



YOUR BEST CHRISTMAS

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25 CHRISTMAS LESSONS THAT WILL
LIFT YOUR LIFE TO NEW LEVELS

DALE A. O'SHIELDS



Your Best Christmas

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Dale A. O'Shields



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© 2024 by Dale A. O'Shields

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Author's Note

Christmas—the word elicits many wonderful, warm emotions. It's a season most people look forward to every year. The decorations, the parties, the food, the family gatherings, and the gift-giving all make it a truly special holiday.

In the midst of the festivities of the season, it's important to remember the real reason for the season. The English term “Christmas” comes from the words “Crist Mass.” “Crist,” or “Christ,” refers to the Messiah or Anointed One, and “Mass” refers to a worship service or event. Christmas, by definition, is an event centered around and focused on the worship of Christ—Jesus Christ the Messiah.

Somehow, over time and through the persistent secularization of culture, the real meaning of Christmas—what it's actually all about—has become obfuscated and, in some cases, outrightly rejected and even ridiculed. It's past time to resurrect the real meaning of Christmas—the celebration of our Savior's birth, the worship of Jesus the Messiah.

This “Christmas resurrection” begins with us—you and me as followers of Jesus Christ. It happens as we cultivate a fresh appreciation for and express our thanksgiving and worship to God for the wonderful gift of Jesus Christ to the world and to each of us. It happens as we take time to prayerfully think about the real meaning of Christmas in our lives today.

This is what “Your Best Christmas” is all about. These twenty-five devotionals are designed to help you renew your appreciation for Jesus Christ and reflect on the lessons we learn from the events surrounding His birth.

My prayer is that these daily Christmas thoughts will enrich your spiritual life this season. May this truly be “Your Best Christmas!”

Merry Christmas!
Pastor Dale



DECEMBER 1



CHOICES



Matthew 1:24 (NIV)

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

The story of Christmas is filled with choices. When the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary, telling her she was chosen by God to bring the Messiah into our world, she had to make a choice. Joseph also wrestled with a decision. He had to choose how to respond to the news of Mary's pregnancy. These choices were critical to their futures and to the fulfillment of God's plan for the world.

Choices are a critical part of life. The quality of one's life is determined by decisions. The best way to improve your life is to make better choices. This starts with always saying "yes" to God's Word and will. Both Mary and Joseph said "yes" to God.

Never underestimate the power and importance of your choices. Sometimes, our choices are small and insignificant; other times, as in the case of Mary

and Joseph, they affect our destiny, the destinies of others, and God's plans. The right answer to God is always, "yes!"



MY PRAYER

Lord, help me to consistently make choices that honor you. Help me always to do your will and follow your plans for my life, not my own. In Jesus' name, Amen.





DECEMBER 2



COMMITMENT



Luke 1:26-27 (NIV)

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

A commitment is a reflection of what we value and a resolute decision to make certain things our priorities. Everyone is committed to something. Commitments are important. They set our life direction. The right commitments prepare us for God's best in life.

When we're first introduced to Mary, the mother of our Lord, we find a young lady who was committed to the right things. She was first committed to God. She lived a life of purity in honor of God's commands.

She was also committed to a relationship with her soon-to-be husband, Joseph. Both of these commitments made her a candidate for bringing the Savior into our world. Without these

commitments, we would not have the story of Mary.

Your commitments matter. They show what's really important to you. The right commitments position you to discover God's will and experience God's best in life.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, help me to honestly inventory my commitments. Teach me to value what you value and to be fully committed to things that are truly important, starting with my relationship with you. In Jesus' name. Amen.



DECEMBER 3



PRINCIPLES



Matthew 1:19 (NLT)

Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man.

Are you a person of “principles?” Do you have a set of values that direct your life? Do you follow a moral compass? Are you principled?

A “principled person” is someone who has a true sense of right and wrong. They consistently follow their convictions, no matter what circumstances or culture dictates or what pressure their peers apply. They know what they believe and live it. They’re reliable and trustworthy. Their actions are based on good and godly internal principles and priorities that guide them.

