



**ROSEMONT BAPTIST CHURCH**



**A FRUITFUL**

**CHRISTMAS**



**DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT**



## **Memory Verse:**

Galatians 5:22-23

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”*

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A Fruitful Christmas Advent  
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**Introduction:**

Advent is a wonderful time of year. The word Advent comes from the Latin word meaning "coming or arrival." It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and marks our journey to Christmas Day, when we celebrate Jesus first coming in humility and eagerly anticipate His return.

This year we have used the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 as a topical guide for our journey through the Christmas story and as a way to highlight some testimonies from members of our church. For those who like things in a specific order, please note we have deviated from the specific order the fruits are listed in Galatians. We hope this won't be too much to handle ☺.

We have also included a separate fruit of the Spirit handout that you can use to decorate and make ornaments with your kids as you study each fruit.

We are grateful to Kathy Hutto for all the work she did on the Bible stories. We are also thankful for each person who included a personal testimony for this project.

We pray this devotional helps you celebrate Jesus' coming in a special way this Christmas season.

Grace and Peace in Christ,  
Jeremy Phillips



*"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son..."*

- Galatians 4:4

### **Patience at Christmas: Anticipating His Birth**

**Attention Grabber:** Prepare a treat for your family. Place it in a location so everyone can see it. Say, "You can have it as soon as we are finished with the devotion."

**Bible Story:** There were about 400 years between the prophecies of Malachi and the opening of the New Testament. These are called "silent years" because there were no inspired words from God during that time. But there were major political, cultural, and religious changes that prepared the world for the arrival of Jesus:

- **Political Changes:** There was a succession of five nations that ruled Palestine: Persia, Greece, Egypt, Syria, and Rome.
- **Cultural Changes:** The Greek language was commonly used throughout the region. The Roman period provided a time of unprecedented peace, magnificent highways, and uniform laws. All these aided in the spread of the gospel and the writing of the New Testament by the first century church.
- **Religious Changes:** The Jews developed a new zeal for the Law. As a result, several new parties arose, including the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Scribes. New institutions were also established, including the synagogue and the Sanhedrin. These groups and institutions are seen throughout the Gospels.

Even in the "silence," the Lord was setting the stage for the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus, to come "in the fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4). His patience and wisdom are always perfect.

**Application and Discussion:** Give the treat to everyone. Ask, "Was it hard to be patient especially since you knew the treat was coming?"

- Are you struggling to be patient about anything? Ask God to help you have patience and to trust in His perfect timing.
  - When the timing was right, Jesus came. Spend time praising God for sending Jesus at the perfect time.
  - Go Deeper: Read 1 Peter 3:9 and Psalm 86. What do we learn about God's patience from these verses?
- 



**Patience**  
**By Christy Tidwell**

When I was asked to write a devotion on patience, I was a little surprised: Patience is not one of my strong points...just ask my kids when we are sitting in the drop-off line at school every morning! But patience is something God is working on in me daily.

For example, In April 2013, my husband Greg was diagnosed with leukemia. It was a blow that came out of nowhere. The doctors told us that although his type of leukemia is very curable, it would be a difficult and lengthy process to reach that cure.

I knew I needed to lean totally on God and rely on His strength every day. So, I wrote several verses on pieces of paper to put on the bulletin board in the hospital room. One of those verses was Psalm 33:22, "May your unfailing love be with us Lord, even as we put our hope in you." I needed to see God's promises of love and hope every day.

Greg spent 37 days in the hospital, three months at home doing outpatient chemo, and two years of maintenance therapy, taking a combination of three chemo pills. If you're doing the math, that's about two and a half years we spent actively treating this disease. We were so thankful to God and excited to be at the end of that process in October 2015!

However, at the same time, my son Josh was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. In December 2015 he had surgery to remove his thyroid. Then, to top it off, our house flooded early Christmas morning. I was stunned. Frustrated. I definitely did not feel patience!

In Romans 12:12 we read, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." It took a lot of prayer to get through that period of our lives. To be honest, at times I wanted to stomp my feet and throw a fit! It took a conscious decision to find joy (not necessarily happiness) in those circumstances. Patience does not always come easily, but when we rely on God's strength every day, it comes.



*"...for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."*

- Luke 1:49

### **Goodness at Christmas: An Angel Visits Mary**

**Attention Grabber:** Look up the meaning of everyone's name and talk about them.

**Bible Story:** Mary's name is the equivalent of the Hebrew name, Miriam, meaning bitter. Mary's young life may well have been filled with bitter hardships. Her hometown was a community in a poor district of Galilee, and frankly, good things were likely pretty scarce.

