

Northminster Daily Devotions



The Best Christmas
Pageant Ever!

Northminster Devotionals

Can you hear the tune already ... “It’s the most wonderful time of the year ...” Why is this time of year so great? Behind all the wrapping and materialism of Christmas, we discover a child born innocently to the world, that we might become innocent in the eyes of God. Advent is when we prepare for the coming Christ child, and also look to the end of time when we are promised that the Messiah will bring all of history to its climax, and our eternal hope will be realized.

This issue of Northminster Devotionals concludes our commitment for this year to daily walk through *The One Year Bible* reading plan. The devotionals written here are the fruit of a dedicated team of writers who base their writing on one of the Scripture verses for each day’s reading. It is our hope that each devotional opens a door for you to have an encounter with the Scripture and that it can even be shared with family and friends as you discuss the themes, challenges and hopes that the reading brings.

It is our belief that reading through God’s Word is a transforming experience as we allow the Holy Spirit to teach us Biblical truths and as we connect and find our place in God’s story of calling, redeeming, and sending.

Also discover the “Sunday” Small Group Study Guides that have been provided here for small group, family or individual use. They complement Sunday morning worship at NPC, and are a launching point for going more in-depth into the bible reading for the morning.

Don’t forget ... this entire resource is on our website - www.godmorning.org - so don’t forget to tell your friends.

In 2008, we will have another opportunity to commit to daily Bible reading, and the Northminster Devotions will continue in their present format. May you, your friends and family be blessed as we renew our commitment to the Word made flesh who has committed his life to us.

If you would like to use your God-given talent to become a part of the devotional writing team, call the church at 327-7121 and talk to Publications Editor, Jim Peck. This is a very flexible ministry and can be done from anywhere!

Sunday, December 2 Scripture Readings

Daniel 9:1—11:1
1 John 2:18—3:6

Psalms 121:1-8
Proverbs 28:27-28

Small Group Study Guide

We hope you will use this guide to get to know each other, build friendships and community with others, as well as experience encouragement and growth in your faith.

Gathering As God's Family

Welcome - *Especially new people.*

Ground Rules - *Remind people what you discussed in week one.*

Ice-Breaker - Which is better: colored or white Christmas tree lights? Real or fake Christmas tree? Egg nog or hot cider? Sneaking a peek or waiting until Christmas morning? Ebenezer Scrooge or the Grinch?

Growing In God's Word

The purpose of this study is to get to know each other and to bond as a group. If you are in a group larger than 6 people, we suggest breaking into groups of 3-5 people for this section of the meeting, which gives everyone a chance to reflect and share. After reading the Scripture out loud, read each question, and each person should be open to share, knowing that there are no right or wrong answers. Use these questions to broaden the discussion and share more.

Bible Study: Hebrews 1:1-14

Bible Application

- e To what is Jesus compared here?
- e What was the function of the Hebrew prophets? How is Jesus similar or different?
- e What are angels like? How does Jesus compare to the angels? ...to God the Father?
- e Of all the qualities of Jesus that are mentioned what do you appreciate most?
- e How has Jesus been made most real to you as God has revealed him?

Going As Ambassadors For Christ

Missional Focus: During this Advent season, how can the supremacy of Christ rule over everything else you will encounter? How can your contagious excitement for the coming of Jesus be shared with those who have difficult times during the holidays, or those who are caught up in all the distractions?

Prayer Requests: "How can we help you in prayer this week?"

Close with Prayer

Monday, December 3 Scripture Readings

Daniel 11:2-35

Psalms 122:1-9

1 John 3:7-24

Proverbs 29:1

The House Of God

by Jerry Smith

I was glad when they said unto me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

-Psalm 122: 1

The Church decorations and candle light services during the Christmas season bring many people into the house of the Lord who don't come regularly. I admit to enjoying the Christmas decorations but that is not what brings me to the house of the Lord. There are manifold reasons but the three most important are:

1. I delight in seeing Jesus Christ being lifted up by our Pastors. Christ was lifted up in the wilderness to save those who were bitten by the fiery serpents if they looked to him. *Numbers 21: 5-9*. He is lifted up today to save those who look to him from the ravages of sin and to lead us as children to our Heavenly Father.
2. To join in the blessings of other worshipers. We can and should seek God in our daily private devotions and prayers. But nothing compares to a church full of united hearts in worshipful singing, Scripture reading, expository preaching and praying. And I believe the Head of the Church agrees.
3. I expect to see the Shekinah Glory of God. In the Old Testament the shekinah glory (*visible manifestation of the divine presence*) was found only in the temple. *Exodus 40:34 KJV*. Since the Day of Pentecost he is found in his Spirit filled believers. So now when I go to Northminster I find the Shekinah Glory of God in my brothers and sisters in the Lord. What a glorious countenance it is.

Youth: What's the best thing about being in church? Why?

Adults: What is most special to you about the "House of the Lord"? What do you find there that brings you joy?

Prayer: Father, we thank you for the sisters and brothers you have blessed us with in your glorious Church and may we always be true to the Head of that Church who gave his very life that we might belong to the Church Triumphant. Amen.

Tuesday, December 4 Scripture Readings

Daniel 11:36—12:13

Psalms 123:1-4

1 John 4:1-21

Proverbs 29:2-4

Be Not Afraid

by Jennifer Monroe

This is how God showed his love among us: he sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. -1 John 4:9

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. -1 John 4:18

Did you know that one of the most frequently-given commands in the Bible is “Be not afraid?” It even shows up in the Christmas story several times. An angel tells Joseph “Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit” (*Matthew 1:20a*); another angel tells Zechariah “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard” (*Luke 1:13*); the angel Gabriel tells Mary “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God” (*Luke 1:30*); and the angel of the Lord who appears to the shepherds reassures them saying “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (*Luke 2:10*). All of these people have legitimate reasons to be scared. Joseph’s fiancé is inexplicably pregnant. Zechariah probably thought he was hallucinating. Mary had just been informed that she was “highly favored” of the Lord. The shepherds were surprised out of an ordinary night by the glory of the Lord shining around them.