Joseph, the God-appointed human guardian of the Christ child, was a principled man. God knew he could trust Joseph to do the right thing with Mary because Joseph always sought to do right.

What a different place our world, communities, families, and businesses would be if there were

more people like Joseph. Choose to live a principled life.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for Joseph's example. Help me to learn and live by your principles. Help me to be a 'Joseph' in my world. In Jesus' name, Amen.



DECEMBER 4



SURRENDER



Luke 1:38 (NIV)

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

It's impossible to imagine both the joy and the concern Mary must have felt when the angel Gabriel visited her in Nazareth. After all, she was planning her wedding and anticipating a wonderful, normal, and hopefully long life with Joseph.

In one startling moment, her plans were upset by God's plans. God's will for her life, to be the mother of Jesus, would change what she had dreamed of prior to this point.

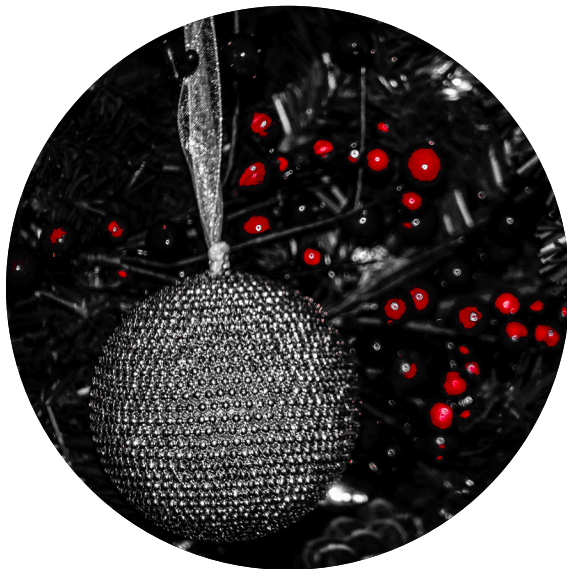
Yes, there was joy in being chosen for such an honor, but there must have been concern too. How would she tell Joseph? What would he say and do? What would others say about her? Questions like these naturally flooded her mind.

What did she do? She surrendered. She said "yes" to God's will above her own plans. She let go of her certainties and trusted God. And we're all grateful she did.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, I'm often tempted to place my plans above yours. Give me eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart that is always surrendered to you. In Jesus, name, Amen.





DECEMBER 5



PURPOSE



Luke 1:31-33 (NIV)

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.

Purpose. It's a word that describes what something or someone is designed, created, and appointed to do. For Mary, it was to conceive, birth, and raise Jesus, the Son of God—God in skin.

Our purpose is similar. While Mary's assignment was physical, ours is spiritual. We've also been called, anointed, and appointed to "bear Christ" to the world. Through our relationship with Jesus Christ, we're to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. By our attitudes and actions, believers in Jesus are given a high purpose—to show the world Jesus.

We should wake up daily consumed by, inspired by, and motivated by this great purpose. The world needs the message of God's love and

grace—and we can give it to them. As surely as God had a purpose for Mary’s life, he has one for your life, too.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, I ask you for a fresh vision of the purpose you have for me. Please give me the courage and confidence to lovingly show you to my world. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



DECEMBER 6



DEPTH



Luke 1:46-47 (NIV)

**My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit
rejoices in God my Savior ...**

Depth is the opposite of shallow. So much of our daily lives are lived in the shallows. Our conversations are often shallow, our thought processes are shallow, our values and pursuits are frequently shallow, and our relationships often suffer from shallowness. Sadly, many times, our worship of God is also shallow. We go through the motions of worship externally while our hearts and minds are preoccupied with other things. It's a common human problem.

Shallow things never change or improve our lives. Transformation requires deep thought, deep conversations, deep reflection, and, yes, deep worship. This is what we see in Mary. From the depths of her spirit and soul, she brought her gratitude and worship to God as she considered the blessing of carrying the Christ child. She had depth. It's something we all need.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, all too often, I am satisfied with shallowness when you want depth. Help me take the time to go deeper with you—in my prayer, praise, and devotion. In Jesus' name, Amen.



