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2023  
devotional journal

*And those who are wise  
shall shine like the  
brightness of the sky above;  
and those who turn many  
to righteousness, like the  
stars forever and ever.*

**DANIEL 12:3 (ESV)**



december



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2023  
devotional journal

december

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**DANIEL 12:3 (ESV)**

I  
2023  
memory verses**JANUARY**

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.

***Daniel 1:8 (ESV)***

**FEBRUARY**

As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

***Daniel 1:17 (ESV)***

**MARCH**

He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding

***Daniel 2:21 (ESV)***

**APRIL**

If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.

***Daniel 3:17-18 (ESV)***

**MAY**

How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

***Daniel 4:3 (ESV)***

**JUNE**

He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.

***Daniel 6:27 (ESV)***

## **JULY**

And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

***Daniel 7:14 (ESV)***

## **AUGUST**

And the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

***Daniel 7:27 (ESV)***

## **SEPTEMBER**

O Lord, hear; O Lord; forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.

***Daniel 9:19 (ESV)***

## **OCTOBER**

Then he said to me, "Fear not Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard and I have come because of your words."

***Daniel 10:12 (ESV)***

## **NOVEMBER**

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

***Daniel 12:2 (ESV)***

## **DECEMBER**

And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

***Daniel 12:3 (ESV)***

from daniel

# preparing to meet king jesus: into your hands

Since 2021, our theological burden and impetus towards Vision 2028 & Beyond is Preparing to Meet King Jesus. Every year, we also ask God to show us a specific spiritual emphasis that we must pay attention to as we continue in our mission. For this year, it is

## **Preparing to Meet King Jesus: Into Your Hands.**

Hence, we will be studying the Old Testament book of Daniel this year.

The phrase "Into Your Hands" was inspired by Daniel 6:26-27, which reads: "I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions."

As the lyrics of the song "Ancient of Days" by CityAlight declares, "Though the nations rage, kingdoms rise and fall, there is still one King, reigning over all. So I will not fear for this truth remains: That my God is the Ancient of Days." Indeed, just as every king and every kingdom are ultimately in the sovereign hands of God, we entrust ourselves into the hands of God.

As we entrust **ourselves** – every leader, child, marriage, family and every generation – into God's Hands, let us also entrust **our mission** to make disciples into His hands.

Salvation is no small thing. We have a mission to be witnesses and we must act with a sense of urgency. Will we be found sleeping on our watch? May we not forget our call and mission as the Church – to be witnesses for Christ.

senior pastors,

*May you entrust yourself into  
His sovereign hand daily as you  
prepare to meet King Jesus!*

**Into His Hands:  
We Pray and Obey**

As disciples of Christ, how do we submit our lives, our families and our mission into the sovereign hand of God? We follow His leading, as we simply pray and obey. Whatever circumstance we are going through – in our family or work – let's pray and obey the Lord's leading. Whatever sphere of influence that we can be salt and light, let's pray and obey the Lord's leading. Whoever God brings across our path to share the Gospel, let's pray and obey the Lord's leading.

Based upon our core values, may we fulfil our mission through the 3 Faith Exploits anchored on Jesus' Great Commandment (Matt 22:36-40) and Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20)!

**Our Core Values:**

- Truth centred upon the Word of God
- Community centred upon the worship of God
- Stewardship centred upon the will of God

- Balance centred upon the wisdom of God
- Brokenness centred upon the way of God

**Our Mission:**

Returning the Church to its disciplemaking roots through authentic discipleship and intentional disciplemaking so as to reproduce disciples of a certain kind and to multiply them to win the world for Christ!

**Our 3 Faith Exploits:**

1. Disciple the Generations
2. Disciple Singapore
3. Disciple the Nations

This Devotional Journal is designed to help you walk daily with God and experience the transforming power of His Word and Spirit as you reflect, pray and obey. May you entrust yourself into His sovereign hand daily as you prepare to meet King Jesus!

**In Christ,**

Rev Tan Kay Kiong and  
Rev Tony Yeo

foreword

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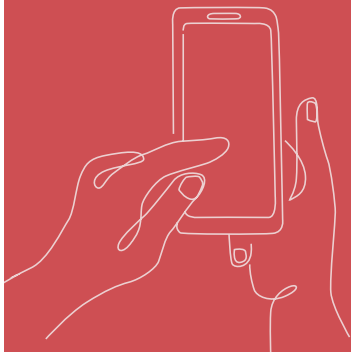
# guide to using this devotional journal

## PREPARE YOUR HEART IN GOD'S PRESENCE

- Select a fixed time (preferably in the morning before you begin your day) and a quiet place where you can be alone and undisturbed.
- Observe a moment of silence as you acknowledge God's presence. Centre down.
- Begin with a song of worship. Meditate on the lyrics even if you are unfamiliar with the tune.
- Ask God to open your heart to hear Him.

## SOMETHING TO PONDER

Examining your life is essential in your faith journey. Your redeemed life as a disciple of Christ deserves careful examining. May you take root and bear fruit in Him!



You can continue to type in the PDF copy of the Devotional Journal using your digital device as we have allotted fillable boxes for you to journal your thoughts and prayers without space constraints.

step one



## ALLOW GOD TO S.O.A.P. YOU WITH HIS WORD AND SPIRIT

- **Scripture** - Take your time to meditate on the Scripture passage for the day. Pause and mull over words and phrases that stand out to you.
- **Observation** - Jot down significant insights and reflections from the passage you have read. You may use the guiding questions provided. The “Deeper Reflection” section is to aid your contemplation of the Scripture. It is not to replace your own observation, for the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture to you as you seek Him earnestly.
- **Application** - Note down a specific and practical commitment to God’s Word for you. Is there a command to obey, a sin to avoid, an example to follow, or a principle to live out? Where appropriate, share your devotional entry with someone.
- **Prayer** - Bring your heartfelt response to God in prayer.

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### + PRAYER POINTERS FOR 2023

We have provided prayer pointers for Pastors and Staff every Tuesday and for one of the 3 Faith Exploits (Disciple the Generations, Singapore and the Nations) every Wednesday. Every Thursday, a prayer pointer is included for Outreach/Missions/New Life Leaders.

On each Friday, there is a prayer pointer for SGI Leaders (e.g. Zone Mentors, CG Leaders and Assistant CG Leaders). A prayer pointer for Church Board Members is included every Saturday. Please pray for each group as well as any specific individuals whom God may bring to your mind.

step two

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# pray for the next generation missions

*“We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.”*

**PSALM 78:4 (NIV)**

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In my recent conversations with the youth Go-Explore missions trip team leaders, most of them went on their first missions trip either as a youth or as tertiary students. For some, that first missions trip began their missions involvement journey. One leader made this remark: “If not now, when?”

Indeed, if not now, when?

We praise God for the 47 youths and 18 leaders who have decided that **now** is the time to go on their Youth Go-Explore missions trip in December. Seven youth mission teams to seven locations in four countries. May they be the beautiful feet that bring the Good News. May they be reflectors of God’s love. May this missions trip be not just an overseas cross-cultural experience, but a personal encounter with the God of the nations, and that they may have a glimpse of His heart for the nations.

2023 has been a year where we see young people stepping out in obedience and going on extended periods of overseas missions work.

Hazel and Kezia started their one-year missions attachment in February, serving alongside Sarah in Timor Leste. November would be the one-year mark for Sarah as a missionary in Timor Leste. We praise God for how He is using the Timor team – Sarah, Hazel and Kezia – to reach out to the community, the young people, and coming alongside the local church to disciple and to make disciples. May they shine brightly for Jesus!

We praise God for the ONE80 Antioch youths, who went on their one-month overseas cross-cultural field exposure, working with local churches and reaching communities. It was also a discipleship journey as they learnt to walk in faith and trust. Worldviews changed. Choices were made to want to live more intentionally for God's purposes. Hearts were open to God's leading in the area of missions. We look forward to sending the remaining ONE80 Antioch youths to embark on their one-month field exposure in the coming months. We pray for them, too, to better understand God's heart for the nations and find their place in God's missions plan.