But things were about to change for Mary. The angel Gabriel visited her in order to give her a special message: "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" he said. A worried look spread across her face. He quickly reassured her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:30-32). Mary was a believer. She did not fully understand how it would happen, but she believed the angel when he said, "with God nothing is impossible" (Luke 1:37). "Let it be to me according to your word" she responded. And just like that, the angel was gone.

God was good to Mary and she was chosen to bear the greatest gift to ever be given, Jesus. But, Mary did not take credit for any goodness in herself. In fact, after the angel shared the special message with her, she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth and was so consumed by the wonder of God's grace and goodness to her that she sang a song. That song was all about God's goodness, His glory, the strength of His arm, and His faithfulness across the generations – and to us all!

#### **Application and Discussion:**

- How does the story of Christmas proclaim God's goodness?
  - What are some of God's attributes that Mary celebrates in her song in Luke 1:46-55?
  - Read James 1:17. What are you celebrating this Christmas season? How are you celebrating God's goodness in your life?
- 



**Goodness**  
**By Cecilia Rollings**

“O taste and see that the Lord our God is good. Blessed is the man who trusts and takes refuge in Him.” - Psalm 34:8

In the beginning, God created mankind in His own image that He might have a relationship with Him. When sin and disobedience entered in the mind and heart of man, it separated man from God. But in God’s goodness, He sent His Son as a sacrifice for our sins, so that through that sacrifice, and our acceptance of Jesus as our Savior, we could be restored back to our relationship with Him.

Christmas is a wonderful time to remember that the story of Jesus is indeed Good News that proclaims God’s goodness! When the angel visited the shepherds he said, “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). Are you celebrating the coming of Jesus as “good news of great joy” this Christmas season? Have you experienced the goodness of His salvation. Do you know Him as your Lord and Savior?

Or, maybe this season has been a particularly difficult one for you. As followers of Jesus, “we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28). As we walk in that relationship and obedience to the Lord, we will see His goodness and realize that He is working all things out for good.

Oh how good is our God! Psalm 23:6 says, “Surely only goodness, mercy and unfailing love shall follow me all the days of my life, and through the length of my days in the house of the Lord (and His presence) shall be my dwelling place.”



*"When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him..."*

- Matthew 1:24

### **Kindness at Christmas: An Angel Visits Joseph**

**Attention Grabber:** Play a game of Uno (or similar game) where you must discard cards you don't want. Or, get your kids to help you throw away some trash. Transition into today's story by saying, "Did you know Joseph could have discarded Mary, but he chose not to?"

**Bible Story:** The punishment was stoning, which meant death. But Joseph could never do that. He didn't understand how Mary could be pregnant, since they were not yet married. He felt betrayed. But, even still, he loved her and couldn't bear to see her harmed. So, Joseph made up his mind to end the engagement quietly. His desire wasn't to make her a public spectacle. He just needed time to think...and while he thought, a revelation came.

Joseph drifted off to sleep and in that slumber, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The words could not have been more clear: "Do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-21).

Joseph woke from his sleep. He no longer needed time to think. He knew what he must do. His feelings of rejection turned to a beautiful awareness of his purpose: He would obey the Lord. He would take care of the woman who was carrying this special child. He would show kindness to Mary because, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means God with us)" (Matthew 1:22-23).

**Application and Discussion:** Showing kindness isn't always easy, but it is right choice because it is a picture of God's kindness to us.

- How does Joseph show kindness through his actions?
- Is there someone you have not been showing kindness to lately?
- How does God show kindness to us even though we do not deserve it? Read Titus 3:3-7 & Romans 5:8



## **Kindness**

**By Becky Grabowski**

Recently, I took my daughter to the library in the midst of running other errands. We perused the shelves and quickly found books for each of us. But, when we walked out of the library, it was pouring rain and I'd left our umbrella at home. A group of gentlemen were deep in conversation as we passed by, but one man stopped me and offered his umbrella. "I don't want you to get your little girl wet," he said. I'm sure he saw me hesitate, weighing whether or not to take him up on this offer. I accepted, and was grateful for the protection of the umbrella. We expressed our gratitude when we drove up to return the umbrella, and he told me to have a blessed day. I drove away in dry clothing, gratefully reflecting on this simple act of kindness.

The Old Testament is rich with examples of people asking for or extending kindness to others. In Genesis 40:14, an unfairly imprisoned Joseph asks for his fellow prisoners to show him kindness in return for his dream interpretations. Rahab asks for kindness in sparing her family after she protects the Israelite spies (Joshua 2:12). Naomi praises Boaz for his kindness in providing food for Ruth and her family (Ruth 2:20-21).