DECEMBER 7



PATIENCE



Luke 2:25 (NIV)

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him.

Luke 2:28-29 (NIV)

Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.”

Can you imagine? Here’s a man patiently holding on to a precious promise from God. What was the promise? The Lord assured Simeon that he would see the Messiah before he died. Year after year and decade after decade, he waited. Still no answer.

But this day was different. The Holy Spirit led him to the temple, and he saw Him and held Him—Jesus, the promised Messiah, had come. Simeon’s patience paid off.

Patience is one of the most challenging qualities to practice, but it has rich rewards. Waiting on God is a wise thing to do.

What are you waiting on? What prayers are you waiting to be answered or promises are you waiting to be fulfilled? Be a Simeon. Be patient.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, you know how impatient I am. Please grant me the grace and power to patiently wait on you, confident that your timing is always the best timing. In Jesus' name, Amen.





DECEMBER 8



TRUST



Matthew 1:24 (NIV)

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

“I can’t see!” If you’ve ever had one of these moments, you know the terror that quickly floods your mind and emotions. Whether driving through a torrential rainstorm or engulfed in a fog bank, the inability to see what’s ahead or around you is extremely frightening.

This must have been how Joseph felt. Mary was pregnant, and Joseph knew he wasn’t the father. Nevertheless, God instructed Joseph to take Mary as his wife. If Joseph were to obey these instructions, he would have to trust God. Joseph decided to walk forward, trusting God to make the path clear in the midst of uncertainty and amidst people’s slanderous speculations. He did the right thing.

God proved his trustworthiness to Joseph. He’ll do the same for you.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, so many times I struggle with anxiety and fear.

I obsess over the uncertainties in my life. My heart and mind generate one worry after another. Please help me trust you and live in the peace that comes from confidence in your faithfulness. In Jesus' name. Amen.



DECEMBER 9



WORSHIP



Matthew 2:11 (NIV)

When they came to the house, they saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.

Nativity scenes almost always include this moment—the arrival and worship of Jesus in the manger by the Magi. While it’s debatable whether this happened immediately after Jesus’ birth or sometime later, the timing really doesn’t matter. The one important thing is that these wise men knew what we need to know—Jesus, and only Jesus, is worthy of our worship.

The word “worship” comes from an old English word meaning “worthship.” The basic meaning of the New Testament Greek word for “worship” refers to falling down in honor and reverence of someone or something.

Sadly, throughout history and even today, people are notorious for worshiping people and things that are unworthy of worship. We metaphorically (and sometimes literally) prostrate ourselves at altars of idols.

The example of the Magi should be an ongoing reminder that only One is worthy of worship. May we never bow to any other god but the One true God and His Son, Jesus Christ.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, I seek your forgiveness for every time I have allowed any idolatry in my life. Forgive me for worshiping anything unworthy of worship. As the Magi did, I choose today to bow my heart and life before you in worship. You alone are worthy. In Jesus' name, Amen.



DECEMBER 10



DESIRES



Haggai 2:7 (NKJV)

“And I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,” says the LORD of hosts.

Many Bible scholars understand this verse as a prophecy about the coming Messiah, Jesus. Here, the Lord is described as “the Desire of all nations.”

What an appropriate title. Our Savior. Jesus, indeed, is the One who satisfies the deepest desires of all people from all backgrounds, tribes, tongues, and cultures. He is the only One who is able to cleanse our hearts from the guilt and shame of sin, heal our hearts from the traumas of a broken world and relationships, and redeem the opportunities we have forfeited through our disobedience and foolishness. He is the One who promises us peace and a truly fulfilled life for eternity.

How many people spend their entire lives searching for the one material thing that will make

them happy or the one human relationship that will finally fill their soul? Disappointment after disappointment, they're never satisfied.

The answer? Jesus. He's the "desire of all nations." He, and He alone, brings the deepest satisfaction to our souls.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, all too often, I have searched for satisfaction from things that cannot satisfy. I come to you today acknowledging that you are who and what I need above everyone and everything else. You are the One I desire. In Jesus' name, Amen.





