughter comes from an outward source. Either someone or something triggers the laugh response. It is based on circumstances and those circumstances change by the second. How nice it would be to stay on the lighter side of things. But that is not reality. Life gets hard. Hurts are excruciating. We mess up and struggle to move beyond our own self-condemnation.

Throughout the Bible, God's people teetered between **"Wow, God! I am so enthralled in Your presence!"** and **"I am such a loser!"** The Israelites repeatedly turned their backs on God by going against His ways and spent many years in exile because of it. They returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and wall, and while there, they were repeatedly read Scriptures. The Israelites realized the magnitude of their sin and began to weep as they heard God's laws read. This all sounds good. Brokenness over sin. Check. But the Israelites were so caught up in their own remorse that they were missing the celebration in which God had instructed them to observe. How do they move on from hurting the God that they loved so much?



Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” The word “joy” used here is the Hebrew word “chedvah”. It means a rejoicing or gladness that is a deep, God-centered joy not based on emotions or circumstances, but rather on His character and promises.

This word is only used twice in the Bible: Nehemiah 8:10 and 1 Chronicles 16:27. In both passages joy is tied to God’s people as a community renewing their covenant with the Lord, worshiping Him, and being restored by Him. The joy of the Lord imparts strength and resilience that cannot be shaken because it is based on Him. May we resolve as a church to **be filled with the the joy of the Lord which brings about strength, true worship, and mission for God.**

Dearest, Precious Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your love for us! Thank You for Your mercy and grace You show us! Thank You for providing for our every need and protecting us! Father, You never promised us a pain-free life. In those moments where the heartache seems unbearable, help us cling to You. The things all around us may be falling apart, but You are steadfast and true and You will never leave us. Precious Lord, let us focus intently on You. Fill us with Your strength in the midst of any circumstance. May Your joy flow freely through us, encouraging one another, and drawing us all closer to You.

In Your Most Precious Name we pray,

SCAN TO LISTEN



All for Him,
Jayne Self

Joy



OUR QUEST FOR TRUE JOY

“And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of GREAT JOY that will be for all the people, For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’”
- Luke 2:10-11

READ: Luke 2:10-11; John 4:14, John 7:37-39

If you asked me at this moment “Shaun, **what do you think is one of the biggest issues in our world today, particularly in the west?**” There would probably be an endless amount of answers I could give you, but for the focus of this devotional I’ll narrow it down to one. The answer is “our unhealthy quest for joy”.

Now, before I get any deeper in God’s word, let’s first define our terms. What exactly do I mean when I use the words “unhealthy” and “joy”?

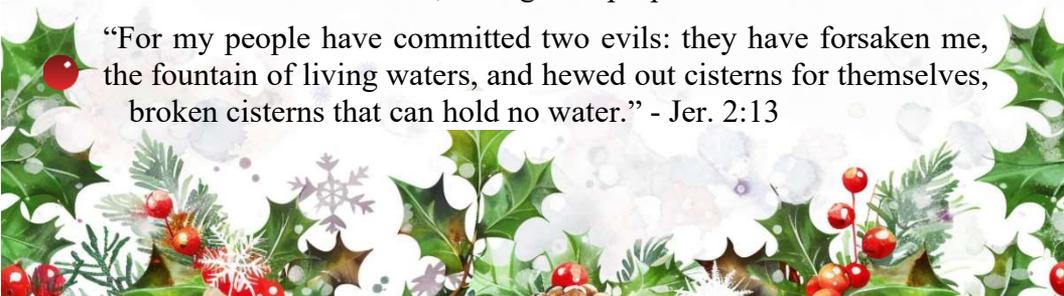
The word “**unhealthy**” can be defined many ways but for this devotional we will define it as “something to be unfruitful, damaging, and destructive to one’s health physically, mentally, or spiritually ”

The Greek word for “**joy**” in today’s Scripture, is “chara”, which is a noun, used to reference “an immense feeling of gladness, delight, and happiness, evoked from an object. ”

So now that we have our terms defined, if we wanted to reword my statement on what the world’s biggest issue today is, then we can word it as “our quest for an immense feeling of gladness, delight, and happiness, within an object, that proves to be damaging, destructive, and unfruitful, to one’s physical, mental, or spiritual health.

Unfortunately, this is not just a 2025 issue, but rather an ancient one. Hear the words of The Lord, through the prophet Jeremiah:

“For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” - Jer. 2:13



A cistern is typically described as a pit or well to hold and store water. Here, God is speaking through the prophet Jeremiah saying that His covenant people, the Israelites, have committed two evils:

1. **They have forsaken Him**, the fountains of living water (John 4:14, 7:37-39)
2. **They hewed out cisterns for themselves, that are broken and cannot hold water.**

This verse is a metaphor that tells us how the Israelites chose to forsake YHWH and instead searched to find in wicked idols, described as “cisterns that are broken and can hold NO water”, for life, joy, peace, and all the great things God so graciously wants to give generously. However, these idols will NOT fill them.