In the New Testament, we see that the ultimate example of kindness, shown through grace and mercy, is Jesus' death on the cross. God's kindness to us is lavished daily in his grace, which is unrelenting, offered freely, and without conditions. Yet, that is the opposite of what we so often extend to each other. Colossians 3:12-13 says, "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." Let's show the kindness of Lord this Christmas.

### **Family Prayer:**

Dear God, Thank you for giving us the best example of kindness: Jesus laying his life down for us so that we would be forgiven of sin, have a relationship with you, and live with you forever. Holy spirit, help us to be sensitive to your direction as we look for opportunities to show kindness to those around us. Help us to love others with the loving kindness you demonstrated to us. Amen



## **Family Project #1**

### **By Randy Presley**

Our family truly enjoys celebrating Christmas. It has always been a special tradition as we put up our Christmas tree and bring out the decorations each year. Since our kids were old enough to help, it has always been a family affair to decorate inside and outside the house. My wife, Hannah, always does a great job of including the kids in making special Christmas sweets. That brings me to a family project idea:

1. Gather your entire family together in the kitchen to bake some Christmas sweets. Make several different things and allow the kids to be hands on with the process. They may not be “Pinterest perfect” but they will be authentic! Get some red or green plastic plates and divide up the sweets onto several different plates. Print off a card with a verse that best sums up Christmas to you. For example: John 1:14, Isaiah 7:14, Galatians 4:4-5, Matthew 1:23, Isaiah 9:6, or John 3:16. Then, go as a family and deliver the plates of snacks to some neighbors that you do not know very well. Take time to explain to them that you hope they have a great Christmas, and why your family celebrates Christmas (the hope we find in Christ).

Or

2. Pick a night to invite your neighbors over to your home for an afternoon or evening “come and go” fellowship party. Make the same Christmas treats and provide coffee or cider or both. As everyone fellowships together, at some point take a moment to thank them for coming and share the Christmas story with them! This does not have to be a long “preachy” message, but rather a quick insight for them to know what your family believes and why. It just might open the door for more conversations with your neighbors at another time.
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# Christmas Ministry Opportunities

Below (and on page 18) are a variety of opportunities you have to help out some worthy organizations this Christmas season. You can get involved with these projects as an individual, family, and/or a Sunday School class. If you have any questions, please call the church office at (706) 882-6234.

## **LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING**

Every year we take up this offering to support international missions. 100% of your gift goes to support missionaries overseas who are making disciples and multiplying churches among unreached peoples and places for the glory of God. Our goal this year is \$51,400. Please clearly indicate "LMCO" with your gift.

## **CHRISTMAS GIFTS for FOSTER CHILDREN & SAFE FAMILIES**

We have specific wish lists for children of various ages. Call or email Christy Tidwell for more info: [ctidwell@rosemontchurch.org](mailto:ctidwell@rosemontchurch.org) (706) 882-6234. This is a great opportunity for a Sunday School class to go in together to purchase gifts for a family. Please turn in your gifts by December 17th.

## **CHRISTMAS GIFTS for CASA CHILDREN**

We have a list of specific gifts for over 100 children of various ages. Please call, text, or email April Taylor for more info about specific needs: [ataylorga@charter.net](mailto:ataylorga@charter.net) (706) 333-2676. This is a great opportunity for individuals or families to purchase gifts!

## **CHRISTMAS GIFTS for 2<sup>ND</sup> CHANCE GIRLS HOME**

We are collecting specific gifts for teenage mothers and their children who currently live at the 2nd Chance Girls' Home. Please call or text Wendy Aldridge for more info about specific needs: (706) 957-1251.

*"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered."*

- Luke 2:1

### **Peace at Christmas: A Decree Went Out**

**Attention Grabber:** Pretend to pack for a trip or use a sheet to make a tent like your camping.

**Bible Story:** The timing was impeccable. A new Caesar was on the throne, Caesar Augustus. Under his rule, the Roman Empire dominated and ushered in a period of great prosperity and peace. He ordered "all the world" (the Roman empire) to be registered. Palestine had previously been excluded from the Roman census, because Jews were exempt from serving in the Roman army, and the census was designed primarily to register young men for military service (as well as account for all Roman citizens). But, now they must report. Only God could have orchestrated these details. A new Caesar, with a new set of rules sat on the throne, and his decree would take Mary and Joseph on a journey to Bethlehem (Joseph's home town)...the very city where the Messiah was prophesied to be born (Micah 5:2).