DECEMBER 11



CHARACTER



Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Who are you? At the core of this question is the issue of character. What kind of a person are you, really?

When Jesus came into our world, He revealed the character of God to us. He showed us who God is and what He is really like. To see Jesus, to know Jesus, to experience Jesus is to see, know, and experience God.

Isaiah, the prophet, spoke about the character of Jesus—who He is and what He does. He described the Messiah as the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.

Think about these titles. There's not a single thing you'll ever need in life that's not found in one of these descriptors of Jesus. You'll never have a

problem He can't solve, a circumstance He can't help you navigate, or a burden He won't help you bear. He's everything we need!



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord. I praise and worship you today as my Wonderful Counselor, my Mighty God, my Everlasting Father, and my Prince of Peace. Thank you that you are everything I need. In Jesus' name, Amen.



DECEMBER 12



REVERENCE



Luke 2:8-10 (NIV)

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

I've heard people say, "Wow, I would really love to see an angel!" If you've ever desired this, perhaps this passage will make you think again.

The appearance of the angel of the Lord to the Bethlehem shepherds announcing the birth of Jesus the Messiah terrified them. It shook them to the core of their being. To deliver his message, the angel first had to reassure the shepherds of his benevolent mission. His first words were, "Do not be afraid." Why these words? Because the shepherds were "terrified." The anger was there to deliver a good news message to them.

The New Testament Greek word translated as "terrified" is interesting. Its meaning depends on the context. It definitely refers to anxiety that

causes one to run away from threat or harm. But it also means a deep awe and reverence for God. The first is oppressive. The second is freeing. Actually, the second delivers us from the first.

The best way to find freedom from fear is to develop a deep awe and reverence for God. When we revere the Lord, we recognize His greatness, power, righteousness, and love. This reverence for God sets us free from tormenting fear in our souls. We overcome our earthly fears with a genuine fear and reverence of the Lord.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, I don't want to live a fear-driven life. I want to live a life of reverence for you. I thank you, praise you, and place my confidence in your greatness, power, righteousness, and love. Thank you for freeing me from terrorizing fear. In Jesus' name, Amen.



DECEMBER 13



GRACE



Luke 1:28 (NIV)

The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

"Highly favored." What amazing words. They could also be translated as "highly graced."

Gabriel's words remind us of a very important point. While there were many good things about Mary—numerous beautiful, distinctive, and admirable qualities in her life—God chose her as the bearer of the Christ child not because of her goodness but as an expression of His grace.

Grace is the demonstration of the care and kindness of God to undeserving people. It's what God gives to people because of who He is. He shows us grace because He is gracious. His treatment of us is based on His loving nature. It's not determined or driven by our spiritual performance.

God loves us. He prefers to show grace and mercy over condemnation, judgment, and punishment.

He only asks that we receive His grace by faith, surrendering our lives to Him.

Mary was the object of God's grace; we are, too. Open your heart to His grace today. You're safe with Him.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, what a wonderful thing grace is. I thank you for loving me in spite of all my weaknesses and failures. Thank you for the many times and ways you have been gracious to me. Please help me to live in the security of your grace and show the same to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.





DECEMBER 14



GUIDANCE



Matthew 2:1-2 (NIV)

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

The arrival of the Magi in Jerusalem following Jesus’ birth is miraculous. Although there are many theories as to how they were led to the city, one thing is for sure, God was the one guiding them.

Why these men? Why did God choose them to be a part of this story? There may be various reasons, but one is their desire to be guided to Jesus. They desperately wanted to worship the newborn King of the Jews. God saw men with willing hearts and directed them to the right place at the right time. They were ready to embark on an extremely lengthy and arduous journey to see the Savior. They were committed to paying the price, no matter the cost. They were determined to invest all the energies and effort required to get to Jesus.