And yet, there is one resounding fact that ultimately drives the fear away from all of these people: God is sending his Son into the world and he is using these ordinary human beings as actors in the remarkable drama that is about to unfold. Perfect love is about to make its entrance in the world as a tiny baby boy. You may have many legitimate reasons to be afraid, but remember this: Because of God’s incredible love, Jesus Christ came into the world, lived, died and rose again. Therefore, be not afraid.

Youth: What is one thing that scares you? Can you talk about it with Jesus and ask him to take your fear away?

Adults: Are your actions motivated by fear, or by love?

Prayer: God of love, drive out all fear from within us, because of the death and resurrection of your Son and through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Wednesday, December 5 Scripture Readings

Hosea 1:1—3:5

Psalms 124:1-8

1 John 5:1-21

Proverbs 29:5-8

The Right Kind Of Help!

by Dick Leon

Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

-Psalm 124:8

When I get in trouble I have so many logical places to turn for help. I can celebrate self-reliance because I've been to school for many years and I have read a lot of books. I can look to my wife and family because they are smart and caring people. I can turn to professional counselors and get good advice. I can listen to Oprah, she has a lot of good ideas! And I have a lot of friends who are never short of good ideas to help me out!

Now, I don't want to debunk any help like those options. But, the bottom line of life for me has been that the Lord is the only help that makes a lasting difference in my life. Psalm 124 begins with these words: "If the Lord had not been on our side ..." and then names all sorts of dangers that would have "swallowed them alive."

1 John 5:4 says "everyone born of God overcomes the world." That is the kind of help I need the most. This world works hard to overcome me! All my resources, family wisdom, good schooling, professional support, public heroes or good friends cannot put this Humpty Dumpty together again when I've fallen with a great crash from my wall of ego and arrogance!

Here is an amazing truth that I have found reliable: the Maker of heaven and earth (*is there anyone greater?*) is available to help us with any and every trouble in our lives!

Youth: When you get into trouble where do you turn for help? Do you get any advice from friends that is anywhere as helpful as the Word of the Lord in Scripture and prayer?

Adults: Is there any trouble in your life you have turned over to the Lord and not found the wisdom or consolation you need to see your way through?

Prayer: Lord, forgive us for failing to trust you with all of our life's issues. Become that center that is a still point in our turning world so our lives may reflect your glory and enjoy your goodness to us. Amen!

Thursday, December 6 Scripture Readings

Hosea 4:1—5:15

Psalms 125:1-5

2 John 1:1-13

Proverbs 29:9-11

Religion For Dummies

by Scott Coverdale

And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love. -2 John 1:6

There is a lot in our faith that is complicated and difficult to understand. How about the sovereignty of God and the free will of the human heart? How about the presence of evil in an ordained world? How about the complex and evolving portrait of God in the Bible? How about salvation by mercy and condemnation by guilt? How about unanswered prayer? How about the complications of our own hearts?

Then we come tripping along and read 2 John 1:6. Suddenly, things come down to a sharp point:

- e If you love God: obey his commands.
- e To obey his commands: love each other.

Simple enough? I love God. I want to love God more completely. I sometimes feel like I barely know God, let alone how to love him. But this verse seems to make it simple. It's kind of like Religion for Dummies, and it is not a scripturally isolated notion. If you love God, express that love by loving and taking care of the people around you. God doesn't need us to be his soul-mates. God doesn't expect our love for him to spring out of our comprehensive understanding. He makes it easy for us: "Love one another." Okay, not that easy, but easy to understand, anyways. Let your impulse to love God be translated into compassion and love for the person with you, and for your neighbor, and for all of the other people in the world.

Youth: How can we act out our love for God? How could you do that today?

Adults: Do you ever hide behind complicated theology to avoid the simple commandment to love others? Can you imagine a word or a loving deed that you could offer to someone in need of God's love? What would it take to nudge that idea into action?

Prayer: Thank you, wise God, for understanding us, and our limitations, and the smallness of our imaginations. Thank you for giving us a noble task to do, a simple and honest way to love you - by loving the other people whom you have created. Amen.

Friday, December 7 Scripture Readings

Hosea 6:1—9:17

Psalm 126:1-6

3 John 1:1-15

Proverbs 29:12-14

Our Country Remembers

by Anne Price

Those who sow tears shall reap in joy. He who goes out weeping carrying seed to sow, and will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

-Psalm 126:6

Today, many will be reminded that on December 7, 1941, we were attacked at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. I was just three years old on that day in San Pedro, California. My grandfather, who raised me was in San Francisco on duty as a Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Army. The nation was in shock and cried many tears as our men and women would be involved in the Asian conflict as well as in Europe. As we fast forward to 1945 we picture the winning of both wars due to the bravery of our leaders, troops and the sacrifices of the people on the home front.

As I read the Psalm this morning I think of the picture of our troops in 1945 joyfully coming home to their loved ones. We see the picture of the sailor giving a big kiss to a nurse that he probably did not even know. We do not celebrate December 7, but we remember, and have faith that our God is with us still.

Youth: Can you remember something sad that happened? How long did you stay sad? How did God help you?

Adults: How have you experienced God's transformation of tears into joy?

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for our great country, the United States of America. We will shout hurrahs at the harvest with our loved ones who have gone before us. Amen.

Saturday, December 8 Scripture Readings

Hosea 10:1—14:9

Psalms 127:1-5

Jude 1:1-25

Proverbs 29:15-17

A Son Gives Joy

by Amanda Place

Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

-Proverbs 29:17

In our season of Advent, we think of the Son daily. One can imagine the joy that was in God's heart when he knew that his only Son was soon to be born to begin his earthly life. He knew that Jesus' life would have much discipline and ultimately take him to an early grave.

However, this is Advent and our emphasis today is upon the joy and rest a son can give, especially if he is the divine one. Look at the word "delight," it implies happiness and it has the word light in it, isn't that what our relationship to God should be? God is light, in him there is no darkness. Think of the carols that tell us about the star with its light to lead the three kings. Let that light shine in your heart as you decide to help others and by doing so may they have some rest and respite.