God is calling out His young people to step forth and embrace His heartbeat for the nations. May they respond to the God of the harvest with these words: "If not now, when? Here I am, send me!"

Pray:

1. Give thanks for the youths and young adults who have had overseas cross-cultural missions experiences. For God to continue to ignite their hearts for missions.
2. For young people who are seeking God's leading for missions and taking steps to prepare themselves for missions endeavours, such as missions attachments. For mentors to come alongside and journey with them.
3. For the seven youth Go-Explore missions teams, that their eyes will be opened to see the harvest field as they serve and reach out to the local communities in partnership with churches and organisations.
4. For the Timor team to have a deeper intimacy with God and stay united as one. For favour and fruitfulness in their work to reach the local communities.

friday

01

## The Tenacity

**SCRIPTURE** Daniel 8:9-14; 12:1-6, 12

### **O**BSERVATION

What is the significance of the question “How long?” (v.13; Dan 12:6) being asked in the larger context of Daniel 7 to 12?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How can I benefit from the discipleship discipline of “How long?” in my discipleship journey?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To hold fast God's Word with perseverance
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**W**e must grasp a twofold vision of God given in Daniel. **The sovereign God of miraculous salvation** (Dan 1-6): We trust in God for His deliverance in tribulations (Dan 3:28; 6:20-23).

**The sovereign God of mysterious silence** (Dan 7-12): We trust in God with tenacity in tribulations when deliverance is absent, and we “fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder” (Dan 11:33). God may be **covertly silent**, but He has **clearly spoken** in His Word. When God is silent, we live by what God has spoken and trust in Him with tenacity.

Tenacity is being faithful to God with perseverance until the end. It is not without significance that it is only in Daniel 7 to 12 that the question, **“How long?”**, is being asked: “How long” will the “time of distress” be when God and His people are trampled underfoot by evil human powers? (v.13; Dan 12:1, 6). “How long?” calls on faith to wait for God with tenacity.

We are enabled and encouraged to wait with tenacity by two assurances from God. **Divine limitation in tribulations:** God will give His people “into the hand” of the little horn to “wage war” against them, to “wear down”, “overpower” and “shatter” them – but only “for a time, times, and half a time [3,5 times],” or “1,290 days [3,5 years]” (Dan 7:21, 25; 12:7).

**Divine termination of tribulations:** “The end is still to come at the appointed time” (Dan 11:27). So, we must “keep waiting and attain the 1,335 days” (Dan 12:12), “until the end time” (Dan 11:35) and “until the Ancient of Days came...” (Dan 7:22).

saturday

02

## The Triumph

**S**CRIPTURE Daniel 7:13-18, 25-27; 11:29-36

### **O**BSERVATION

What characterises the triumph of God's people in tribulations under tyrants?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How can I triumph in tribulations?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To grow in the faith and perseverance of overcomers in Christ
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**G**od's people living under tyrants and suffering tribulations under them can triumph – whether we are delivered from or destroyed in tribulation. The triumph rests on a threefold confidence.

**We know the conclusion of evil.** It is repeated in manifold ways in Daniel that evil that comes through inhuman kings – no matter how great and how long – will definitely come to an end: “he will be broken” (Dan 8:25), “he will be found no more” (Dan 11:19), “yet he will come to his end” (Dan 11:45) and “all these events will be completed” (Dan 12:7).

**We know God's calling for us:** To be a **suffering** people – to be captured, plundered, burned or killed (Dan 11:33). But in our suffering, we can be **strong** as “people who know their God” (Dan 11:32), knowing that God is purging and purifying us to become a **sanctified** (Dan 11:35; 12:10) and **shining** people who “shine brightly” with heavenly brightness in the hostile world (Dan 12:3). And we will be a **steadfast** people who “keep waiting and attain to the 1,335 days” (Dan 12:12) – until we become a **sovereign** people who “receive and possess the kingdom forever” from “the Ancient of Days” (vv.13-14, 18, 27).

**We know who is in control.** The tribulations under the tyrants in Daniel 7 to 12 are all subject to and subsumed under “that which is **decreed** will be done” (Dan 11:36; 9:26, 27) “at the **appointed time**” (Dan 11:27, 29, 35).

We conclude Daniel with this theological-discipleship summary statement: We can **triumph in tribulations** under **tyrants** when we **trust** with **tenacity** in the One who is on the **throne**.

—  
sunday  
03

# Sunday Journal

**S**CRPTURE

**O**BSERVATION

**A**PPPLICATION

**P**RAYER



# the past week



## **review**

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

# the past week

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## reflect

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

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## respond

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.



Week 1

# FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

## CHRISTMAS:

Celebrating Jesus,  
God's Greatest Gift.

### Memory Verse

"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."  
– Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

### 1 Bottom Line

You can have hope because God is faithful.\*

### 2 Bible Story

Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6-7; 7:14-15 – Jesus Is Promised

### 3 Activity

#### The Best Gift

Props: Paper and drawing tools

Ask your family members to draw a picture of the most memorable gift they had received and explain why. Invite everyone to share their drawings.

Say, "We celebrate Christmas every year. The true meaning of Christmas is not about the beautiful gifts we receive from friends and family but from our Heavenly Father – that is Jesus Christ. Our hope and peace is in Jesus. We can overcome anything through Jesus. By believing in Him, we will receive the gift of eternal life. Therefore, one of the best gifts we can give someone is to tell him or her about the goodness and love of Jesus."

### 4 Talk About It

- Why do you think it's important to have hope?
- What keeps us from having hope?
- Why is Jesus our best source of hope?
- Aside from gifts, what are you hoping for this Christmas?

**Parents:** Talk about how Jesus is the hope in your life and share examples of this.

### 5 Prayer

Dear God, Christmas is proof of your promise and hope – You sent Jesus to us. We can overcome and put our trust in everything through Jesus. Thank you for giving us the best gift.

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Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/December2023



Click or scan  
this QR code for  
this week's Bible  
story video!

monday

04

# God's Light Dispels the Darkness

**SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:12-17

## OBSERVATION

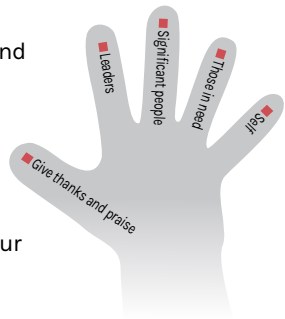
How was the prophecy in verses 1 to 2 fulfilled in Jesus Christ and after how long (see Matt 4:12-17)?

## APPLICATION

In what areas do I need to wait patiently for God's deliverance to come and for His light to dispel the darkness of my situation?

## PRAYER

Sovereign God, You are wise in appointing times and seasons in human history. You are also faithful to keep Your promises to Your people. In the dark situations of my life, You see my struggles and hear my cries. I continue to put my hope in You. Please teach me to trust in Your perfect wisdom and Your unfailing faithfulness to deliver me in Your time. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.



- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

Isaiah chapters 1 to 39 record prophecies made by the prophet Isaiah between 740 to 681 BC in the pre-exilic historical context of Judah, the southern kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Verses 1 to 2 set out a salvation oracle<sup>2</sup> — there will be no gloom for the land of Judah,<sup>3</sup> which was in anguishing anxiety because of the Assyrian conquest of Israel, the northern kingdom, in 722 BC.

God had repeatedly called Israel to repentance, but they rejected His offer to forgive their sins should they repent. As a result, God sentenced Israel to disaster. The Lord punished Israel with the humiliation of Assyrian domination, but He would later restore and bless her territory. In verse 2, Isaiah used darkness as a metaphor of the foreign domination of Israel. In future, a great light would shine on God's people dwelling in a land of deep darkness. God's light would dispel the darkness!

From a New Testament perspective, Jesus Christ is the light of the world, who has come to deliver people from the darkness in the world (Matt 4:12-17; Lk 1:76-79; Jn 1:4-5; 8:12; 12:46)! The fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy came around 700 years later. God is faithful and His Word is true. However, God's thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways; they are immeasurably higher and beyond our full understanding (Isa 55:8-9). God's Word is effectual and will certainly be fulfilled and will accomplish His purposes (Isa 55:10-11). Let us learn to trust God more and wait patiently for His answer to our prayers for deliverance from our dark situations.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah chapters 40 to 55 contain oracles in the exilic context, while chapters 56 to 66 contain oracles in the post-exilic context.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 7 to 11 record judgment and salvation oracles delivered during Judah's war with Israel and Syria.