Joseph, along with a very pregnant Mary, began their journey. The trip involved much more than packing a suitcase and jumping in the car. They needed to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, which was around 70 miles. Joseph probably would have traveled on foot and Mary on a donkey, but the Bible doesn't specify these details. It would take us about an hour and 10 minutes to make this trip in a car. It took nearly a week for Mary and Joseph to make the trip.

It was not an easy journey, but it was all a part of God's plan. Even when we cannot see the big picture because circumstances are clouding our view, we can be filled with God's peace because He is in control.

### **Application and Discussion:**

- How would knowing God was orchestrating all these events have given Mary and Joseph peace during their journey to Bethlehem?
  - Read Philippians 4:6-7. Are you going through any difficulties now that you need God's peace? Pray, and ask the Lord to fill you with His peace.
- 



**Peace**

**By Elizabeth Powell**

I never would have thought we'd be faced with the trial of having a child who would need procedures and open heart surgery within her first year of life to save her life and will need more in the future to sustain her life. We were, and sometimes still are, completely out of our comfort zone and in awe of what God has opened our eyes to through these circumstances. As we've trusted in His goodness during the uncertainties surrounding Becklyn's health, we've lived in an indescribable state of peace that could only come from Him.

Here are lessons tucked away in my heart from Becklyn's journey:

- 1. Pray for His will to be done.** Even when you're not certain what His will is, or if you're scared it may not be what you want, pray for it.
- 2. Trust Him.** As you pray, trust that His will is good. Even if it isn't what you wanted, you'll eventually see that He works all things for good. Somehow, even in the midst of sorrow, there will be good.
- 3. Follow the path He's given you.** After you've prayed for and sought His will, you'll know when it's revealed to you. Once your heart knows the path He's set before you, follow it.
- 4. Always be kind.** I can't tell you how important this is. Be kind to strangers...your family...those who are like you...those who aren't. When we were at the hospital, the diversity in culture was vast and deep. As different as we all were, there was a common thread that ran through us - our children were very sick. The best medicine for parents as we waited for our own kind of miracle was kindness.
- 5. Don't underestimate the devil.** But, remember he has already been defeated. Guard yourself against him. Arm yourself with God's truths and speak them out loud. Most of what worries us is out of our control anyway. Let go and let God bring you peace.
- 6. Be thankful.** The more you reflect on what you have to be thankful for, the less you focus on things that are out of your control. Let your thoughts be those of thanks and you'll be happier because of it.

Each of these lessons brought peace to my soul and reminded me that when we dwell on the things of the Lord, we can be overcome with the kind of peace that only He can give. It is a peace that brings calmness even in the midst of what feels like chaos.



*"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."*

- Luke 2:7

### **Gentleness at Christmas: No Room at the Inn**

**Attention Grabber:** Go outside and play toss the egg. Say, you must be gentle or the egg will break. If that is a little too messy, grab one of your fragile ornaments and talk about why you have to be gentle with it.

**Bible Story:** Imagine the scene. Mary and Joseph had come to the end of a long journey. The city was full of people who had traveled to Bethlehem to complete the census. Mary went into labor and the only place, probably the only uncrowded place, for her to give birth was where the animals were kept. The setting was humble. This baby was the promised Messiah. He was the One of whom the prophet Isaiah said hundreds of year before His birth, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

A Bible teacher once wrote, "Gentleness can refer to a great power under control' it is meekness and a form of being submissive."<sup>1</sup> There is no better description of this type of gentleness than the birth of Jesus. The One who "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-2). It is He, the King of Kings, "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men....he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:6-8). Now that is great power under control...that is gentleness in it's purest form.

**Application and Discussion:** We have enough power to crush an egg or fragile ornament, yet God's power is infinitely greater. Jesus could have come in great power...with all the pomp and circumstance of king. However, He came gently that first Christmas night.

- How are you displaying gentleness in your life?
- Are you abusing your power to exalt yourself, or are you displaying gentleness to bring glory to God?

<sup>1</sup>. Kelly Minter during a teaching session



## **Gentleness**

### **By Kati Wallace**

Over the past few years the Lord has been teaching me so many things. Gentleness would surely be near the top for me! I would love to be known as a person who is always striving for gentleness. Gentleness in every situation, gentleness in raising my girls, gentleness in conflict or discipline. Yet sadly, I fail at this so often.