Take the moments at the end of the day to count the blessings that have delighted our heart in the past year. Be disciplined yourself to think of the many less fortunate than you and yours.

Youth: During Advent what, besides tangible gifts, has given delight to your heart? Have you given of yourself to help your Mom or Dad in extra ways or offered to do something that will help them rest a little?

Adults: Have you given delight to our Holy Father or have you just been "too busy?" What would happen if he were too busy for us?

Prayer: Oh Holy Night, the stars are brightly shining ... help us Father to rejoice in the days ahead about the magnificence of your gift to all of us, the Christ child. Amen.

Sunday, December 9 Scripture Readings

Joel 1:1—3:21

Psalms 128:1-6

Revelation 1:1-20

Proverbs 29:18

Small Group Study Guide

We hope you will use this guide to get to know each other, build friendships and community with others, as well as experience encouragement and growth in your faith.

Gathering As God's Family

Welcome - Especially new people.

Ground Rules - Remind people what you discussed in week one.

Ice-Breaker - What was your least favorite class in school? Why?

Growing In God's Word

The purpose of this study is to get to know each other and to bond as a group. If you are in a group larger than 6 people, we suggest breaking into groups of 3-5 people for this section of the meeting, which gives everyone a chance to reflect and share. After reading the Scripture out loud, read each question, and each person should be open to share, knowing that there are no right or wrong answers. Use these questions to broaden the discussion and share more.

Bible Study: Hebrews 2:1-18

Bible Application

- e Why is it important to pay careful attention here?
- e What seems to be the relationship between angels, people, and Jesus?
- e Why did Jesus need to be flesh and blood, like us, and not like an angel?
- e Have you ever drifted from God? Are you drifting now? What bring the biggest challenges to faith?
- e What does it mean to have your faith restored?
- e How is knowing about Jesus life and struggles comforting or troubling to you?
- e Which titles of Jesus mean most to you: "brother", "author of salvation", high priest"?

Going As Ambassadors For Christ

Missional Focus: How can you be an encouragement to someone this week, as you share in someone else's struggles, and share how Jesus shares in them too.

Prayer Requests: "How can we help you in prayer this week?"

Close with Prayer

Monday, December 10 Scripture Readings

Amos 1:1—3:15
Revelation 2:1-17

Psalms 129:1-8
Proverbs 29:19-20

The Wonder Of His Word

by Deb Van Scoyk

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. -Revelations 2:7

Although we do not often reflect on the lessons bestowed through the book of Revelation as our observances of Advent commence, I find it an enriching and joyful experience, as we near the end of our One Year Bible, to recognize and embrace the totality of God's plan.

As this beautiful season of Advent unfolds, we recall the words of the Prophet Isaiah, "Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (*Isaiah 7:14*), almost the exact words we re-read in Matthew 1:23, as we begin our journey into the New Testament. We proceed through the New Testament to read the stories of Jesus' early healings in Matthew 8:17, "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases", as prophesied by Isaiah (*Isaiah 53:4*) over 700 years before the birth of our Jesus.

"He who has an ear, let him hear", the words beginning today's Scripture reference, are reminiscent of Jesus' own warnings following his parable of the sower (*Matthew 13:9*). The Spirit of Christ uses these same words (*recorded about 95 AD*) in reaching out to the one "who overcomes", those believers who persevere by faith and therefore need not fear the second death.

What an incredible journey we experience from the prophesied birth of our Saviour through the teachings of the life that gave birth to "the churches", culminating in the promise we're reading today of the privilege of ruling and reigning with Christ in his Kingdom. What a gift we're able to realize in God's Holy Word!

Youth: What is your favorite story from the Bible?

Adults: Let us not let a day go by without dwelling on the gifts we receive through God's Word.

Prayer: Oh Lord, it is through your Word we find purpose for our lives, comfort for our troubled hearts, and the joy that sustains our faith and nourishes our soul. We thank you, Father, for revealing yourself through your Word. Amen.

Tuesday, December 11 Scripture Readings

Amos 4:1—6:14

Psalms 130:1-8

Revelation 2:18—3:6

Proverbs 29:21-22

Waiting On The Lord

by Marie Ruiz

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. -Psalm 130:5

Here it is December 11, 2007. Where has the year gone? As we age it seems time flies by faster and faster. In our Scripture found in Psalm 130 we are told the Psalmist was waiting or anticipating for a first arrival of the redeemer that is promised to Israel. The one who is full of redemption and who will redeem people of their sins. This is what we celebrate on December 25, the redeemer who came for all of us in the form of man. Through his birth he became flesh just as we were born, lived on earth and experienced life as we know it. Then he gave his life so that we can be redeemed of sin and eternally live with him in Heaven.

Just as the Psalmist waited, we now await for the Lord's second coming - the time promised in Scripture when Christ will come and take his church to Heaven and out of the sinful world we live in. It could be tomorrow - my soul waits and in his word I put my trust.

As we await Christmas day and celebrate Jesus' birth, let us be mindful that his birth on earth and death and resurrection for our redemption enables us to await with joy and hope of his return. We have much to celebrate this holy season. Hallelujah!

Youth: Christmas day is something you wait for because of gifts that are fun to open. But Jesus who came as a baby was the greatest gift of all. And best of all he came for you! Is waiting easy or hard? Why?

Adults: Let us remember with wonder the plan that God laid out for us. And let us wait patiently and earnestly study his Word as we wait for the Lord's return. What are you waiting for in life? Is waiting easy or hard? Why?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, it is so easy for us to take our focused attention off you during this time of year, but renew our minds to the hope that we have when we trust in you. And may we be your light this Christmas season shining brightly for all to see. Amen.

