

Lord for this truth! I don't know about you but I know I can be easily led away from living in a Christ-like manner. I can find myself thinking that others have a better life than me, that their grass is greener than mine, and waste time pursuing material goods instead of God. I also know that I could be a rough around the edges kind of person if it wasn't for the grace of God that I grew up in a family with love and faith in God. Today let us give thanks to our great God who loves His sheep and watches over us.

Saturday — A Great Light!

This is the sixth day of CHRISTmas and very near to the end of 2017. For today please read Isaiah 9:1-7. As this year comes to a close we begin to look back over the year and think about what has or has not happened, what goals did we or did we not meet. 2017 seemed to be a year filled with a lot of darkness for our country. The violence, mass shootings, racial hatred and tension has been increasing and there seems to be a general sense of anger in our society. It seems like our society is filled with people living in the land of deep darkness. As children of God we have seen this great light and we get to reflect the light of Christ to those we encounter in our day. Today let us spend time thanking God for revealing the light of Christ to us and for allowing us to reflect the Light to our friends, family, co-workers and neighbors. Pray about some tangible ways that you might put those thoughts into action and let Christ and His light and love shine into some darkness in the days ahead.



*Devotions for
the week of
December 24, 2017*

What Now?

May these brief daily devotions be a blessing to you and an opportunity for personal reflection and spiritual growth!

This week's *Bring It Home* devotions were written by Rhonda Frerichs.
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Monday — The Greatest Gift!

On this first day of CHRISTmas our True Love gave to us His One and Only Son Jesus Christ, the perfect gift! Isaiah 9:6 "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace." Through these last four weeks of Advent we have been looking towards this day. God with us in the baby Jesus! Within our Triune God is a relational family and Jesus was born into an earthly family. On this CHRISTmas day hopefully you all are able to spend it with your family enjoying one another's fellowship and perhaps sharing gifts. In light of this I simply encourage you all to spend some time today talking within your family about the importance and meaning of the perfect gift our heavenly Father gave to us.

Tuesday — Immanuel – God With Us!

The second day of CHRISTmas we will begin by reading from the Gospel of John. Read John 1:14. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us! I would like to encourage you to think about this truth for a few moments and while you do you may want to listen to Michael Card's, "Immanuel." (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISY2hOJ9v_E) What comes to mind as you think about the Word becoming flesh? Can you picture our infinite God taking on finite flesh, allowing Himself to spend nine months in Mary's womb, slowly being formed, completely and utterly dependent on Mary? Can you see the hands that would heal and the feet that would one day be nailed on the cross slowly being formed? Can you hear the voice that would one day calm a stormy sea and announce, "It is finished," make its first sound, a cry? This is how great the Father truly loves us! It's amazing, isn't it? Today ask God to help you take to heart the lengths He went to, and goes to, in reconciling our relationship with Him. Then thank Him for always being with us.

Wednesday — Prophecy Fulfilled

For the third day of CHRISTmas we will read from Luke 2:1-7 and Micah 5:2-4. God is true to His Word. In these two readings we hear God proclaiming through the prophet Micah where and how He will bring about the One who will be the ruler of Israel. We hear Him fulfilling His Word in intricate detail. I encourage you to think about the length that God goes to in fulfilling His Word. Just as our lives are not always pretty stories that have "happily-ever-after" endings, God does not make His story a fairy tale either. As Mary and Joseph travel, they do not get a red sleigh pulled by reindeer – they have a donkey. Then once they arrive they do not get offered a room at Caesar's Palace, but a place where animals are kept and fed. I don't know about you but I am overwhelmed by the length our God goes to just to be with us and to

help us understand and believe that He truly does know what we're going through and what we need. He accommodated Himself to the world in which we live, allowing Himself to experience not simply a royal lifestyle, but rather a lifestyle to which all of us could look and see that He "gets" us and the lives we live. He understands our hurt, our pain, our challenges, our disappointments. I find myself wondering, am I willing to go to those same lengths of discomfort to reach others for Christ to show them the depth of love He has for them? Today let us thank God for fulfilling His Word in a beautiful but messy way and ask Him for the willingness and courage to go to messy lengths to love others.

Thursday — Good News of Great Joy!

On this fourth day of CHRISTmas please read Luke 2:8-20. Try to picture this scene – spend a few moments imagining that you are there, perhaps you are a shepherd, or maybe an angel. Re-read these verses again, taking yourself back in time to be there in Bethlehem. What would this event have been like for you? Did you find yourself terrified? Or perhaps you found yourself speechless in the presence of an angel of the Lord. What would it have been like to see a heavenly host of angels filling the sky and then hear them speak and sing their praises to God? It must have been amazing to say the least as the shepherds hurried off to check out what they were told. Did you catch what the shepherds did after they saw Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus? They spread the word and glorified and praised God for everything they had just witnessed and seen with their very own eyes! If you have a little more time please enjoy listening to Chris Tomlin's version of "Joy to the World" and experience that Good News of Great Joy! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tC3SwhJsLqU> (Or check out Pentatonix version of "Joy to the World" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xo64Q2ucQ8>)

Friday — The Shepherds' Shepherd

For this fifth day of CHRISTmas let us think a little more about the importance of to whom the birth of Jesus was first announced – the shepherds. When you think about shepherds and sheep what comes to mind? Perhaps you thought about the sheep, how they are considered to be easily led and how they are not very intelligent. Sheep have a tendency to wander off, following after food thinking the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. Maybe you thought about the shepherds and how they were considered unclean, rough around the edges kind of people. These are the ones to whom God chose to reveal His Son! Please read Micah 5:2-5a. Here we read the prophecy that we know speaks of Jesus, assuring us that Jesus is our Shepherd who will stand and keep watch over us with strength and majesty. We His sheep will live securely under His watch. Praise the