In Colossians 3:12, God tells us that, as His people, we are to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. I remember a particularly hard season we were in as a family. Day in and day out, the same issues were happening. I knew something had to shift! Once I realized that I was the one who needed to change, things slowly became different. One thing I saw was that I needed to understand that all the time and effort I was gently pouring in was actually me spending myself for the Lord (Isaiah 58). He calls us to spend ourselves, and that is where and when we will find our joy in the Lord!

We do this by daily clothing ourselves in these things...kindness, compassion, gentleness, etc. How we respond in our day in day out is everything! Do not shift your gaze—keep focused on Jesus. Clothe yourself with the fruit of the Holy Spirit! The Lord is who we are pouring ourselves out for! Whatever your valley may be for you—choose daily to gently do it well. And do not be fooled! This is beautiful and glory-giving and true worship to our One and Only King, Jesus!

Matt Redman has a new song, “Place of Praise,” that says...

“If the highest praise is a sacrifice,  
and the greatest song is to give my life,  
then I will not bring that which costs me nothing!”

May our praise to our God not cost us nothing—may it cost us till we have spent ourselves completely, because that is what He deserves! Choose with me to gently, but boldly, chase after Him, speak of Him and spend ourselves for Him each day.

Jesus— you are worth our all!



*"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger..."*

- Luke 2: 7

### **Love at Christmas: Jesus is Born**

**Attention Grabber:** Have a family member get the baby Jesus figure from your Nativity (use a picture if you don't have one). Pass it around and have each person share a way God has shown His love for them.

**Bible Story:** It was the ultimate example of love. Jesus left perfect heaven to come to fallen earth to save the people He dearly loved from their sin. They deserved to die because they sinned when they ate the forbidden fruit. But, God loved them so much and had a special plan.

An animal paid the wage that day. God sacrificed it for Adam and Eve and covered their shame (Genesis 3:21). From that point on sacrifices would be made over and over because of sin, but all of them were a foreshadow of the great and final sacrifice that God would provide.

When Jesus was born, in Mary's arms lay that perfect sacrifice that would once and for all pay the wage for sin. "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Those words are staggering. Jesus came to give us eternal life. Could there ever be a greater display of love? Could there ever be a greater gift for us to celebrate at Christmas? Definitely not! So let's joyfully celebrate His love this Christmas season.

"In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." - 1 John 4:9-11

#### **Application and Discussion:**

- Propitiation means, "a sacrifice that bears God's wrath and turns it to favor." Why did Jesus need to be our propitiation for sin?
- How will we celebrate God's love this Christmas?



## Love

**By Sherma Lumpkin**

As the Christmas season approaches, our hearts are drawn to things we love. We have traditions we love with people we love in order to celebrate our Savior's love. That's a hard one, isn't it? The love of the Savior...perfect, unconditional love, love that would send His only Son to die for our sins. We struggle to wrap our minds around it because nothing else in all of creation compares to it. And too often, we are content to walk through life never really experiencing it.

I see evidence of God's love through family and friends. Sometimes His still small voice speaks love directly to my heart. But his love is revealed most fully when I see the wonder of who He is.

I remember sensing God's love in this way while serving in San Juan Moca, Guatemala. It was an exceptionally hot and humid day, even for Guatemala. I found myself exhausted, standing alone on the side of a mountain overlooking the village. From this viewpoint, I could see people from different races, cultures, and languages all working together toward one goal. In that moment, one question resonated in my mind, "How did I get here, God?" This wasn't a question from an entitled first world girl who was dirty and tired. Instead, it was a longing from my heart to really understand. With all my doubt, pride, and self-reliance, in all my sinfulness, how could God possibly see fit to use me as a part of his perfect plan for this world? His answer was simple. He loves me. He doesn't need me. In fact, I'm really a mess most days, but He loves me anyway. I was overwhelmed by this small glimpse of the love that saved me and allows me to join His work to redeem His people.

I desperately want to live a life that is worthy of this calling. I want to grasp the width and length and height and depth of the Father's love just as Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus. And I want you to do the same. This Christmas, I pray that we won't settle for less than to truly encounter His love. Let's search for it, pray for it, open our hearts to it. And when we catch a glimpse of it, may we rest in it and allow ourselves to be captivated by His true love.





**Family Project #2**  
**By Randy Presley**

We celebrate Christmas often times by giving gifts as a reminder of the gift the Lord God sent to us through Jesus. That kindness naturally flows out of us into the lives of others during the Christmas season. However, we know there are so many who are without the support network who also have many needs especially during this season.