<sup>3</sup> That is, for the time being. God's judgment against their persistent idolatry and disobedience will come about a hundred years later in the form of the Babylonian exile in 586 BC.

tuesday

05

## God's Hand Delivers the Downtrodden

**SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 9:3-5; Judges 7

### **O**BSERVATION

According to Judges 7, how did God ensure that Gideon and the people of Israel would know that it was the hand of the Lord that saved them?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How can I better recognise God's hand at work in my life's seemingly insurmountable challenges?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To discern God's hand in their lives and acknowledge Him at all times with praise and thanksgiving
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**V**erses 3 to 5 speak of a great military victory that will come. God Himself will act to bring it about. He will bless and restore His people. His mighty hand will deliver them. There will be population growth; there will be great joy like farmers celebrating their harvest season and gladness like that of triumphant warriors dividing the spoils of war (v.3). The yoke of oppression upon God's people and the instruments of abuse used against them will all be broken (v.4). Every last vestige of war will go up in smoke; every painful memory will fade away completely (v.5). Peace will reign in the land!

In verse 4, "the day of Midian" alludes to Gideon's incredible victory over Midian (Judg 7), when the Lord delivered Israel from an oppressive foreign invader. God did so against all odds according to conventional warfare. Imagine, 300 men of Israel (Judg 7:8) were victorious over the vast army of the Midianites, the Amalekites and the people of the East – with men like "locusts in abundance" and camels "without number, as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance" (Judg 7:12)! Indeed, God's ways are beyond all human wisdom!

Brothers and sisters, let us seek to discern the hand of the Sovereign Lord in our lives. In our successes, may we not be prideful to think that it was our own actions alone that wrought us victory or delivered us out of trouble. Instead, let us acknowledge God's hand in our lives, for indeed He is our Deliverer in our past, present and future battles!

wednesday

06

## King Jesus – Our King Forever

**SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 1:1-17

### **O**BSERVATION

The Gospel writer, Matthew, was very keen to show the Davidic lineage of Jesus Christ (Matt 1:1-17). In the light of verses 6 and 7, why do you think that was so?

### **A**PPPLICATION

In what ways can I live more consistently with the fact that Jesus is my King forever?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Generations: To love, worship and serve King Jesus all the days of their lives
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

Verses 6 and 7 contain an often-quoted prophecy about Jesus Christ<sup>4</sup>. It speaks of Jesus as the ideal and ultimate Davidic King, descended from the line of David (see the genealogies in Matt 1:1-17 and Lk 3:23-38). In 2 Samuel 7:4-17, the prophet Nathan conveyed God's promises to David. There, the offspring directly referred to was Solomon, David's son with Bathsheba.<sup>5</sup> However, in 2 Samuel 7, verses 13 and 16, God promised that the Davidic throne would be established forever. Here we see a clue that God was indirectly referring to a subsequent Davidic offspring who would live forever and therefore rule over God's people forever as their King – Jesus the Messiah!

Jesus' divinity is clear from what was written about Him in the Old Testament Scriptures, as well as the New Testament Gospels: What Jesus did, said and taught in His life and ministry; the fulfilled prophecies about and His crucifixion, death and resurrection. Jesus is both the Son of God and the Son of Man, appointed by God the Father as King over God's people forever! Jesus' Kingdom will be established and He will rule it with justice and righteousness forever (v.7).

Great is God's steadfast love toward His people; His faithfulness endures forever! Therefore, He is impelled by His zeal to act on their behalf to deliver them from all foreign oppressors and establish permanent peace for them. The prophecies in Isaiah 9:1-2, 6-7 contain God's glorious promises that have been fulfilled with the birth of Jesus on that first Christmas and will be consummated at the Second Coming when King Jesus returns to rule forever.

<sup>4</sup> Especially during every Christmas season.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Samuel 12:24.

thursday

07

## King Jesus - Wonderful Counsellor

**SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 32:1-11

### **O**BSERVATION

According to Psalm 32:8-11, what promises did the Lord make regarding His counsel for His faithful people? What is our part in the process of seeking His counsel?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How should I seek the Lord's counsel in specific matters that concern my life and ministry?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To seek God and ask for His counsel and guidance for their important decisions in life and ministry
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he Hebrew words translated “Wonderful Counsellor” can mean “a wonder as a counsellor” or “one who counsels wonders”<sup>6</sup>. It may refer to the King’s ability to plan effective military strategy that will bring about victory for His people.<sup>7</sup> More than that, it may also refer to the King’s ability to give wise counsel to His people for victorious living. **King Jesus is our Wonderful Counsellor!**

In Psalm 32, the Psalmist David extols God’s goodness in answering his prayers. The Lord forgave David when he confessed his sins (Psa 32:1-5). And the Lord delivered David from trouble when he trusted in Him for protection during times of life-threatening danger (Psa 32:6-7). To the godly ones who faithfully seek God in prayer and draw near in humility and trust (Psa 32:6, 9, 10), He promises to instruct (i.e. to cause to consider, give insight), teach (i.e. to show and direct) and counsel (i.e. to advise) them with loving care for their journey ahead (Psa 32:8).

God counsels His faithful people with great love. He instructs them with great wisdom and understanding. God’s perspective is unsearchable in breadth and depth. His power is unsurpassed in might and strength. The Lord wants what is best for us. He works to grow us in spiritual maturity. The Lord speaks to our hearts by His Spirit to counsel and instruct us. As the Psalmist David testifies elsewhere, “I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me” (Psa 16:7). Let us draw near to the Lord and seek His counsel!

<sup>6</sup> NET Bible translation note.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

friday

08

## King Jesus – Mighty God, Everlasting Father

**SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 9:6; Colossians 1:13-20

### **O**BSERVATION

In Colossians 1:13-20, how did the Apostle Paul describe Jesus Christ's divinity, eternity and power?

### **A**PPPLICATION

Take some time to praise the Lord Jesus for His attributes of greatness as described in Colossians 1:13-20.

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: That they will often contemplate the greatness of the Lord Jesus and worship Him in reverent awe and wonder
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**his promised child is given the second title, “Mighty God”, indicating his divinity. That same title, “the mighty God”, was used with clear reference to Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, in Isaiah 10:20-21.<sup>8</sup> But to use that title to refer to a boy child is to clearly indicate the deity of the child. Israel is here confronted with the notion that the ideal Davidic King for whom they are waiting is a divine person!

The third title of “Everlasting Father” was probably understood by Isaiah’s first hearers and readers in this way: Israel’s messianic King was their protector and therefore was, in a sense, their “father”, whose long and enduring reign is aptly described as “everlasting”<sup>9</sup>. From a New Testament perspective, we know that the Lord Jesus literally fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy and both titles of “Mighty God” and “Everlasting Father”, because He is the God-man – fully God and fully man – and the eternal King of Israel.

Jesus’ divinity is clear from the Apostle Paul’s descriptions of Him – “He is the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15a) and “in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col 1:19). Jesus is God in human flesh. The fact that “by Him all things were created...all things were created through Him and for Him” (Col 1:16) shows us His eternity. Jesus is eternal and therefore existed before creation was created (“He is before all things”, 1 Col 17a). Jesus’ power is evident in that He is the source, means and goal of creation; and He sustains the whole of creation (“in Him all things hold together”, Col 1:17b).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> There is nothing surprising about the latter instance, because Yahweh is known to Israel as “the great, the mighty, and the awesome God” (Deut 10:17) and “O great and mighty God” (Jer 32:18).

<sup>9</sup> NET Bible translation note. “This title must not be taken in an anachronistic Trinitarian sense. (To do so would be theologically problematic, for the ‘Son’ is the messianic King and is distinct in His person from God the ‘Father.’)”