We all need God's guidance. A key ingredient to receiving guidance is guidability. No one can be guided who doesn't really want to be guided. The desire and willingness to receive direction is the first step. If this quality is present, you can be sure God will get you where you need to be, and you'll arrive there at the right time.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, I want to be guided by you. I pray that through the circumstances, opportunities, and relationships of my life, you will get me where you want me to be. I trust you will guide me to the right places at the right time.

In Jesus' name, Amen.



DECEMBER 15



FAITH



Luke 1:37 (NIV)

For no word from God will ever fail.

This promise was spoken to Mary by Gabriel, the angel, as reassurance of the Lord's ability to do what He said He would do. What's the background of the statement? Mary was told that the Holy Spirit would miraculously conceive in her the Messiah, the Son of God. She openly questioned how this could happen. She knew only God could do something like this. Gabriel puts the icing on the cake by declaring, "No word of God will ever fail."

Older translations of the angel's statement read, "For with God, nothing will be impossible." This rendering is my favorite. I love the inherent promise encapsulated in this declaration. It's a reminder that God is able to do whatever He says He will do.

What is required of us in response to God's interactions and promises? One thing—faith. Faith says, "If God said it will happen, it will happen."

If God promised it, He will do it. If God declared something to be, it will be.”

Faith settles all issues with God. It settles it with us. God always does what He says He will do. When we add our faith to His promises, we enjoy the benefits.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for your faithfulness to your promises. You always do what you say you will do. Today, I affirm my faith in your nature, your Word, and your promises. I believe. In Jesus' name, Amen.



DECEMBER 16



FREEDOM



Luke 2:36-38 (NIV)

There was also a prophet, Anna ... She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Not long after Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph presented Him in the temple for dedication. On that day, an elderly prophetess named Anna was present. When she saw Jesus, she immediately prophesied that He was the One who would bring redemption to Jerusalem.

The word "redemption" is important. It refers to a person being released or freed after the payment of a ransom. In other words, it's the purchase of a bound, captive person's liberty.

Anna instinctively knew, by the Holy Spirit's witness in her heart, that Jesus was present in the world to redeem lives. He was present to set people free. He came to pay the ransom to liberate

people from sin, guilt, shame, destruction, and death. Jesus is the Redeemer.

Jesus came to set you free from anything destructive or deadly. He came to be your Redeemer.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for coming to set me free. I long to live in your freedom, delivered from every sin, unshackled from all guilt and shame, and liberated from the enemy's destructive death grip. Thank you, Lord, for my freedom in you. In Jesus' name, Amen.





DECEMBER 17



PREPARATION



Luke 1:76 (NIV)

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him.

The story of Jesus' birth is incomplete without the introductory story of John the Baptist's birth. John had a very important role to play in the life and ministry of Jesus. He prepared the way for Jesus to preach the good news, heal the sick, and deliver the oppressed.

There's a valuable lesson in this. God is a preparer. He has plans, and the execution of His plans is always preceded by exceptional preparation. When God isn't fulfilling a particular plan, it's because He's simply preparing the way for it to be fulfilled.

We sometimes become frustrated because we cannot see a plan coming together. What we thought would happen or wanted to happen isn't happening. It seems God is absent or isn't working as we hoped He would. In these moments,

it's important to remember that if the plan's not yet working, it's because God is working to prepare the way to execute His plan. "John the Baptist" came before Jesus to prepare the way. Preparation always precedes manifestation.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, it's so easy to become impatient and frustrated when we're waiting on you for a plan to materialize. Help us to remember that you're always at work. If you're not manifesting a plan, you are preparing us and the world around us for it. In Jesus' name. Amen.



DECEMBER 18



NO COINCIDENCES



Luke 2:4-5 (NIV)

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

These verses describe Joseph and his pregnant fiancé Mary traveling from Nazareth to Bethlehem because of a census ordered by Caesar Augustus. What seemed like nothing more than a young couple following government requirements was something much more.

Unbeknownst to Joseph and Mary and certainly unknown to the Roman emperor, this census was God's way of fulfilling a prophecy. About 700 years earlier, the prophet Micah declared that Bethlehem would be Messiah's birthplace.