In an attempt to help our children recognize how blessed they truly are, we like to include them in gathering items to give to others. There are so many opportunities you can look into. You can check with schools and try to find a family that could use help at Christmas. You could also call the church office and get the names of a family that you could bless. There are many local ministries that serve those who are homeless, in crisis situations, SAFE families, etc., that have needs as well. Take your kids along to do the shopping, let them be involved in picking out the items, and let them see how much you spend.

There are also places that your family could serve a meal to those in need. The Lagrange Homeless warming center is open on nights that the temperature gets down around freezing. Each night that they are open, they request people to come and provide a meal, or serve a meal. This could be a project that several families could do together.





# Christmas Ministry Opportunities

## **KOATS for KIDS**

We are collecting new or gently used winter clothing for all ages and sizes, with an emphasis on children's clothes. We will continue to collect these coats through the first week of January.

## **TOYS for EGLESTON**

We are collecting new, unwrapped toys, board games, video games, movies, art supplies, etc. for children in Egleston Hospital. Toys can be for a variety of ages, from infant to teens. Toys DUE by December 10th.

## **TOYS for TOTS MARINE CORPS. LEAGUE**

We are collecting NEW toys for children 3-12 years old for the LaGrange/Troup Co. area. Please drop off toys by December 17th.

## **CANNED FOOD DRIVE for RBC food pantry**

We are collecting canned food items to make food boxes for families in need. We have the greatest need for canned food, but we will accept other non-perishable food items as well. Please be sure to check the expiration dates on the food you give.

## **KIDS CLUB**

We are collecting socks, winter hats & gloves for children in the LaGrange area. We need all sizes for boys and girls, from child sizes to adult sizes for teens.

*Thank you for your participation.*

*Merry Christmas!*

*"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told to them."*

- Luke 2:20

### **Joy at Christmas: Shepherds Proclaim**

**Attention Grabber:** Sing or listen to the song, "Joy to the World." You could also use Chris Tomlin's version, "Joy to the World (Unspeakable Joy)." Make sure everyone understands the meaning of the song.

**Bible Story:** Bethlehem was near Jerusalem and many of the sheep used in the temple sacrifices came from there. The surrounding hills were prime grazing land and shepherds worked in the area day and night, all year round.

It was night when an angel of the Lord appeared before the shepherds. It must have been an amazing sight. The angel was glowing with the glory of the Lord and the shepherds were afraid. The angel reassured them there was no need to be afraid because he was bringing "good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10).

The angel told the shepherds that the long awaited Savior of the world was born and told them where they would find him. He would be in Bethlehem, wrapped in cloths, lying in a manger. Suddenly a host of angels appeared. ("Host" is a term that was used for army encampments and suggested a large number). That host of angels began to praise God. The Bible doesn't say if they were singing or speaking, but we often like to think they were praising God in song. They proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:14).

The shepherds made haste to go and see the Messiah. When they had seen him, they made widely known all that they had experienced. When it was time for them to leave and go back to the field, they went with such joy – still glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen (Luke 2: 20).

**Application and Discussion:** The angels experienced joy as they proclaimed the glory of God. The shepherds experienced joy because of all they had heard and seen. What about you?

- How does celebrating the birth of Jesus bring you joy this Christmas?
  - What did the shepherds do when they saw Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger? How can you share with others what God has shown?
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## **Joy**

### **By Carole Bray**

My name, Carole, means “A song of joy.” Like the song, “I have the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart. Where?...Down in my heart to stay.” I have to say, I really do have joy in my heart.

My first joy came at the birth of my sister, Connie. I still remember it so well. Daddy put on his best white dress shoes and said, “We’re going to get Mama and baby sister.” I still remember seeing her tiny wrist with the ID bracelet on it. It was such a joyful moment.

I also remember the joy I felt when I met the love of my life, Jerry. We’ve been married 52 years. When I met him I screamed with such excitement that Mama ran out wielding a mop and broom thinking someone was attacking me. I thank God daily for him. He brings me joy every day. We have had such joy in serving God throughout our entire marriage. Over Rosemont’s 50 year history, we have had the joy of teaching and ministering to Preschool, Children, and Youth. What joy we have in loving them and seeing them ask Jesus to be their Lord and Savior. We are now teaching our third generation of children. Our church family brings us joy daily.

Our special joy came in the birth of our son, Ben, after almost 22 years of marriage. He is our pride and joy; our special and blessed gift from God. We thank God daily for him. Everyone was so excited for us when he was born. They called us Abraham and Sarah at church because we were older. The children even gave up their place in our live nativity for us to be Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus. What a sacrifice for them and an honor for us. We celebrated a parent’s greatest joy when Ben asked Jesus to be his Lord and Savior. He accepted Christ at home, made his public profession of faith at Rosemont, and later followed Christ in baptism. We have joy too in knowing that one day we’ll see our baby I miscarried before Ben was born in Heaven. What joy in knowing we’ll all be together forever.