<sup>10</sup> Further, Jesus is “the firstborn [i.e. preeminent or supreme in rank] of all creation” (Col 1:15b) and the preeminent one in all things (Col 1:18c). He is the wonderful Saviour “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:14) and through whom we are reconciled to God (Col 1:20).

saturday

09

## King Jesus – Prince of Peace

**SCRIPTURE** Isaiah 9:6; Ephesians 2:11-22

### **O**BSERVATION

Which persons and groups of people are involved in the peace-making process in Ephesians 2:11-22?

### **A**PPPLICATION

What can I do to be a peacemaker in my family and workplace or school?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To seek to be a peacemaker wherever God has placed them
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**O**n one view, the Prince of Peace is the ideal Davidic King who, by His military strength, establishes a safe socio-economic environment for His people.<sup>11</sup> By destroying the enemies of His people, the King brings about the blessings of peace, safety and prosperity for His people.<sup>12</sup>

A more important aspect of the Prince of Peace is His character and reconciling work. The Lord Jesus Christ is a peaceable, peace-loving and peace-making King (Eph 2:11-22; Col 1:19-23). In the sacrifice of His own body and by His blood shed on the cross, Christ has reconciled sinners to God, as well as sinners to one another. Christ has broken down the dividing wall of hostility. He has removed separation and alienation. The Lord has killed hostility in order to establish peace. Therefore, there is no longer to be any hostility and separation between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. They are one body in Christ (Eph 2:14-16). They are fellow citizens of the same household of God, joined together as one holy temple in the Lord, and built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Eph 2:19-22).

It must sadden the Lord Jesus to see so much hostility and violence between human beings and nations in our fallen world, when He has done all that was necessary for people everywhere to repent of their sins, receive forgiveness from God and live in peace with one another. As Jesus' disciples, let us align our will to the Lord's and seek the Holy Spirit's empowerment to be peacemakers wherever God has placed us in our families, neighbourhoods, church communities, schools and workplaces.

<sup>11</sup> NET Bible translation note.

<sup>12</sup> For example, see Psalm 72.

—  
sunday  
**10**

# Sunday Journal

**S**CRPTURE

**O**BSERVATION

**A**PPPLICATION

**P**RAYER



# the past week



## **review**

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

# the past week

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## **reflect**

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

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## **respond**

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.



Week 2

# FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

## CHRISTMAS:

Celebrating Jesus,  
God's Greatest Gift.

### Memory Verse

"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."  
– Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

### 1 Bottom Line

You can have peace because God has a plan.\*

### 2 Bible Story

Luke 1:26-56 – Gabriel Appears to Mary

### 3 Activity

#### Feelings Charade

Props: Word cards and writing tools

Get your family members to play the "Feelings Charade" game. Prepare a deck of word cards with different feelings written on them, for example, anxious, surprised, etc. Appoint a family member to be the "actor". He or she will act out the different feelings on each card, while the others try to guess it.

Say, "Do you know you can have peace even when you are facing a problem? Jesus knows everything about us and He has a plan to help us. Since we know that His plan is the best, we can leave our plans in His hands while we continue to do our best in our daily lives. Because we have Jesus in our hearts, we have the confidence to do what's right. This peace is priceless!"

### 4 Talk About It

- What does having peace mean?
- What is the opposite of peace?
- What do you believe about God that can help you when you feel worried or anxious about something?
- What does it look like for a kid your age to have peace? How does it show up in the things you say and do?

**Parents:** Talk about a time when you experienced peace in the midst of overcoming a series of problems. What was the source of peace? How did having Jesus in your heart enable you to overcome the obstacles?

### 5 Prayer

Dear God, help us to look up to You when we have a bad day or when things don't go our way. Teach us to appreciate and celebrate the peace You give us while waiting patiently for You to fulfill Your plan for us.



Click or scan  
this QR code for  
this week's Bible  
story video!

monday

11

## The Reliability of the Gospel

**S**CRIPTURE Luke 1:1-4

### **O**BSERVATION

What was the reason Luke wrote his Gospel (see the purpose statement in v.4)?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How can I be more certain that what I believe about Jesus is really true?

### **P**RAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for preserving for us true historical accounts of the life and ministry of Your Son, our Lord Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life.<sup>13</sup> To know Him is to know You.<sup>14</sup> Please help me to know You more, not merely cognitively in my mind, but experientially in my life by believing and obeying Your Word. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**W**hat do you notice about Luke’s opening statements to his Gospel account? **First**, Luke recognises that he was not the first one (“many”, v.1a) to attempt to document the recent happenings concerning Jesus. This would probably include the other Gospel writers. **Second**, Luke recognises that what happened in recent history were “fulfilments” (“accomplished”, v.1b). In other words, the life of Jesus was the culmination of the promises of God in the Old Testament! **Third**, Luke reveals that his sources are reliable because they were eyewitnesses of the actual events (v.2b). **Fourth**, Luke places his own reputation at stake when he claims that he himself carefully verified the data (v.3a). **Fifth**, Luke’s account was logically arranged (“to write an orderly account”, v.3b), in that it began with the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ birth, followed by His childhood, ministry, death, resurrection and finally ascension.

All of the above gives us much confidence regarding the historical reliability of the Gospel according to Luke. As disciples of Jesus, we need to equip ourselves to better respond to people who are genuinely seeking to know the truth but are skeptical about the reliability of the biblical record of Jesus’ life and ministry.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> John 14:6.

<sup>14</sup> John 14:7.

<sup>15</sup> A good starting point are these two articles on the historical reliability of the Four Gospels and the New Testament: <https://probe.org/the-historical-reliability-of-the-gospels/>; <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/reliability-new-testament/>.

tuesday

12

## The Righteousness of God's Ways

**S**CRIPTURE Luke 1:5-7

### **O**BSERVATION

How were Zechariah and Elizabeth righteous before God?

### **A**PPPLICATION

What is one thing that I know I need to do in obedience to God, though it is hard for me? Ask God to enable you to trust and obey His righteous ways.

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To live in accordance with God's commands, by the enabling of the Holy Spirit
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**K**ing Herod of Judea ruled from 37 BC to 4 BC. He was known as the great builder king who built many buildings, including the Temple in Jerusalem (where Zechariah served). Herod was also known for his cruelty, as seen in the slaughter of the infants recorded for us in Matthew 2:16-18. Contrasted with this royal figure is a priestly one – Zechariah. Both he and his wife, Elizabeth, had come from a priestly line. We notice at least two things in this passage. First, God restarted His work after 400 years of silence, not through the mighty ruling king, but through a righteous couple (v.6). Second, what may seem to be a curse – in this case, Elizabeth's barrenness – was not due to sin, but was something God would use to display His glory.

In our lives, we usually want things to turn out according to what we judge as good in our view. Yet, it is so important for us to learn to see things as God sees them, because His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways (Isa 55:8). Then we can continually trust God even when things do not make sense or feel good to us. And seek to live righteously before God by obeying His commands, all the while knowing that God already sees us as righteous because we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice on the cross for all our sins.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> 1 John 2:12; 4:10.

wednesday

13

## The Faithfulness of God

**S**CRIPTURE Luke 1:8-13

### **O**BSERVATION

What did the angel say to Zechariah besides “Do not be afraid...”?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How would I know when to stop praying for something and when to keep bringing my petition to God?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Generations: To grow in their prayer life and learn to pray in accordance with God's will<sup>17</sup>
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he priesthood was restructured into 24 divisions since the time of King David (1 Chron 24:4). Zechariah came from one such division (Lk 1:5b; 1 Chron 24:10). Each of those divisions served one week, twice a year in the Temple. Zechariah was chosen by lot to enter the Holy Place to ensure that the altar of incense in front of the Holy of Holies was kept burning (Exo 30:7-8). “Ordinarily, a priest would have this privilege very infrequently, and sometimes never, since duty assignments were determined by lot.”<sup>18</sup> This was a sacred duty.