Wednesday, December 12 Scripture Readings

Amos 7:1—9:15
Revelation 3:7-22

Psalms 131:1-3
Proverbs 29:23

Have You Invited Him In?

by Frank Shallenberger

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. -Revelation 3:20

More years ago than I care to recall, I was awakened late in the night by a strange sound on the intercom. Adult voices! Someone was at our front door. Whatever were they doing there at that hour? Then the doorbell rang. Jumping out of bed I ran to the door. Whoever could be coming to visit us at such a strange hour? When I opened the door I found my aunt Rose and my cousin Donald there. They had driven all the way from Baltimore, Maryland to Tucson, Arizona to visit us in order to be a surprise. What a wonderful and joyous surprise that was, for aunt Rose was my favorite aunt. In Revelation 3, Jesus is also knocking at our door. This time it isn't the door of our home but it is the door of our heart. He is there because he has chosen us and wants to have a warm and personal relationship with us.

In 13 days we will celebrate the appearance in this world of an infant child laying in a manger. God captured the imagination of the entire universe when he decided to visit us in such a way. Every one loves a newborn baby. Have you ever watched what happens at church when a mother brings her newborn to services for the first time? Everyone gathers around and wants to take a turn holding him/her. Newborn infants are instantly loved!

While Jesus is always there waiting to be invited in, this season of the year is a very special time. God has made a "godly effort" to be as appealing as possible to even the hardest of hearts. Have you taken this Infant Child into your heart? He is God's gift to you and he is waiting.

Youth: Have you forgotten this special gift while celebrating his Birthday?

Adults: We are here today and gone tomorrow, don't waste time! Have you asked him in?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we are commemorating your arrival as a newborn infant over two millennia ago. Open our hearts Lord. We invite you in to dwell there. You are the greatest present ever given to us. We want to be like you Lord. Amen.

Thursday, December 13 Scripture Readings

Obadiah 1:1-21

Psalms 132:1-18

Revelation 4:1-11

Proverbs 29:24-25

Best Present Ever

by Karen Foss

"The day of the Lord is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head. -Obadiah 1:15

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. Its message is one of doom to the Edomites, the Jews in Judah, and God's people everywhere. It was written to show that God judges those who have harmed his people. Edom was a very prideful nation who did nothing to help their neighbors, Judah, when they were destroyed by Babylon. Obadiah predicted that God would destroy Edom, but the Edomites were so self-confident that they thought they were invincible.

You know that old Christmas song ... the one we sing to our little ones about Santa "sees you when you're sleeping, sees you when you wake, knows if you've been good or bad so be good for goodness sake." I think we like the children to hear this in the hope that it will make them think twice about misbehaving so close to Christmas.

Christian adults know they are not invincible. We're rather like broken dolls donated to the Salvation Army, where their skilled volunteers lovingly repair and repaint them and put a new smile on their faces for some lucky little girl on Christmas morning. God does the same to us. He repairs our broken lives, puts a new smile on our face and dresses us in a new attitude so we can live life joyfully in his love. What a wonderful gift! Better than the best looking package under the Christmas tree!

Youth: What's on your list for Christmas? Do you have a friend that you'd like to share the joy with?

Adults: How can you live, being confident in God's love and what he's done in your life and going out to spread the good news to your neighbors?

Prayer: Dear Father, this season, all seasons, help me love my neighbors as you have loved me.

Friday, December 14 Scripture Readings

Jonah 1:1—4:11
Revelation 5:1-14

Psalms 133:1-3
Proverbs 29:26-27

Jonah, Scrooge And You

by Jerry Smith

That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. -Jonah 4:2b

Jonah was a strange duck to be thrown in with the likes of Daniel. First of all, he not only refused to obey God, but went in the opposite direction by boat. In the belly of the big fish, he prayed to God for deliverance and vowed to answer God's call. Jonah proclaimed to the city of Nineveh that they would be overturned in forty days. Nineveh heeded God's warning and every man and beast fasted and repented in sack cloth and ashes. Jonah became furious and shouted to God the Scripture verse shown above. We are not told whether Jonah ever got over being mad at God for saving Nineveh.

In *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge is a miserable boss, and an insufferable person without a charitable bone in his body. Yet when visited by the Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future, he repented, changed his ways and became the opposite of his miserable, old self.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to compare or put a fiction story on the level of importance of Scripture but I do believe there are important lessons in both. When God asks us to do something, do we give it the old Marine response and ask "How high" on the way up? Or do we look for excuses as Jonah did? When we do respond and the result is a Nineveh miracle, do we rejoice and praise God for his grace or sulk because they didn't deserve God's grace in your estimation. Nineveh changed their ways and so did Ebenezer, and may we always be open to making changes in our lives when the need becomes obvious.

Youth: Can you rejoice with the person who received the present you really wanted?

Adults: May we always be prepared to share the Good News that Christmas brings. How is God calling you to share the message of Christmas with a Scrooge of Nineveh in your life?

Prayer: Father, may we always rejoice when others receive the same gift that you gave to us by believing in your Son. Amen.

Saturday, December 15 Scripture Readings

Micah 1:1—4:13
Revelation 6:1-17

Psalms 134:1-3
Proverbs 30:1-4

Peace On Earth

by Jennifer Monroe

He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. -Micah 4:3

Christmas seems like an especially popular time to talk about peace. The expression “Peace on Earth” is one of the catchphrases of this time of year, along with “Happy Holidays,” “Season’s Greetings,” and the increasingly-unpopular “Merry Christmas.”

Perhaps one reason for this is that the Bible associates peace with the person of the Messiah. When the angels announce Jesus’ birth to the shepherds, they end their message with the words “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests” (*Luke 2:14*). The prophet Isaiah (*a contemporary of the prophet Micah*) said that the Messiah who was to come would be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” and that “of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end” (*Isaiah 9:6b, 7a*). Certainly, the Jews living at the time of Jesus’ first advent into the world would have longed for peace, just like we do today. Although they lived in the time of the *Pax Romana*, a time of outward peace tightly controlled and maintained by the Roman empire, there was unrest bubbling just under the surface. The Jews were living as occupied people, often chaffing under the demands of Roman imperialist rule. Yet, the peace that Jesus brought was personal (*between God and man*), rather than national, and it was not necessarily what people were looking for.