As we celebrate this most beautiful season of the year, be joyful. Remember that the greatest joy came in the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus. Remember that for the joy set before him he endured the cross and offers salvation to all who would believe (Hebrews 2:2, Romans 10:9). “Joy to the world, the Lord is come!”



*"And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother and they fell down and worshiped him."*

- Matthew 2:11

## **Faithfulness at Christmas: The Wise Men's Journey**

**Attention Grabber:** Let each family member share a gift they hope to receive this Christmas.

**Bible Story:** It must have been exciting. They had faithfully scanned the heavens night after night, but this time they saw a star that wasn't there before. Everything was lining up. These men were known as Magi, or wise men. They studied the sky, and were apparently familiar with God's Word because they knew these events showed that a new king had been born. So, they set out on their journey in search of "he who has been born King of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2).

Where were they from? The East. The journey probably took them quite some time, and though they had to travel far to see this special promise with their own eyes, they were faithful to make the journey. The sad part of it is though, people who should have known, the people of Israel, seemed to have missed it. Yet, these men from far away showed up. However, they weren't just faithful to journey, faithful to show up, they were also faithful to rejoice, to worship, and to offer a sacrificial gift to the Lord in response to His faithfulness in this special moment. God's Word says, "And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11).

**Application and Discussion:** Let's strive to be like the Wisemen this year at Christmas. Let's be faithful to praise the Lord in all things because He is faithful to fulfill His promises. Let's be faithful to honor Him with our words and deeds because He alone is worthy of all glory, and honor, and praise. Let's be faithful to focus on Him this Christmas.

- How are you being faithful to honor the Lord with your life?
- Are there ways you are not being faithful?
- Spend some time sharing ways you have experienced the Lord's faithfulness this year.



## **Faithfulness**

**By Jason Bennett**

I feel like I see God's faithfulness most in all the little things that happen every day. I often miss them as I go through my day in a hurry to get things done. Yet, when I pray for something very specific and it is related to a real need, it seems that God responds with a prompt reply and in a way I completely did not expect or could not plan. It is in those moments that I see God's faithfulness.

God has also proven that the size of my request is no hindrance for Him. He regularly reminds me that He already knew what I was going to pray for and had already been speaking to someone else's heart about being a blessing or part of His answer. His answers to prayer always seem to say, "I am working ahead of you. I have this planned out and I'm going to prove that it's Me by meeting your need in a way you could not have foreseen."

I also see His faithfulness in the little measures of grace. Grace to simply respond with love in tense situations. Grace to find patience for my children or communicate with Lee Ann after we've both had long and exhausting days. Grace to remember a scripture that I needed to hear at that exact moment.

God creates ways every day to give me reason to say,

"the LORD is good;  
his lovingkindness is everlasting  
and His faithfulness to all generations"

- Psalm 100:5

When I am most desperate for God's presence, I make myself slow down. I look for Him and I find Him always faithfully present, faithfully working in me and around me. I praise God for His faithfulness.



*"She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day."*

- Luke 2:37

### **Self-Control at Christmas: Simeon and Anna**

**Attention Grabber:** Give everyone a piece of candy. Tell them to put it in their mouth. There is one rule: You cannot chew or bite it. You must leave it in your mouth until it dissolves. See who lasts the longest.

**Bible Story:** After Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph took him to the temple in accordance with the Law of Moses. There, they met Simeon, who was known for his devotion. The Holy Spirit had promised Simeon that he would not die before he saw the long-awaited Messiah. When his eyes fell on Jesus, there was no doubt in his mind. He took the baby in his arms and praised God. "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace...My eyes have seen your salvation," he said (Luke 2:30).

Anna was at the temple as well. She was an older woman, who was also known for her devotion. "She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer, night and day (Luke 2:37). Anna was completely devoted to the service and worship of God. When she realized Jesus was the promised "redemption of Israel" (Luke 2:38), her only response was to praise God and tell others about him.

Something happens when people are confronted with the truth of Jesus. For Herod, it was a selfish desire to destroy him. For Simeon and Anna, it was worship and fulfillment of a deep longing. The difference? One was of the Spirit and the other was of the flesh.

The Spirit's work in Anna and Simeon was beautiful. But, their self-control was not the product of their own willpower: It was a deep work of the Spirit. They were devoted. They prayed. They fasted. They worshiped. They had self-control and people knew it. But, when their moment in the story arises, when the spotlight hits them, what do they do? They direct everyone's attention to where it should be: The great work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They possess the self-control of a true worshiper.