As the people's prayers were lifted up outside in the Court of Men and Women, an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah in the Holy Place! It would be quite natural for anyone, including a righteous priest, to be struck with fear when faced with such an encounter with an angel. The angel told Zechariah not to be afraid and that his prayer had been heard. God would give Zechariah and Elizabeth a son, who was to be named John. The couple probably prayed many years for a child (Lk 1:7b), but God only chose to grant them their request at this point. It was God's appointed time. He is faithful and His timing is perfect. God was directing history in accordance with His will for the fulfilment of His promises.

<sup>17</sup> 1 John 5:14-15.

<sup>18</sup> NIV Study Bible.

thursday

14

## Turning Hearts Godward

**SCRIPTURE** Luke 1:14-17; Malachi 4:5-6; John 1:19-23

### **O**BSERVATION

What did God do to prepare people for the coming of Jesus Christ?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How can I be used by God in this Christmas season to help turn the hearts of my friends and relatives to the Lord Jesus?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To help people to hear the Gospel and receive the Lord Jesus into their hearts
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**J**ohn's birth would be a wonderful blessing to his parents and many people! After many years of waiting, Zechariah and Elizabeth would finally have a child – more than that, he would be a special son set apart by God for His work! From the time of conception, John would be filled with the Holy Spirit. The consecration of John's life was like that of one taking a Nazirite vow<sup>19</sup>.

After John grew up, he would exercise a prophetic ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit and turn many Jews to the Lord their God. He would also “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children” (v.17). This is a beautiful picture of the reconciliation of broken relationships within families. Verse 17 makes it clear that John would go before the Lord “in the spirit and power of Elijah”. In other words, John would exercise an Elijah-like prophetic ministry to prepare the way of the Lord (cf. Matt 11:7-15). This is in fulfilment of the promise that God made at the closing of the Old Testament, in the final chapter of the book of Malachi, where God promised to send a prophet to prepare the way before the Lord (Mal 4:5-6, cf. Jn 1:19-23).

People who are in a state of rebellion and disobedience against God will certainly face God's wrath and judgment. They must turn from their wicked ways to make the wise choice to humble themselves, repent of their sins, and believe in the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and salvation in His name. May we as Jesus' disciples help to turn their hearts Godward.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Numbers 6:2-12.

friday  
15

## Learning to Trust God

**S**CRPTURE Luke 1:18-20

### **O**BSERVATION

What did the angel Gabriel state as the reason for Zechariah's punishment?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How can I strengthen my belief in God's words (there is a difference between fear and unbelief; one can be afraid and yet believe, like Mary in Lk 1:30, 34, 38)?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To overcome their fears and, through obeying God, to grow in their faith in His words
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**his is a curious ending to an otherwise wonderful story. We expect a happy ending to this happy announcement. Yet it ended with Zechariah's punishment instead. Why do you think Zechariah was punished? Was it fair? Maybe he was afraid. After all, how many of us are used to meeting angels? Let us think about this a little further.

First, if God were to meet you, where would you expect Him to turn up? Now ask yourself, where was Zechariah when the angel Gabriel appeared to him (see Lk 1:8-9, 11)? Second, consider this: What had Zechariah and Elizabeth been asking God for all these years of her barrenness? Did they not expect God to hear and answer their prayers? Third, reflect on this: Were there episodes in God's dealing with Israel's patriarchal families where "barren" women became pregnant (see Gen 11:30; 21:1-2; 25:21; 29:31)? Would Zechariah, as a priest, be well aware of such historical accounts?

Having considered the above, do you think that it was unfair for such a judgment to come upon Zechariah? Let us now turn the spotlight on ourselves as God's people today. If we have walked with God and served Him for some years, would God expect us to have grown in knowing His faithfulness and believing Him at His word? What is our faith level currently? How can we learn to trust God more?

saturday

16

## Recognising God's Providence

**S**CRPTURE Luke 1:21-25

### **O**BSERVATION

How do we know that Elizabeth recognised God's hand of favour and deliverance in her life?

### **A**PPPLICATION

What are some things that are currently happening to me that reveal God's hand of favour, guidance and care in my life? In prayer, acknowledge these and give thanks to God.

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To recognise and be grateful for God's hand of favour, guidance and care in their lives
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**Z**echariah entered the Holy Place in a state of wellness, but came out mute and, apparently, also deaf (cf. Lk 1:62). The Greek word used here, *kophos*, can mean muteness or deafness. In any case, the people recognised this as a sign of a divine encounter. But what was the encounter all about? It was not recorded for us whether Zechariah told the people what happened (e.g. by writing on a tablet) or kept the matter to himself. However, we do know that this divinely imposed silence lasted until eight days after the birth of his son (Lk 1:64).

We are also not told why the pregnant Elizabeth went into hiding for five months. Was it for a season of worship or preparation or some other reason? We do not know. However, what we do know is that after many years of her disappointment and hopelessness in barrenness, God acted to remove Elizabeth's feelings of shame, inadequacy and despondency. In verse 25, we see in Elizabeth's words her clear recognition of God's hand of favour and deliverance in her life. The turn of events was God's providence in the lives of Zechariah and Elizabeth, and indeed for the people of Israel and all the nations.

—  
sunday  
17

# Sunday Journal

**S**CRPTURE

**O**BSERVATION

**A**PPPLICATION

**P**RAYER



# the past week



## **review**

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

# the past week

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## reflect

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

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## respond

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.



Week 3

# FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

## CHRISTMAS:

Celebrating Jesus,  
God's Greatest Gift.

### Memory Verse

"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."  
– Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

### 1 Bottom Line

You can have joy because God sent Jesus.\*

### 2 Bible Story

Luke 2:1-7 – Jesus Is Born

### 3 Activity

#### Joy and Happiness

Props: Word cards (see template below)

Money	Gifts	God	Play	Help others	Excellent results	The Bible	A friend comes to know Jesus
Listen to music	Watch a concert	Attend church	Holidays	Do nothing	Praying	Quiet Time	Exercise
Win a prize	Praises	Worship God	Enjoy good food	Music	Walk in the Park	A feeling of not lacking anything	Freedom

Ask your family members to sort these cards according to two categories – "joy" and "happiness". After the activity, ask everyone to share how each thing or event fits into these categories. (Note: There are no right or wrong answers. Do allow everyone to share their views freely.)

Say, "Joy is found in Jesus and it is forever. God's plan for us is unshakable. Jesus died and was resurrected so that God's promises were fulfilled. Our sins are forgiven so that we can enjoy eternal life! Things on earth are given by God for us to live and enjoy. They are also given to help others who are in need. We can never find eternal joy by putting our faith and trust in earthly things."

### 4 Talk About It

- What is the difference between happiness and joy?
- How do you find joy at Christmas?
- Can you have joy even if things don't go your way?

**Parents:** Talk about experiences which gave you joy and happiness. How did you differentiate joy and happiness?

### 5 Prayer

Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus to us. Please help us to focus on You this Christmas so we can have true joy.



Click or scan  
this QR code for  
this week's Bible  
story video!

monday

18

## The Son of the Most High

**SCRIPTURE** Luke 1:26-33**OBSERVATION**

What kind of picture emerges from these descriptions of Jesus – “He will be great”, “the Son of the Most High”, “the throne of his father David”, “reign over the house of Jacob forever”, and “of his kingdom there will be no end” (vv.32-33)?

**APPLICATION**

In this Christmas season, how will I serve the purposes of God and tell unbelieving friends and relatives about King Jesus (e.g. share your personal conversion testimony, explain the Gospel message, or invite and accompany them to a church service)?

**PRAYER**

Lord God, thank You for Your love, mercy and grace towards me a sinner. Please fill me afresh with deep gratitude for the salvation that I have in Your Son Jesus Christ. Fill me anew with strong compassion for people who have yet to know Him. Empower me as Your messenger of Good News in this Christmas season, that people may come to believe in Jesus and be saved. In His name, I pray. Amen.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**his is the second time the angel Gabriel was sent to bear good news regarding a coming baby boy. The first time was regarding the birth of John the Baptist. This time the angel announced to the virgin Mary her coming birth of a son, Jesus, who will be the future King of Israel. The name “**Jesus**” – a name which in Hebrew is *Yeshua* (or Joshua) – means “Yahweh saves”<sup>20</sup>. He is “**the Son of the Most High**” (v.32; cf. “the Son of God”, Lk 1:35).