At Christmas, it is our privilege to celebrate and proclaim Jesus’ first advent and the peace that now exists between God and Man. However, it is also our task to eagerly await and pray for his second advent, his second coming into the world when the words of the prophet Micah will finally be fulfilled.

Youth: When you hear the word “peace,” what do you think of?

Adults: What do you think “peace on earth” might look like?

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for your Son’s first Advent, and for the peace that now exists between you and us. We eagerly await the day when he will come again and bring lasting peace to the whole earth. Amen.

Sunday, December 16 Scripture Readings

Micah 5:1—7:20
Revelation 7:1-17

Psalms 135:1-21
Proverbs 30:5-6

Small Group Study Guide

We hope you will use this guide to get to know each other, build friendships and community with others, as well as experience encouragement and growth in your faith.

Gathering As God's Family

Welcome - Especially new people.

Ground Rules - Remind people what you discussed in week one.

Ice-Breaker - What do you do when you are lost on a trip: stop and ask directions, check the map, wander around to you find your way?

Growing In God's Word

The purpose of this study is to get to know each other and to bond as a group. If you are in a group larger than 6 people, we suggest breaking into groups of 3-5 people for this section of the meeting, which gives everyone a chance to reflect and share. After reading the Scripture out loud, read each question, and each person should be open to share, knowing that there are no right or wrong answers. Use these questions to broaden the discussion and share more.

Bible Study: Hebrews 3:1-19

Bible Application

- e What is the word "therefore" in verse 1, there for? What are the practical implications of chapter 1 and 2 revealed here?
- e How are Moses and Jesus similar or different?
- e What is the house that is referred to here?
- e What is a warning given here?
- e How can believers be supportive to each other?

Going As Ambassadors For Christ

Missional Focus: How can you live out verse 13 this week?

Prayer Requests: "How can we help you in prayer this week?"

Close with Prayer

Monday, December 17 Scripture Readings

Nahum 1:1—3:19

Psalms 136:1-26

Revelation 8:1-13

Proverbs 30:7-9

A Cup Of Chocolate

by Anne Price

Give me enough food to live on, neither too much, nor too little. If I am too full I might get independent, saying, "God, who needs him?" If I am poor, I might steal and dishonor the name of my God. -Proverbs 30:8-9

This Proverb was written by a friend of Solomon named Agur, that had such wisdom he included it in his book. The Book of Proverbs gives us practical, positive, life giving lessons. As a grandmother, I would love to give advice as has been given in Proverbs to keep my family from detouring from our faith in God.

We are now in the season of purchasing gifts that in a few months will be put aside. Many years ago as I was raising my four children, I was concerned about having enough money to buy my children Christmas presents. I was the sole support of our family and just meeting the daily necessities was difficult. We took a little trip down to Tijuana. We were in a little cafe and we saw an old grandmother sharing her cup of chocolate with her grandson. There was such love being shared between the two of them. It lightened all of our hearts. To this day all of us remember that scene. We drove home feeling rich. We had plenty. I prayed to Our Father that day a prayer like this Proverb. I would not need to be rich or poor, but show love like that lovely lady gave to that little boy. She shared what she had. Thank you God for sharing your Son with us.

Youth: What is something special you can share with a friend?

Adults: How can you be as a little child this Christmas and be excited about the celebration of Jesus' birthday and the abundance that you enjoy?

Prayer: Thank you Father for teaching us through the Proverbs about our relationship first with You and then with others. Amen.

Tuesday, December 18 Scripture Readings

Habakkuk 1:1—3:19

Psalms 137:1-9

Revelation 9:1-21

Proverbs 30:10

Yet I Will Rejoice!

by Dick Leon

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines ... yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. -Habakkuk 3:17-18

Psalms 137 asks, "How can we sing with joy in the foreign land of Babylon" (*present day Baghdad!*) where the Jewish faithful had been taken into captivity. Habakkuk begins his brief book with the plaintive cry: "How long must I call for help but you do not answer?" Revelation 9 spells out the coming woes of history as the sun is darkened, nations rage and plagues abound.

Life is not easy! We all face troubles. We all have times of failure and disappointment. Maybe the greatest test of our faith comes when life is unkind to us ... when our fig trees do not bud and there are no grapes on the vines!

Habakkuk affirms the kind of faith we all need when he proclaims, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior!" Our faith needs to be more than "because all is well" ... it also needs to be "yet I will rejoice!" We need an "even though-faith" when troubles come!

The only way I have found to do this is to look beyond the immediate causes for gloom in my life or in our world. "Lift your eyes, my people," cry the prophets of old, and see the glory of the Lord who has come as a babe in a manger to tell us again that the God who made us, has come to save us, because he loves us!

One week from today we celebrate the most enduring reason our faith is a "yet-faith" and not just a "because-faith," for while we were far away God came close and that Event transcends and surpasses all the troubles we could ever have!

Youth: How do you handle discouragement? When you begin to feel "down" remember to look "up" to the Lord of Lords and the King of Glory!

Adults: Has your life worked out perfectly? Do you rejoice only when all is going well? Or can you say with the prophet: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord!"

Prayer: Mighty God, you have come to us in the quiet birth of your Son to counter the noisy world around us. Thank you for your unfailing love and your redeeming grace that shine beyond the shadows of this dark world. We pray in the name of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Wednesday, December 19 Scripture Readings

Zephaniah 1:1—3:20

Psalms 138:1-8

Revelation 10:1-11

Proverbs 30:11-14

The Surprise Of His Lowly Birth

by Dick Leon

Though the Lord is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he know from afar. -Psalm 138:6

I studied at a Hindu University in India for two years and made many friends among the students. One good friend took me to his village during a school holiday. The village “elders” wanted to talk with this American so they set up an evening conversation. Thirty or so of them gathered under the stars, when the heat of the day had died down, and we talked into the night. I was thrilled when they raised the topic of religion.

They were anxious to show that Hinduism had everything Christianity had. I wanted to show that there was something unique about my faith to them. When I told them about Christ being the Son of God who came to us in the flesh I thought they would see the great difference in our faiths. But they responded that they also had stories of “avatars” who came to them in the flesh.