■ *“The sin under all other sins is a lack of joy in Christ”* - Timothy Keller

The question we must now answer is: **what is the wellspring of our joy?** If we go back to our original text Luke 2:10-11, we see the angel tell the shepherds that they have news of “Great Joy” that will be for ALL people. They then tell them that, on this day, in the city of David, a Savior is born, who is Christ the Lord.

Jesus is the object from which our joy comes from. He is the Greater Cistern, the Well of Living Water, the Source of our Joy for ALL people, and He gives it to us in full (see John 15:11, Psalm 16:11).

- Abide in Him, and He will give you the fullness of Joy.

Let us prepare our hearts this Christmas Season by abiding in Christ, by spending intimate time in His Word, in prayer, and obeying the commands He has given us. Then, as we draw closer to Him, in His presence we will experience the fullness of joy, that NO broken cistern can offer. Redirect your quest for joy today by chasing after the one who can supply it to the full.

Shaun Estrich



NOT SEASONAL FRUIT

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” – Galatians 5:22-23 NASB

READ: Psalm 4:7; Matthew 25:21

I am impressed every year with the Joy of the Christmas Season. Starting in November, I notice that people are generally happier.

More smiles.

More laughter.

More patience with their fellow humans.

I fully participate in the Joy of the season. I am happier.

I smile more.

I laugh more.

I am more patient with my fellow humans.

I am chagrined that this Joy seems seasonal. It does not have to be. For Christians, our Joy should never be based on any annual celebrations. Christmas, Easter, birthdays, and anniversaries are just repeating dates on a calendar. No, our Joy comes from our intimate personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus is not seasonal.

Jesus is constant, and once the Christmas Season is over, and our worlds are bounced back to the reality of living day to day, we should remember that Jesus has not changed.



He is not waiting on the next season.

Jesus has already saved us; His redeeming work is done. Our Joy should come from the absolute certainty of our Salvation, not from the numbers on a calendar. Our day-to-day lives should be lived in the reality of our Salvation, and Joy that puts in our hearts.

Our Scripture reading tells us one of the fruits of the Spirit is Joy. That same Holy Spirit who bears the fruit of Joy lives in our hearts every day of the year, not just seasonally. His fruit should be evident in our lives regardless of what the calendar shows.

Dear Lord,

Thank you for the joy of the season. The joy we celebrate in the birth of your son, Jesus. Help us to carry this forward long after the season is over. Help us not to wait for months to share the joy of our Salvation. Let us share it every day, with everyone we meet. I pray that the people you love will see my joy in knowing Jesus every day of every year. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen

In Christ,
Troy Mason



KNOWING

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

- Psalm 16:11

READ: Psalm 16:1-11; Acts 2:24-33

Sometimes joy feels far away—like something we have to chase, earn, or wait for. But Scripture tells us the opposite: joy isn't something we find; it's something that finds us when we draw near to God.

Joy is not the denial of trouble. It is the reminder that God walks beside us in trouble.

Joy grows in ordinary moments—quiet mornings, small answers to prayer, simple reminders that God is paying attention to the details of our lives.

Even when life is heavy, joy whispers:

- “God hasn't forgotten you.”
- “This isn't the end of your story.”
- “There is hope, because He is here.”

Fullness of joy doesn't come from a perfect life but from a present God. As you invite Him into your day, you may discover that joy springs up in places you never expected—right in the middle of the unexplainable, the unbelievable, or the unimaginable.

“You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

-Psalm 16:11

“The Bruce's”

Chad, Amanda, James, Michael, & Kamryn



Peace



ROCK OF AGES

"For You are my rock and my fortress; For the sake of Your name You will lead me and guide me." - Psalm 31:3 NASB

READ: Psalm 31:3, Psalm 118:22

The stone of Israel is Jesus my Rock and my fortress, the stone the builders rejected. The foundation stone on which alone we build. Lord, make me a polished living stone. Holy LORD self-offered for my salvation, death that I might live.

Enlighten me with thy peace and understanding. Someday our work will be finished. The question will be of our foundation. Are we built on the **Rock of Ages**, so that, though the wind blows and storms shake all around us, we shall stand secure?

Lord Jesus our eternal foundation, may we seek to bring honor to thee through all the ages. Amen!

William "Dub" Sloan



154 **Rock of Ages.**

Augustus M. Toplady. *Toplady, 7s. 6l.* Thomas Hastings.

1. Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, Let me hide my - self in Thee;
2. Could my tears for - ev - er flow, Could my zeal no lan-guor know,
3. While I draw this fleet-ing breath, When my eyes shall close in death,

Let the wa - ter and the blood, From Thy wound-ed side which flowed,
These for sin could not a - tone; Thou must save, and Thou a - lone:
When I rise to worlds un-known, And be - hold Thee on Thy throne,

Be of sin the doub-le cure, Save from wrath and make me pure.
In my hand no price I bring, Sim - ply to Thy cross I cling.
Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, Let me hide my - self in Thee. A - MEN.

PRINCE OF PEACE

“His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” - Isaiah 9:6

READ: Isaiah 9:6-7; Revelation 21:1-5

Have you ever caught yourself saying things like, “I’m freaking out,” “I can’t deal with this,” or “I’m at my limit”? I certainly have—especially when stress feels like it’s pressing in from every direction.

Earlier this week while studying the Bible, I came across a passage in Isaiah that stopped me in my tracks. It challenged the way I’ve been thinking about stress and reminded me what true peace actually looks like.

Isaiah, foretelling the birth of Jesus, wrote: “His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

As I paused to reflect on that final title—Prince of Peace—I realized something important: peace has two realities. Both forms of true peace flow from one person—**Jesus, the Prince of Peace.**

The first reality is **the peace of heaven.**

Scripture tells us that in heaven there is no sin, no fear, no sorrow, and no stress. One day, as believers, we will experience perfect, unbroken peace—the kind our hearts have been longing for all along.

The second reality is **peace on earth.**

And as I wrestled with what that truly means, I discovered this: **peace on earth isn’t the absence of problems—it’s the presence of faith.**

It’s trusting that God is who He says He is, even when life feels overwhelming. It’s believing that the Prince of Peace can quiet our hearts long before He quiets our circumstances.

So as we pursue peace of mind in this season and in every season, let’s remember this: The only path to true peace is built one step of faith at a time.

Gina Lemilin

CHRISTMAS PEACE

READ: Luke 2:14; John 14:27; Isaiah 9:6

“Peace on earth” is a phrase you see everywhere around Christmas time. For many of us, we have to wonder where that peace is. Whether we're trying to find peace in the chaos of our own lives or trying to wrap our heads around hope for political peace, “peace on earth” certainly seems elusive.

In our own lives, we struggle to find peace with ourselves. We regret past mistakes, struggle with our present weaknesses, and worry about the future. We seek and long for peace in our relationships with others. In our present relationships, sometimes we avoid conflict and run the other way in fear of doing something we'll regret. We become frustrated and angry over the mistakes of others.

We struggle with the uncertainty of tomorrow and the turmoil going on in the world around us.

Optimists would say that things are better now than they were even several decades ago. But why do we still long for a better world? Even with the best of intentions, our human effort to be good and make this world a better place seems to fall short.

So where can we turn for hope of peace? Have you ever considered looking to see what Jesus Christ says as a solution for peace?

He taught people to love each other as they love themselves (not a self-serving kind of love, but a self-respect kind of love). He taught people to love their enemies.

Not only did he teach people how to be at peace with each other, Jesus himself served to make peace between people and God — a peace that was broken because of our imperfection, and our rebellion to go our own way and live life apart from God (otherwise known as “sin”). This separates us from God who is holy, perfect, and loving. It also prevents us from having access to the love and power from God that would enable us to truly realize and experience peace.



God revealed himself to people through the person of Jesus. Jesus came to earth in a peaceful way as a baby in a humble circumstance of a manger and proceeded to live a humble life. Jesus came to restore our broken relationship with God so that we could first experience wholeness and peace with ourselves, and then extend it to others around us.

Through a personal relationship with Jesus we find peace with God. He came to live life perfectly and died in our place to pay the consequence for our sin.

We find wholeness and peace in our relationship with others because we begin to change and see people through God's eyes. We remember that God first loved us, and we grow in wanting to extend love to others.

Coming into a relationship with Jesus by faith and following Him does not mean a life free of conflict. But He offers a promise of hope of something better to come, and a power to bring some of that better world here and now. He offers a strength to persevere until that time a new world comes.

He always treated people with respect, wisdom and love. He brought peace to those around him, and he ultimately wants to bring peace between you and God.

Take a look at your life. How would you describe it? Contented? Rushed? Exciting? Stressful? Moving forward? Holding back? There are things we dream of doing one day, and there are things we wish we could forget. In the Bible, it says that Jesus came to make all things new. What would your life look like if you could start over with a clean slate?

You can receive Christ right now by faith through prayer! (Prayer is talking with God.) God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart.