We are told that Mary was betrothed to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. We see in the birth of Jesus the fulfilment of the promise that a descendant of David will one day arise as king and rule over God’s people forever (2 Sam 7:8-13, 16). God was fulfilling His promise of a Messiah who would come to save His people from their sins and to return them back to a right relationship and favour with God again. That Messiah is Jesus, who will reign as King over God’s people, and whose throne and Kingdom shall last forever. Every Christmas season brings new hope to God’s people in the present times, with the reminder that God is faithful to His promises and, through the faithful proclamation of the Gospel by “ordinary” Christians, God continues to save sinners who believe in His Son Jesus Christ and bring them into Jesus’ Kingdom.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Matthew 1:21.

tuesday

19

## The God of the Impossible

**SCRIPTURE** Luke 1:34-37

### **O**BSERVATION

How did the angel encourage Mary to believe that God can do what is impossible with man?

### **A**PPPLICATION

In what “impossible” situations must I learn to be rested in God who loves me and is totally sovereign and all-powerful?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To live a godly life waiting for the blessed hope of all believers, the glorious return of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ<sup>21</sup>
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**M**ary asked the angel Gabriel, “How will this be...?” (v.34). It was a very understandable question, even given the fact that it was an angel of the Lord who announced Mary’s coming birth of a son. After all, Mary was a young, unwed teenager who was only engaged to Joseph, and therefore still a virgin. The angel Gabriel explained that her conception of baby Jesus in her womb was made possible by the Holy Spirit and the power of God Most High. For that reason, Mary’s son would be called “holy – the Son of God” (v.35). To help convince Mary, the angel cited the recent precedent of God’s supernatural intervention. Six months ago, baby John was conceived in the womb of the elderly and long-barren Elizabeth, a relative of Mary’s (v.36). Now, in Mary’s case, the impossible would again be made possible by the power of God! Here is the truth: **“For nothing will be impossible with God”** (v.37)<sup>22</sup>.

Beloved, let us trust in God’s sovereignty and power to keep His promises and fulfil His plans for His people! One of the “impossible” situations that we may face is this: How will I ever be vindicated in my workplace situation of continually suffering difficulties and disadvantage as a result of my standing up for righteousness? Take heart, God is at work and He hears your cries. Ultimately, the righteous ones in Christ will be vindicated and blessed, even though they may have to suffer for a period of time. The wicked and godless will be put to shame and end up in destruction, even though they may prosper temporarily.

<sup>21</sup> Titus 2:11-14.

<sup>22</sup> Consider the impossible things that God promised to do in Jeremiah 31:33-34 and Ezekiel 36:26-27, and how He has done them through His Son Jesus Christ.

wednesday

20

## The Servant of the Lord

**S**CRIPTURE Luke 1:38; 22:39-42

### **O**BSERVATION

What similarity do you see between Mary (v.38) and Jesus (Lk 22:39-42)?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How am I submitting to God's will in terms of serving Him through my personal witness and engagement in missions?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Generations: To seek and submit to God's will and live for His redemptive purpose and His glory among the nations
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

It was a truly divine moment when Mary submitted herself completely to the Lord to be His servant and do His will. Do you think that Mary had thought through the full implications of her appointed role as the mother of Jesus, the Son of God? Was her future clear and certain to her at that point? Do you think that Mary expected her journey ahead to be easy and smooth? The answer to those questions is almost certainly “No”. In those few moments between the angel Gabriel’s words and Mary’s response, she could not have foreseen all the travails that would attend her role as Jesus’ mother. Mary simply abandoned herself to God’s will, disregarding the potential difficulties that she would have to suffer, and fully trusting God who is good, faithful, all-powerful and all-wise. Deep devotion to the Lord were expressed in her words, “**Behold, I am the servant of the Lord...**” (v.38).

When God reveals His specific will for your life, you may experience all kinds of doubts, uncertainties and fears. If you clearly know the Lord’s leading, it does not necessarily follow that it will be easy for you to say to Him, “Yes, Lord, I’ll obey.” Like Mary, you must still make the choice to trust and obey God, to put your life into His hands: “**...let it be to me according to Your word**” (v.38). Just as Jesus consecrated Himself to do the Father’s will: “**...not My will, but Yours, be done**” (Lk 22:42), so must we who are disciples of Jesus.

thursday

21

## Believing the Lord

**S**CRPTURE Luke 1:39-45

### **O**BSERVATION

What do you observe about the faith of the two women?

### **A**PPPLICATION

What is one biblical promise that God has given me but I have been struggling in recent times (perhaps due to some hardship or setback) to believe? Ask God to strengthen your faith to believe Him and move forward with courage and confidence in the new year.

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To be strengthened in their faith to believe God's promises and move forward with courage and confidence in the new year
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**Y**oung Mary, carrying in her womb the baby Jesus, made a very special, pre-natal trip to visit her elderly relative, Elizabeth, who was pregnant with her son John. Both Elizabeth and the baby in her womb felt greatly blessed and were filled with joy at the visit of Mary and the Lord Jesus. The presence of the divine child was clearly sensed, and baby John leaped for joy even while in his mother's womb. The Holy Spirit enabled Elizabeth and baby John to immediately recognise Mary and baby Jesus – one the mother of the Lord and the other the Lord Himself. Elizabeth proceeded to pronounce a blessing on Mary as one who believed in God's promises to her. Elizabeth blessed Mary not because of Mary's social status or religious stature (indeed she had none!). Mary was blessed because **she believed God's word and that God would surely fulfil what He had promised her.**

Our God is a faithful, covenant-making and promise-keeping God. He will certainly bring all that He has promised to fulfilment. When we believe God and move forward in anticipation of the fulfilment of His promises to us, we delight God's heart and are blessed by Him!

friday  
22

## Magnifying the Lord

**S**CRPTURE Luke 1:46-49

### **O**BSERVATION

How did Mary describe the God whom she worshipped and what were her emotions at the time?

### **A**PPPLICATION

Consider what God has done in your life: Your conversion to Christ, major experiences of God, defining moments, key Bible verses, and sense of God's calling and destiny for your life.

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To never lose the sense of awe and wonder toward God and a heartfelt gratitude for His gracious and marvellous works in their lives
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**M**ary saw clearly a most remarkable thing about God: He is about to change the course of human history. Mary saw beyond her present circumstances to behold a God who is beyond all time and boundaries. As she lifted her eyes off herself and onto God, she was caught up in a wonderful deep love for God. Mary broke forth with a song of exaltation known as “The Magnificat” (Lk 1:46-55).<sup>23</sup> From the depths of her finite being, she praises and glorifies the infinite God. Mary’s song began with the words, “**My soul magnifies the Lord**” (v.46). To magnify the Lord is to exalt Him, to lift Him up in praise, to declare His greatness! Mary’s words that follow after verse 46 are words of deep delight in God, and spiritual insight reflecting a special clarity regarding the spiritual realities in her life story as well as human history.

Let us take a few moments to magnify the Lord through this prayer:

Awesome God, may we never lose the wonder of You, our God, our Creator and Redeemer! You are great, mighty and holy beyond comparison! You are excellent, majestic and glorious above all else! Please give us eyes to see Your personal fingerprints in how You have made and called us, and how You are shaping and using our lives for Your glory. Give us a heart of gratitude and joy to delight in Your destiny for our lives through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

<sup>23</sup> The Magnificat’s closest parallel is Hannah’s song of thanksgiving at the dedication of her young child, Samuel, to the Lord in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

saturday

23

## Trusting the Lord

**S**CRIPTURE Luke 1:50-56

### **O**BSERVATION

Why did Mary think back to the covenant that God made with Abraham and his offspring (vv.54-55)? What is the connection between the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1-3; 22:16-18) and Mary's promised Son?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How does the way I live my life reveal a steadfast trust in the Lord's mercy and faithfulness?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: To trust in the mercy and faithfulness of God, and teach the generations to trust and obey Him
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

In this part of the Magnificat, God's servant Mary (Lk 1:38, 48) praised God for His mercy towards her personally. Mary also praised God for His mercy and faithfulness toward His servant, the people of Israel (vv.54-55). God both cares for the individual and helps His people. He works to bring permanent restoration and blessings to them. By His might, God reverses fortunes by humbling the proud and exalting the humble, and by filling the poor and emptying the rich. Why is God committed to care for His people who humbly depend on Him? According to His covenant, God remembers them and helps them in their need and times of trouble. In fulfilment of His covenant, God brings blessings through His Son, Jesus Christ, on all the generations and all the nations. All those who **fear God, humble themselves and trust in the Lord Jesus** will be blessed forever. Mary is a paradigm of those who are blessed by God.