As I studied Hinduism I came to learn that the great difference is not in a story *that* God came to us but in *the surprising manner* with which God *actually* entered our world. Their avatars were born to royal families, knew no pain and conquered all evil and had no historical dates.

Our story is of a God who “looks upon the lowly” and for whom the “proud are far off.” Christmas is stunning because even though the Lord is on high, he came down low. The heroes of Christmas are the lowly ... Mary in her meekness and Joseph in his humility, and the lowest of the low in the shepherds from the fields ... and Jesus, who, by being low himself (*born in a stable, worked as a carpenter, ministered with no place to lay his head, died on a cross and buried in a borrowed tomb*) is available to all humanity. Only the proud remain far off!

Youth: It sometimes looks like the proud have it made. Look closely at the Christmas story ... it is the humble who come to know God! What does being humble mean to you?

Adults: Have often felt the closeness of the Lord in times of lowliness rather than times of great achievement?

Prayer: Loving Lord, we join with millions around the world and throughout history in praising your name as you come to us in your lowly birth! Amen.

Thursday, December 20 Scripture Readings

Haggai 1:1—2:23

Psalm 139:1-24

Revelation 11:1-19

Proverbs 15-16

Hallelujah!

by Jennifer Monroe

“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.’” Revelation 11:15

Chances are, you’ve probably heard a portion of George Frederick Handel’s popular oratorio *Messiah* at some point during this Christmas season (*and if you haven’t yet, you probably will!*). And, chances are the piece that you heard performed is the chorus *Hallelujah*, which is the most famous chorus from the oratorio and is often sung as the finale at performances.

These words from Revelation 11 (*above*) are right at the center of this popular piece of music, and they communicate one of the most astounding truths of the Christmas story. Sometimes, we can be tempted to forget that the quaint manger scene that epitomizes Christmas for us is only a prelude, an opening act to the rest of the story.

This baby lying in a Bethlehem barn was actually God himself, in human flesh. And God had come, not just to have a look around or out of curiosity, but because the “kingdom of the world” was in desperate need of a savior, a new king who would rescue it from death and destruction. By coming as a man, dying on the cross and being raised again, Jesus brought his Kingdom to earth.

Jesus Christ is the Lord of this world and he will reign forever. It is our privilege and our responsibility as his followers to celebrate and proclaim his Lordship and to work to do our part to see his kingdom fully realized here on earth. Hallelujah, indeed!

Youth: Have you ever heard Handel’s “Hallelujah” chorus? How did it make you feel?

Adults: If Jesus is Lord of this world, what does that mean for you? How are you working to build his Kingdom?

Prayer: Jesus, we recognize and celebrate your Lordship. Thank you for coming as a baby at Christmas, and thank you for loving this world enough to die on the cross on its behalf. You are the risen king! Amen.

Friday, December 21 Scripture Readings

Zechariah 1:1-21

Psalm 140:1-13

Revelation 12:1-17

Proverbs 30:17

The Magnificat

by Mary Krongaard

She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

-Revelations 12:5

“The male child who will rule ... with a rod of iron” is the Messianic figure of Psalm 2:8-9; however, there is no earthly rule over all nations at this point in time. From the perspective of this heavenly scene, the child-ruler is soon caught up to the throne of God, apparently referring to the “Ascension of Jesus, the Christ” (*Acts 1:9*). The woman’s first child (*Revelation 12:2-5*) is often interpreted as Jesus and her other “offspring” as Christian “true believers” (*Revelation 12:17*). Some think that this woman bearing a child is Mary, Christ’s mother. Since this devotion is falling just a few days before Christmas, I would like to agree with those scholars! A better known verse is found in Isaiah 7:14: “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Luke gives an account of the angel Gabriel as he appears to Mary: “You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.”

This was so much for a young girl to bear! Mary was probably about sixteen years old, maybe younger, and becomes pregnant. We can try to imagine ourselves in Mary’s shoes, but I do not expect we can never grasp the enormity of her situation. Mary must have known there could be problems. Yet rather than focus on the size of her problem, she chooses to trust in the size of her Lord.

“I am the Lord’s servant,” she replies. “May it be to me as you have said.” Yet in Luke, Mary offers one of the most powerful examples of a person submitting to God’s will.

God touches our lives often, in ways we almost never expect. We must aspire to Mary’s faith. We need to try, as best we can, to be the Lord’s servants, entrusting ourselves to his care as we walk through each day this Christmas season.

Youth & Adult: What is the essence of Mary’s response to the angel’s message? Do you feel led to this same response in any area of your life right now?

Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to have the faith of Mary and submit to you this Christmas season. Thank you for coming to earth as a child. Thank you for winning the battle of good and evil at the cross! Amen.

Saturday, December 22 Scripture Readings

Zechariah 2:1—3:10

Psalms 141:1-10

Revelation 13:1-18

Proverbs 30:18-20

He Is Coming!

by Jennifer Hager

“Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you,” declares the Lord. “Many nations will be joined with the Lord in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you.” -Zechariah 2:10-11

Five hundred years before Jesus Christ was born, Zechariah wrote his prophecy. Zechariah wrote of the coming of the Lord. His prophecy told the nation of Israel that the Messiah would live among them and that many nations would be joined together in Christ.

How loving is our Lord to tell of his Son many generations before his birth. Doesn't it seem so clear and so plain? The Jewish people believed this prophecy but did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. It seems that their expectations were so high and unrealistic they did not remember the Lord's words to them years before.

The Jewish people expected an earthly king who would free them from Roman rule. God's Word through Zechariah does not promise political freedom or a ruler on earth. God's promise is that he would live among the Jewish people and join many nations in him.

The Lord has blessed us with his holy Word just as he blessed the ancient Israelites. We need to ask him daily to bring us understanding of it.

Youth: Are you excited for Christmas to come? Ask Jesus to fill your heart with his love on Christmas day.