### **Application and Discussion:**

- Are you being controlled by anything other than the Spirit of God and His work in your life?
- Read Hebrews 12:1-3. How are you fixing your eyes on Jesus? How is His example helping you persevere?



## **Self-Control**

### **By Philip McClung**

Self-control is hard. It is allowing the Spirit to enable us to keep from doing things we shouldn't do, things that wouldn't be good for us or for others. We often think of a person with self-control as one who avoids drugs or alcohol, or avoids sugars or unhealthy foods to watch his/her weight. As Christians, we can show a lack of self-control, not by what goes into our mouths, but by the words that come out of our mouths.

Years ago when I was a teacher, I remember the mad dash to get to the lunchroom each day so I could have adult conversation after spending hours teaching 25 second graders how to read, write, and multiply. After getting my students settled, opened milk cartons, ketchup packs, and chip bags, I would finally get to sit down and eat lunch at the teachers' table.

There was a person who sat at our table who always spoke negatively of others. "Can you believe he did that?" "Did you hear about this?" Every day there was a discussion that led to speaking negatively about someone else. Before long, it was easy for me to be drawn in and even join in the conversation. But, I remember one day God clearly showed me that I was not showing self-control during that time by allowing unwholesome talk to come from my mouth. I was displeasing God and not showing self-control.

I asked God to give me self-control, wisdom and strength to change. I tried to steer our conversations in a different direction when I felt the conversation "going south." I talked to one of the other teachers who was a Christian about my struggles and asked her to hold me accountable when those situations arose. There were days that I even chose to sit with my students to avoid the struggle. After a while, I realized I had more joy than ever before and I knew God was shaping me into who He wanted me to be.

So ask yourself, "Am I taking part in conversations that lift others up or tears them down?" "Am I practicing self-control in my conversations and my daily walk with the Lord? Self-control is a gift from God, and we can always ask Him to help us have more self-control. He will not let us be tempted beyond what we can handle and will always provide a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13).



*“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”*

- Galatians 4:5-6

### **A Christmas Eve Devotion by Adam Camp**

Christmas is my favorite time of the year. I love the lights and the sights and the sounds. I love the time with my family. I love to remember all that Christ has given us. It’s during this time of year that we turn our attention to that simple manger all those centuries ago.

The birth of Jesus was a defining point in human history. It literally changed the world. However, it was more than just a single event. It was more than just a young couple celebrating the birth of their child. It was the unfolding of God’s plan from the beginning.

From eternity past, God had a plan. Even though His perfect creation was ravished because of Adam and Eve’s sin, God’s plan would not be stopped.

In Genesis 3, God tells the serpent, “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (3:14–15). Here, just after man falls into sin, the Lord gives us the hope that one day the Messiah will come and once and for all defeat the enemy. In fact, the entire Old Testament looks ahead to the glorious day when the Savior will be revealed.

Yet for hundreds and hundreds of years, the darkness and oppression of sin gripped the people of God. People waited. People hoped. A Savior was desperately needed, but none was in sight.

Until...With no fanfare and no one even paying attention, a young couple quietly walked into Bethlehem and changed the world forever. The scriptures aren’t clear as to how long their journey might have





taken or how long they had to wait in Bethlehem, but we know that after a period of time Mary found herself not only holding her first born son, but holding the very baby that would become the Savior of the world. We can only imagine what she must have felt.

God with us. Immanuel. The Prince of Peace. The Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. That small baby boy represented the cosmic plan of the Lord. That one birth was the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. God's plan had arrived.

So when you wake up tomorrow, celebrate the birth of Jesus. Remember why the angel and a multitude of heavenly hosts declared, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased." Remember why the shepherds left glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Remember why the wise men fell down, worshiped, and gave their treasure in that special moment. Remember the joy. Experience the hope. But most importantly, remember that from eternity past, God had a plan to redeem His people back to Himself and he did it through that little baby boy - JESUS!

**Conclusion:** It is easy for us to lose sight of Jesus amidst the busyness of the Christmas season. So, if you haven't already done so, plan how you will take time to focus your attention on Him and celebrate His birth tomorrow. Plan to spend some time reading the story of Christmas (Matthew 1-2 & Luke 1-2). If you have an opportunity to gather as a family or with other Christians tomorrow, make sure to spend time in worship together.

We hope you have enjoyed the devotions and testimonies in this booklet. May Christ

"...dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge...to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

- Ephesians 3:17-21