Beloved, may God help us to live in such a way that it is evident to all the people around us that we trust in the Lord Jesus. In our weakness and need, the Lord is merciful and faithful. His mercies are new for us every morning, and He will sustain and carry us through every struggle we face. The Lord's faithfulness endures through all generations. It is not momentary or dependent on our merits. His faithfulness does not change based on how I perceive events nor how I feel. The Lord loves His people and is for them, and we will clearly see **His mercy and faithfulness toward us.**

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sunday  
24

# Sunday Journal

**S**CRPTURE

**O**BSERVATION

**A**PPPLICATION

**P**RAYER



# the past week



## **review**

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

# the past week

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## **reflect**

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

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## **respond**

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.



Week 4

# FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

## CHRISTMAS:

Celebrating Jesus,  
God's Greatest Gift.

### Memory Verse

"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."  
– Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

### 1 Bottom Line

God's love is for everyone.\*

### 2 Bible Story

Luke 2:8-20 – Shepherds and Angels

### 3 Activity

#### Glory to God in the Highest

Props: Any YouTube Video on the hymn "Gloria In Excelsis Deo"

Sing the hymn together as a family.

Invite everyone to talk about what they look forward to this Christmas and share how your family can spread God's love this Christmas.

Say, "God's love is not meant to be kept in a box, but to be shared freely with others. Christmas is a time to share God's love. We can sing, invite others to our homes, share our life experiences with others, etc. By doing this, we are sowing the seeds of God's love and these seeds may one day grow into a big tree. What a joy to know that the seed we spread brings a person to God. That's the best gift we can give to God!"

### 4 Talk About It

- Why is it important to share God's love with others?
- Why does God love everyone all the time?
- What makes the Christmas season the perfect time to let others know that God loves them?
- What keeps us from sharing God's love with others?

**Parents:** Talk about a joyful experience when you shared God's love with someone. How did you feel? What did you do?

### 5 Prayer

Dear God, we are so thrilled and excited to share that Your love is for everyone! Please help us to be loving to those around us.



Click or scan  
this QR code for  
this week's Bible  
story video!

monday

25

## Do You See God's Sovereign Hand?

**SCRIPTURE** Luke 2:1-7; Micah 5:2

### **O**BSERVATION

What do the events in this passage teach you about God?

### **A**PPPLICATION

How should I view my life – the past, present and future – in relation to God and His power and authority?

### **P**RAYER

Sovereign Lord, You sustain all things that You have created.<sup>24</sup> You direct the course of human history. All my days are held in Your hands. You are my God who sustains me through all the seasons and events in my life. O God, You work in all things to conform me to the image of Your Son.<sup>25</sup> Teach me to trust in Your provision for all my needs and deliverance from all my afflictions.<sup>26</sup> Amen.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**S**ignificant details of the birth of John the Baptist and the conception of Jesus the Messiah were described in Luke chapter 1. They were all in preparation for **the** event of human history: **the coming of the Christ child!** In chapter 2, Dr Luke recorded the details of Jesus' birth – it was during the reign of the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus; and after Joseph and Mary travelled from Galilee in Nazareth to Bethlehem in Judea to register for the census as per Augustus' decree (vv.1-3). All these events and movement were part of the eternal, sovereign plan of God. None of these things happened by chance! They were the fulfilment of a prophecy made some 700 years earlier: “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, ... from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days” (Mic 5:2). There are no accidents of history!

Luke's detailing of the historical setting of Jesus' birth is not incidental. Through it, we can see the sovereign hand of God in history. He directs its course to fulfil His sovereign purposes. A baby in the womb cannot tell his parents at which time and location to give birth to him. Micah 5:2 is a prophecy that cannot be the subject of self-fulfilment. Jesus the Saviour of the world was born at the exact time and location, and in the specific historical and cultural context, that God purposed and appointed from eternity. God's hand holds sovereign control over all of human history – past, present and future.

<sup>24</sup> Colossians 1:16-17.

<sup>25</sup> Romans 8:28-29.

<sup>26</sup> Psalm 34:9-10, 17-20.

tuesday

26

## Isn't the Gospel for All the People?

**S**CRPTURE Luke 2:8-14

### **O**BSERVATION

What do you find surprising about the circumstances surrounding the angel's announcement of Christ's birth?

### **A**PPPLICATION

When seeking to share the Gospel with non-Christians, why do I tend to approach certain groups of people and usually avoid other groups?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for pastors and staff: To have the opportunity to share the Gospel with non-Christians from groups they do not usually encounter
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**his episode contrasts strikingly with the previous account of Jesus' birth (the quiet, understated, obscure birth in a lowly manger).

Here, Luke tells us that when shepherds were out in the field watching over their flock in the stillness of the night, an angel of the Lord appeared to them. It was dramatic! The glory of the Lord shone around them! They were filled with fear, terrified at the sight! The angel announced to them Good News of great joy – the birth of Israel's Messiah in Bethlehem! Before the shepherds could recover from the shock of the glorious appearance and grand announcement, they saw in the very next moment a host of angelic beings praising God and filling the quiet countryside with their anthem of praise!

The shepherds were lowly, simple folks. In society, they were a despised group of people due to their hard and smelly vocation. Why did all this heavenly drama of angels take place before them? It was to announce the birth of the Messiah: "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." (vv.10-11) Isn't it remarkable that the glorious Gospel was first heralded to lowly shepherds, a group of people not esteemed, but the marginalised in society?

**The Gospel is for all the people.** Not just certain groups of people. Not just people whom society deems more deserving. No group is to be excluded. Let us as Christ's servants herald the Good News to all the people!

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27

## Is There Room in Your Heart?

**S**CRPTURE Luke 2:15-20

### **O**BSERVATION

What was the response of those who heard the shepherds' report ("the saying that had been told them concerning this child", v.17; cf. Lk 2:10-12) and Mary's own response?

### **A**PPPLICATION

What does Christ's incarnation mean to me personally, and how can I help a non-Christian friend or relative to know Him?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for leaders
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for the Generations: To be deeply grateful to God for sending Jesus to save us, and have a strong desire to know Him and make Him known to others
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**T**he Christmas season can be a very hectic time for many Christians in Singapore. We are busy attending celebration parties and exchanging gifts with loved ones and friends, or even travelling during the holidays. But if we are not careful, we will find ourselves leaving the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the shelf at home – **an unshared gift**. Shops, restaurants and local attractions may be busy and crowded, with carols in the background adding to the festive mood everywhere. But if we are not careful, we will find that, due to overcrowding, there is **no room in our hearts** for Jesus.

It was very different that first Christmas. The angelic announcement of the birth of the infant Jesus brought the shepherds hastily to Bethlehem. Upon arrival, they saw the baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger, just as they were told by the angel (Lk 2:7, 12). What a confirmation! It was true! The angel had told the shepherds that the birth of Christ was “good news of great joy for all the people” (Lk 2:10); this baby was “a Saviour...Christ the Lord” (Lk 2:11). Filled with confidence, the shepherds then **made known** these things to others (v.17). **The Good News was shared!** When we consider Mary, we see that she “**treasured up** all these things, pondering them **in her heart**” (v.19). The wonder of the Christ child – all that He is and what He came to do – found **a home in her heart**. May we be like the shepherds and Mary in our response to the coming of Jesus into our world and our hearts!

thursday

28

## Christ the Lord, Jesus Our Immanuel

**SCRIPTURE** Luke 2:7-12; Matthew 1:18-25

### **O**BSERVATION

What can we learn from Matthew 1:18-25 concerning the primary purpose for the birth and coming of the Lord Jesus?