Adults: Do we listen to God's word and prayerfully ask for understanding?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, Almighty God, thank you for your Word. Please bring us each day to it and bless us with your meaning of our readings. Amen.

Sunday, December 23 Scripture Readings

Zechariah 4:1—5:11

Psalms 142:1-7

Revelation 14:1-20

Proverbs 30:21-23

Small Group Study Guide

We hope you will use this guide to get to know each other, build friendships and community with others, as well as experience encouragement and growth in your faith.

Gathering As God's Family

Welcome - Especially new people.

Ground Rules - *Remind people what you discussed in week one.*

Ice-Breaker - What is your favorite way to spend a day off?

Growing In God's Word

The purpose of this study is to get to know each other and to bond as a group. If you are in a group larger than 6 people, we suggest breaking into groups of 3-5 people for this section of the meeting, which gives everyone a chance to reflect and share. After reading the Scripture out loud, read each question, and each person should be open to share, knowing that there are no right or wrong answers. Use these questions to broaden the discussion and share more.

Bible Study: Hebrews 4:1-16

Bible Application

- e What is this rest referred to? How would you describe it to someone?
- e In verse 12, in regards to the word of God, what does each phrase mean to you?
- e What does it mean that Jesus is a great high priest? What about Jesus' priesthood is most encouraging?
- e What is the resulting attitude and posture of those who realize Jesus' priestly role?

Going As Ambassadors For Christ

Missional Focus: Who would you like to invite to attend Christmas Eve worship with you?

Prayer Requests: "How can we help you in prayer this week?"

Close with Prayer

Monday, December 24 Scripture Readings

Zechariah 6:1—7:14

Psalm 143:1-12

Revelation 15:1-8

Proverbs 30:24-28

Our Gifts To God

by Deb Van Scoyk

...They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.

-Revelations 15:2b-3

I recently read that Compassion International, an organization serving the needs of impoverished children, will provide a Christmas gift to each of the 680,000 children in their program. So, while we can take some solace in the knowledge that a tiny percentage of the world's children in poverty will have a brief celebration focusing on the birth of Jesus, one cannot help but reminisce and wonder.

Contrast the one gift these children receive with those sparkling under your own Christmas tree and recall, as I do, the tinker toys, electric trains and model planes, pick-up sticks, marbles, silly putty, and cowboy hats of our childhood. Add to this the turkey dinners, homemade fudge, the candles and tinsel, eggnog and mistletoe, and the thousand cherished memories we carry in our hearts.

We cannot bestow this magic on the starving children of our world, but most of us are in a position to accept the opportunity of introducing one child to Jesus. "Great and marvelous" are the deeds of our Lord - let us set about to assure that God's love becomes known to these dear ones who struggle daily for survival. As we join together in celebration of our Lord's birth this year, let's ask God how we might bring a precious child hope for their family, a future that includes adequate food, medical care, education, and the absolute assurance that they are loved and adored as part of a worldwide Christian family.

Youth: How might you share something that you have with one child who is less fortunate?

Adults: Can we sacrifice a couple trips to Starbuck's? Could those dollars go toward supporting a child living in poverty?

Prayer: Oh, Lord, we cannot bring the gifts of our childhood to the little ones suffering today, but we ask your guidance in doing what is within our reach. Help us, Father, to bring gifts sufficient to convey just how great and marvelous are your deeds! Amen.

Tuesday, December 25 Scripture Readings

Zechariah 8:1-23

Psalms 144:1-15

Revelation 16:1-21

Proverbs 30:29-31

I'll Be Home For Christmas!

by Andy Ross

Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.

-Zechariah 8:23

God is in the house!

That was the key to the exciting message of the prophet Zechariah ... that it was time now for God's people to come back home ... to rest and find peace again. In fact, Zechariah speaks God's hope to the people by saying, "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem." He spoke about God restoring his people back in their homeland; that God would help his people find peace once again.

Back in the days of World War II, there was a popular song, *I'll Be Home for Christmas*, which spoke about the hope of a soldier, at least being home in his heart, as he thinks about his loved ones.

Zechariah's song of hope is very similar - one day we'll all be home and together - and that's because of Christmas. Today is the day of days we celebrate the Messiah, God's Servant and Son, entering human history ... to save us, to restore us, to show us how to live, and to give us lasting peace. Truly, the best gift we could receive is God's love, given in Jesus, the Christ - who came here - to bring us home.

May God bless you on this wonderful day! Have a joyful, Zechariah Christmas! May your life, and your home, be a place of Christ's love ... a place that shows others that God is with you, that "Jesus lives here."

Youth: How does Christmas change your home? What is your favorite part about that? What gift does Jesus give for your heart?

Adults: What might be a way you can share or show the gift of "home" for someone else this day; this week?

Prayer: Dear Lord, we pause to pray on this special day for your care and blessings on those who aren't able to be home today. Keep our servicemen and women along with any others who are feeling lonely, in your care this day. And thank you for coming to us, as a baby, so that we might find our life and home with you. Amen.

Wednesday, December 26 Scripture Readings

Zechariah 9:1-17

Psalms 145:1-21

Revelation 17:1-18

Proverbs 30:32

Will Wrong Win?

by Dick Leon

They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings. -Revelation 17:14

One day after we celebrate the birth of our Lord we read a text that tells the future. Jesus is born in weakness, as a Lamb, but all the dark forces of the world (*named in the first 13 verses of Revelation 17*) know this child is a threat to their evil rule so they make war against the Lamb.

It would seem that the battle is uneven. The forces of evil are so visible and strong and frightful. In the imagery of Revelation evil is portrayed here as a woman sitting on a scarlet beast. A babe in a manger with no army to protect him but the entourage of shepherds and their sheep, and the goats and cattle of the stable, leaves us with the impression that what is good and true and lovely in the Lamb will be consumed by all that is evil and false and ugly in the woman and the beast.

Aren't there times in your life when wrong seems so strong that right has no chance? Can this Lamb, whose birth we have just celebrated, really tilt the scales of justice and power in this world?