Charles George



PEACE OF GOD THAT GUARDS

“Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

- Philippians 4:6-7

READ: Matthew 6:25-34

I had every reason in the world to be anxious, but God’s Word gave me peace.

On the night of February 24th 2025, my dad received a call from a hospital in the state next door that I had been involved in a very bad auto accident. No one could have imagined how bad it was though. I was T-boned at a major intersection by a driver going over 80mph, and I was totally unconscious until I was transported to a major hospital in Atlanta over two weeks later. Even after I arrived in Atlanta, I was still partially unconscious until about a month into my stay there. Once I was fully conscious though, I found out how bad the wreck was. I also found out about all the challenges that I would face in the near and far future, but that’s where God’s Word comes in.

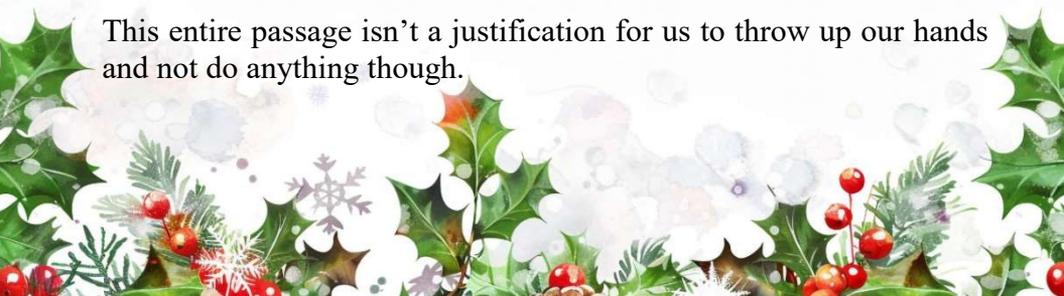
The header for Matthew 6:25-34 in many Bibles is **‘the cure for anxiety.’** Verse 26 of that passage goes on to read that if you

‘look at the birds of the sky: they don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they?’

I love this passage because it reassures me that God cares for me much more than I realize, and verse 34 closes the passage by stating,

‘don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.’

This entire passage isn’t a justification for us to throw up our hands and not do anything though.



Colossians 3:17 reads that

‘whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.’

So if you’re going to do something, put forth your best attitude and best effort because it’s for the perfect God. But if you are worried about something, Philippians 4:6-7 says that we should pray to God about such things, and **the peace of God** will guard us from our worry.

These passages were most prominent to me in the hospital and helped me have peace about my circumstances and a positive outlook on my recovery. I hope you are able to find the same peace about whatever you are going through today.

Heavenly Father, Thank you for how much You love me. I’m not deserving of it, but thank You for guiding me through the challenges in this life. I take comfort in knowing that even if I don’t have all of the answers, You do. In Jesus Name, amen.

Josh “Moto” Henderson

“Your attitude and effort are the only two things you can control in life when everything else is falling apart. So put forth your best attitude and best effort, and let the cards fall the way they’re going to.”

- Craig Henderson (dad) & Josh Henderson (son)



Christ



BE STILL

“Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.” - Psalm 46:10

READ: Psalm 46:1-11; Luke 14:27; Philippians 4:7

We made it. Christmas is here.

Wrapping paper will soon be torn, laughter will echo throughout our homes, and the day will fill with visits, food, football, and festive movies. Oh, don't forget to call or text those closest to you—and yes, that food won't cook itself. And because I don't want anyone to feel bad, I'll do my part to eat more than I should.

Today is often a mix of joy and exhaustion. By tonight, we will all greet our dear friend with a welcomed smile: the pillow.

But before the day sweeps you away, let me remind you—peace doesn't have to vanish with the rush. Peace isn't tied to your schedule; it is anchored in your heart. It doesn't depend on what's happening around you, but on what has happened within you. It depends solely on the person of Jesus Christ.

The Prince of Peace has come—so that you may have life and peace. Today is a great day to bear the fruit of peace to all those you are around. What is the best way to experience that peace today?

Pause. Be still. Enjoy Him. Know.

Take a few minutes. Breathe deeply. Stop striving. Know that He is God. Be at rest!

Our Father, help me be still and know that You alone are God. Thank you for Jesus . . .

In the busyness of this day, would you join my family and me in closing our eyes and listening to “*Be Still and Know*” by Steven Curtis Chapman? Let's center our hearts on the One who holds it all together.



SCAN TO LISTEN

Loving My Chicopee Family,
Clyde Self and family

The words in this devotion came from the prayers and hearts of those who call Chicopee Baptist their church home. We are honored to walk through life together as a church family as we continue to grow as disciples of Jesus.

WRITTEN BY THE CHICOPEE BAPTIST FAMILY