Joseph and Mary didn't live in Bethlehem; they lived in Nazareth. However, God orchestrated a circumstance to get them where they needed to be to fulfill the word spoken by His prophet. The census decree was no coincidence. It was a God event.

How wonderful it is to know that God works through natural circumstances and events of life to accomplish His events in our lives.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, how assuring it is to know that you have all things under control. Thank you for working in my life, even through natural events, to accomplish your purposes and plans. Help me to trust You more and remember that there are no coincidences with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.



DECEMBER 19



PERSISTENCE



Matthew 2:8 (NIV)

He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.

Having seen an unusual star signifying the birth of a king, the Magi, likely from Persia, followed the star’s path to Jerusalem. When they arrived in the holy city, the star disappeared. These men now needed help finding the King of the Jews.

After making some inquiries of local religious leaders, Herod informed the wise men that Bethlehem was the place predicted by the prophets as the birthplace of Messiah. So they journeyed there.

A notable quality of the Magi is their persistence. They refused to give up their pursuit of the Savior until they found him. We don’t know the number of days, weeks, or perhaps months they journeyed, but we do know they didn’t give up until they located Him. Their persistence was rewarded.

Persistence in pursuit of God is an excellent quality. It's what keeps us going when others tap out. It's what leads to many blessings and rewards in our journey of faith.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, please help me to be persistent in my pursuit of you. Help me refuse to allow weariness, disappointments, confusion, or what seems like dead-end pursuits to rob my passion for you. Help me persist, I pray. In Jesus' name,
Amen.





DECEMBER 20



HUMILITY



Luke 1:52 (NIV)

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

Following the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she was to bear the Christ child, Mary visited Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. At the conclusion of her visit, Mary broke out in a song of worship, referred to as Mary's Magnificat.

As part of her praise, she reflected on what God had done for her, honoring her with the privilege of bringing His Son into the world. She expressed her deep appreciation for His grace that reached down to someone as lowly as herself. She described it as the Lord "lifting up the humble."

Humility truly is a qualifying character trait for those who want to be used by God. Nothing repulses God (and people, too) more quickly than pride. Mary's humility attracted God's attention. The Lord knew she could be trusted because she was humble.

God tests our humility not to humiliate us but to see if we're truly ready for the assignments He has for us. He trusts and lifts up the humble.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, please forgive me for the many times my heart has been prideful. Forgive me for the times I am full of myself and empty of you. Reverse this in my life. Help me to be empty of myself and full of you, I pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.



DECEMBER 21



WARFARE



Matthew 2:16 (NIV)

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

After visiting Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, the Magi were warned in a dream to avoid King Herod. Herod was an evil, paranoid man. He planned to kill young Jesus. His murderous spirit was triggered by jealousy and concern over the One the wise men rightly called the “newborn King of the Jews.” He saw Jesus as a potential threat to his political position and power.

Because Herod couldn’t locate Jesus, he decided to do something unimaginably wicked. He gave the command to kill all boys two and under born in Bethlehem. This was his way of ridding himself of a possible challenge to his rule.

What was behind Herod’s actions? It was more than human evil at work. It was a demonically initiated event. The devil wanted Jesus dead and

was willing to sacrifice innocent lives, attempting to accomplish this goal. Herod was simply his pawn.

It's important to remember we live in a world of ongoing, active spiritual warfare. We should remain vigilant, continually resisting the devil's actions and activity. As surely as God protected His Son, He'll protect you.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, help me be aware of the devil's schemes against me and our world. Please give me the discernment and strength to resist and overcome any and all attacks of the evil one. In Jesus' name, Amen.



DECEMBER 22



INVITED



Luke 2:11-12 (NIV)

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

On the night of Jesus' birth, an announcement was made to an unexpected group of people—several shepherds taking care of their flock outside Bethlehem. The announcement included an invitation. The shepherds were encouraged to find the place of Jesus' birth and join Joseph, Mary, and the angelic host in celebrating the Savior's arrival.

From a social status perspective, this group was the least likely to be invited to such an audacious, historic event. Shepherding was considered a low-class, dirty job. However, from God's perspective, they were the folks He wanted to be there.