### **A**PPPLICATION

What does Jesus' name, "Immanuel" (God with us), mean for me as I prepare to begin a new year where God has placed or sent me?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To always be thankful to God for the coming of Jesus Christ and ready to share the Good News with unbelievers
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

“**T**oday” (or “this day”) is a theologically significant word in Luke’s Gospel. It frequently signals that something is about to be introduced which relates to the redemptive work of God or the arrival of the day of salvation. For example, in Luke 19, where Jesus told Zacchaeus to hurry and come down “for I must stay at your house **today**” (Lk 19:5), and “**Today** salvation has come to this house” (Lk 19:9).<sup>27</sup> It is thus highly significant that Luke uses “today” as part of the angelic announcement of the Good News: “**Today** in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord” (v.11, NIV). The birth of the Christ child from David’s lineage essentially ushered in salvation for members of fallen humanity!

That first Christmas also ushered in a new phase of the human understanding and experience of the reality that God is with us. Jesus Christ the Son of God is God incarnate. In Jesus, God came and dwelt among His people.<sup>28</sup> Sometime after Christ ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit came and dwelt in the disciples. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus.<sup>29</sup> Since Jesus is “**Immanuel**” (God with us), we can stand firm in the face of all adversities and adversaries. We do not need to be afraid. God is with us at all times and in every situation. Jesus is our Good Shepherd who guides us with His voice.<sup>30</sup> He is the One who stills the storm.<sup>31</sup> He heals our brokenness and restores us to wholeness.<sup>32</sup> Jesus tells us to take heart, for He has overcome the world.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See also Luke 4:21; 5:26; 13:32, 33; 23:43.

<sup>28</sup> John 1:1, 14.

<sup>29</sup> Acts 16:6-7.

<sup>30</sup> John 10:27.

<sup>31</sup> Mark 4:39.

<sup>32</sup> Acts 3:16; 4:10.

<sup>33</sup> John 16:33.

friday  
29

## Obedience to God, Faith in Christ

**SCRIPTURE** Luke 2:21-24; Matthew 5:17-20; 1 John 5:3-5

### **O**BSERVATION

Jewish piety is integrally related to observing the Mosaic Law which can be exacting and demanding. How is Christian obedience to God's commandments different?

### **A**PPPLICATION

In which aspects of God's Word do I need to strive for "a long obedience in the same direction"?<sup>34</sup>

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for SGI leaders: To receive God's forgiveness and cleansing when they sin, and God's grace and help to grow in obedience to His Word
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, carefully observed the stipulations of the Jewish Law. They circumcised their son after eight days and named him "Jesus" as instructed by the angel Gabriel. They fulfilled the purification obligations and dedicated Jesus according to the Law of Moses. The Gospel writer, Luke, emphasised their obedience to the Law – three times it was mentioned that Jesus' parents observed the Law of Moses/the Lord (vv.22-24).<sup>35</sup>

In Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus taught that He had come to fulfil the Mosaic Law, not to abolish it, and that His followers are to strictly obey God's commandments and teach others to do so. Jesus said, "...unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven". This is bewildering – for who more strictly observed the Law than the scribes and Pharisees? How would it be possible for one's righteousness to exceed theirs? The answer: We must be found in Jesus Christ, the One who alone has perfectly fulfilled and obeyed God's Law. Christ was without sin, yet He bore all our sins on the cross and died as our atoning sacrifice. If we believe in Christ, our sins are fully forgiven by God on Christ's account. We can have a right relationship with God, not based on our own obedience, but by trusting in Christ's perfect obedience (1 Jn 5:3-5). In trying our best to obey God's commandments, we are to be motivated by love for Jesus our Saviour,<sup>36</sup> and not by a desire to earn a righteous standing before God. For salvation is by grace through faith in Christ.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Borrowing from the title of Eugene H. Peterson's book, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society* (IVP, 1980).

<sup>35</sup> See also Luke 2:27, 39.

<sup>36</sup> See John 14:15, 21, 23-24.

<sup>37</sup> Ephesians 2:8-9.

saturday

30

## Salvation in Christ, Available to All

**S**CRIPTURE Luke 2:25-35

### **O**BSERVATION

To whom does God offer salvation in the Person of Jesus Christ?

### **A**PPPLICATION

In the new year, how can I be more urgent and proactive in seeking to persuade my non-Christian relatives and friends to receive Christ?

### **P**RAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

- Give thanks and praise
- Pray for Church Board: For God to help them make renewed efforts in the coming year to persuade their unbelieving relatives and friends to receive Christ
- Pray for significant people
- Pray for those in need
- Pray for self

## deeper reflection

**A**t that time, Simeon was an old man since he was ready to leave this world after seeing the Christ child (vv.26, 29).<sup>38</sup> The Holy Spirit led Simeon to encounter the Christ child and inspired him to speak words that revealed fundamental truths about Jesus (vv.29-35).

**First**, Jesus Christ (or “Jesus the Messiah”) is the salvation that God has prepared “in the presence of **all peoples**, a light for revelation to **the Gentiles**, and for glory to [God’s] people **Israel**” (vv.30-32). In other words, **the salvation that God offers in Jesus is available to all peoples and all ethnicities.**

**Second**, the Messiah’s coming had been eagerly anticipated by Israel and would bring division in the nation (“the fall and rising of many in Israel”, v.34). Some will be judged and others blessed, depending on how they respond to Jesus. Although **people are blessed when they receive Jesus**, many will still reject him and have Him crucified (“a sign that is opposed”, v.34). In fact, Simeon, predicted that Mary, the mother of Jesus, would suffer much anguish (“a sword will pierce through your own soul also”, v.35) – a probable reference to her witnessing the cruel crucifixion and death of Jesus on the cross more than 30 years later. The cross will one day be the sign that brings focus to the people’s response to Jesus’ atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. The outcome is that “thoughts from many hearts may be revealed” (v.35) – do the people believe in God’s Anointed One for the forgiveness of their sins and the salvation of their souls?

<sup>38</sup> Verse 25 tells us that Simeon was a model of Jewish piety (“righteous and devout”) – a man who eagerly awaited the coming of Israel’s Messiah (“the consolation of Israel”) and was anointed by God’s Spirit (“the Holy Spirit was upon him”).

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sunday

31

# Sunday Journal

**S**CRPTURE

**O**BSERVATION

**A**PPPLICATION

**P**RAYER



# the past week



## **review**

What was my high point and my low point for the week?

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

# the past week

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## reflect

What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

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## respond

What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.



Week 5

# FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

## CHRISTMAS:

Celebrating Jesus,  
God's Greatest Gift.

### Memory Verse

"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."  
– Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

### 1 Bottom Line

Celebrate Jesus all year long.\*

### 2 Bible Story

Matthew 2:1-12 – Wise Men

### 3 Activity

#### Jesus is for Life

Props: Things at home that help you remember Jesus

Ask your family members to share why that particular object – for example comfort cross, keychain, etc – was chosen. Get everyone to talk about why Jesus is important to their lives and everyone.

Say, "Whether it is Christmas, birthdays or any other day, we need food and water. We can't live without it. Jesus is like the food and water we take every day. Eternal joy comes from Him. Since we need Jesus every day, Jesus deserves to be celebrated every day! Everything we have is provided by Him. Christmas is a day to celebrate His coming to earth, but His love for us lives in us every day."

### 4 Talk About It

- What objects remind you to celebrate Jesus all year long?
- What can you learn from the wise men about celebrating Jesus?
- What are you looking forward to in the New Year?

**Parents:** Share how you will celebrate Jesus every day. How does making an effort to thank and celebrate Jesus give you joy and peace? How did you persevere?

### 5 Prayer

Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus to us. Please help us to celebrate Jesus all year long and not just at Christmas. Guide us to be the Light to others.



Click or scan  
this QR code for  
this week's Bible  
story video!

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# NOTES

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# NOTES

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# NOTES

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# COVENANT EFC

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