Did you catch this word from the Lord? "The Lamb will overcome them (*all*) because he (*indeed*) is Lord of lords and King of kings." I know I need this word of reassurance every day. I need to be reminded that God has entered our world in the person of his only Son, he has shown us what is good and true and beautiful, and he has conquered every evil including death by his resurrection from the tomb. Christmas is not an empty charade but a brilliant light in the dark that the world cannot extinguish. Just as our Christmas candles chase darkness away so the Lamb conquered death and will, in the end, conquer all that is evil, false and ugly! Trust him, this babe is Lord of lords and King of kings, forever and ever and ever.

Youth: Do you ever get discouraged when you see kids who do wrong things getting away with it? Read this text again with that in mind.

Adults: We live in a messy world. What keeps you from giving in to the mess rather than trusting that goodness and truth will prevail?

Prayer: We praise you, mighty God, for coming to us as a mere Lamb and for conquering the forces of darkness that seem, at times, to be winning! Help us to trust your Victory and to live by your unquenchable Light. We pray in the name of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thursday, December 27 Scripture Readings

Zechariah 10:1—11:17

Psalms 146:1-10

Revelation 18:1-24

Proverbs 30:33

Turn Your Eyes Anew And Upward

by Amanda Place

I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have being. -Psalm 146:2

Christmas is over, and we look anew to a year that holds every possibility. We have started to “resolve” do some things differently. Does your list of things you would change include a stronger relationship with your religion? We have been asked to sing the praises of the Lord this day and every day.

Some of us are not gifted singers like the choir members. However, our singing is not about perfection but about inspiration and God hears us as if we were all exquisitely gifted in our singing. Most of us love the Christmas time because of the closeness it brings us to our loved ones and because of the powerful music that has been written to share in the joy and praise of Jesus’ birth.

We know the words to so many carols, and by singing them we bring back sweet memories of an earlier time in our lives and in the birth scene in Jerusalem.

Youth: What is your favorite Christmas carol and why? Did you learn or hear a new beautiful carol this past month in Sunday school or on the radio?

Adults: Do you sing soft enough so no one can tell it’s you, or do you let it out loud - not caring who hears you - as you sing to your Savior?

Prayer: Father, we have the choice of singing with a glad heart at this time of year. Help us to keep this choice in the forefront of our activities as we end this day. Amen.

Friday, December 28 Scripture Readings

Zechariah 12:1—13:9

Psalm 147:1-20

Revelation 19:1-21

Proverbs 31:1-7

Praise The Lord

by Frank Shallenberger

Praise the Lord. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him! -Psalm 147:1

Three days ago we celebrated what is one of God's greatest miracles - The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity being delivered of a Virgin, fathered by the Holy Spirit and arriving on this planet in a stable surrounded by barnyard animals. The announcement of His Birth was announced to humble shepherds by Angels of the Heavenly Realm. These humble men announced the birth of Jesus Christ to all who would hear.

David sang how fitting it is to praise God. How true his words are. Only God himself could conceive of such a miracle. Jesus being all human and at the same time all Divine. You and I are amazed at the humility of the young, single Jewish girl who immediately responded to an angel by saying "Be it done unto me according to thy word." Mary then journeyed to see her cousin Elizabeth, who at the time was pregnant with John. Upon seeing Mary she cried out in a loud voice, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (*Luke 1:38 KJV*) What kind of songs did Mary sing, what kind of thoughts did she have, what kind of prayers did she say over her firstborn child? Could this humble, uneducated, young girl truly take this all in? Can't you hear her now crooning to the infant at her breast, "Praise the Lord, how good it is to sing praises to our God!"

While the manger scene is still engraved upon our memory, let us too join with this young mother and praise the Lord. Let us remember how good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

Youth: Have you let Christmas gifts get in the way of remembering that it is Jesus who is the reason for the season?

Adults: Have you let Christmas decorations, holiday cooking and family gatherings push the Manger scene onto the back burner?

Prayer: Father, you who conceived this event back before the beginning of time. For this we praise you, we adore you, we thank you, we glorify you. For it is by this gift and your grace that we as Christians have the Blessed Assurance of Eternal Salvation. Amen.

Saturday, December 29 Scripture Readings

Zechariah 14:1-21

Psalm 148:1-14

Revelation 20:1-15

Proverbs 31:8-9

Where's Your Name Written?

by Lisa Grenier

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. – Revelation 20:15

For many years, I attended church and thought, "Of course I am a Christian. After all, I go to a Christian church!" In my mind, it was as simple as that. I thought I was a pretty good person and that God would accept the way I was trying to live my life. I even began to serve in the church as an usher. God certainly had to be happy about that! I didn't really understand why Jesus is so important until I took the Alpha course in the Spring of 2000. At that time, the Lord opened my heart through the study of his Word. I knew he died for *my* sins and more than anything else, I wanted to know him as *my* Lord and Savior.

What I am trying to say is that a person can attend church, serve in various ways in the church (*ushers, choir, musicians, office volunteers, etc.*) and do all sorts of good deeds. But, if one's name is not written in the Book of Life, one's final destination is the lake of fire! We don't like to hear it, but this is the penalty for sins before Holy God!

With the busyness of the Christmas season starting to wind down, take some time to reflect on *why* Jesus was born in the manger. He was born to die for my sins and yours! Friends, we cannot save ourselves with good deeds or by performing religious rituals! Jesus is the only way! (*John 14:6*) If Jesus doesn't save you, you're headed straight for the lake of fire. Now here's the good news: God graciously gave sinners the best Christmas gift ever - the Baby Jesus who was born to save **you!** Surrender *your* life to him, receive the gifts he wants to give you, and then share him with others!

Youth: How can you share Jesus with others? If you are not sure that your name is in the Book of Life, talk with a pastor or youth leader.

Adults: Do you have friends (*even at church*) who need to hear your faith story? Who could you invite to a Bible study?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for opening my heart to you and please give me the boldness to tell others about that. Amen.

The next issue of the Northminster Daily Devotions will be available on Sunday, December 30, 2007.



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