Interestingly, the Nativity story includes both upper-class Magi and working-class shepherds. Here we have a message from God. All people need Jesus, and all people are invited to come to Him. The invitation is to anyone and everyone.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you that all are welcome to come to you.

Thank you for being the Savior of anyone and everyone who puts their faith in you, regardless of social status or position. Thank you for inviting me. In Jesus' name, Amen.





DECEMBER 23



PEACE



Luke 2:13-14 (NIV)

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.

Tension, anxiety, fear, turmoil, strife, contention, hatred, contempt, envy. What’s the underlying issue in all of these human emotions and experiences? It’s a lack of peace.

Our world is continually threatened with potential war. An undiplomatic word or perceived aggressive act can instantly ignite latent fumes of hostility between nations and groups. The same is true in our homes. Lingering resentments in a marriage can erupt into ugly domestic disputes. We’re personally vulnerable to war in our own hearts and heads also. Harassing, self-destructive, threatening thoughts can wreak havoc on our minds, robbing us of personal peace.

When the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds in Bethlehem’s fields, one key thing was emphasized—peace! The good news of great joy was

that peace was now possible because the Prince of Peace had come.

The peace of Jesus is first a personal peace with God coming from the forgiveness of our sins. It's peace in our hearts and minds, understanding we're God's child and He's committed to caring for us. It's peace with others, helping us make peace with people who have hurt or offended us. Jesus came to show us the pathway to real peace.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, too often, I live with turmoil in my soul and tension in my relationships. Please help me to experience your peace in my life as I learn to trust you. Help me to also pursue peace with others. Rule in my life, O Prince of Peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.



DECEMBER 24



FORGIVENESS



Luke 1:77-78 (NIV)

...To give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven.

Here are the words of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. In a prayer of great praise following the birth of John, Zechariah looked ahead to the work his son would do in preparing the way for the Messiah. He anticipated the day when all people could experience salvation and the forgiveness of their sins through the one he referred to as “the rising sun from heaven,” speaking of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist would pave the path for Jesus’ message of salvation and forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a beautiful word. More importantly, it’s a life-changing experience. When tortured by guilt and shame, no greater declaration could be heard than “You’re forgiven.” In a split second, real forgiveness frees the burdened soul from sins and failures of the past and gives us hope for our

present and future. Forgiveness wipes the slate clean and gives us an opportunity for a fresh start.

When guilt and shame weigh heavily on your heart, remember that God forgives sin. When we honestly and with sincere repentance and contrition ask for His grace, He gives it. Forgiveness is possible because of Jesus.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, how grateful I am for the promise of forgiveness in Jesus. I fail you so often and feel the sadness and shame over my sins. Thank you for your shed blood that washes clean all who sincerely confess their sins to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.



DECEMBER 25



GENEROSITY



Matthew 2:11 (NIV)

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Nothing communicates love more than giving. In fact, it could be said that love is really all about giving—giving ourselves, our time, our resources, and our attention to others.

The Magi understood this. Notice what they did when they finally arrived in Bethlehem, having found the Savior, the King of the Jews. They worshiped Him. Their worship included bowing in the presence of Jesus. It also included something else—they presented Him with gifts. They understood their love and worship of Jesus would be incomplete without giving. The Spirit of God moved them to give. They came to Jesus prepared to give.

The spirit of the world is to get. The Spirit of God moves us to give. The more we grow in God, the

more we want to give. God's love delivers us from selfishness, insecurity, holding and hoarding, and stinginess. He makes us generous. When we're generous, we're imitating God.



MY PRAYER

Dear Lord, forgive me for all the times my fear, selfishness, or lack of love have caused me to resist giving. I long to be like you, Lord, generous in spirit and actions.

In Jesus' name, Amen.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Pastor Dale is passionate about inspiring people to grow in Christ and impact their church and community. His practical teaching makes the Bible understandable and applicable in everyday life. His messages are broadcast widely, and he has written several books and devotional resources.

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