

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY

Daily Meditations



DECEMBER 2023



These meditations are available online
for computer, tablets, and smart phones
at:

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www.pihprayer.blogspot.com

*Partners in Hope Recovery Society
is a Christian community
outreach organization
offering hope, support, and healing
through Jesus Christ
to victims of
harmful circumstances and dependencies,
as they reclaim the gift of their life.*

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JUST FOR TODAY

*Just for today I will try to live in conscious contact with God praying only
for knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out.*

*Just for today I will strengthen my mind. I will take a few minutes to
read and meditate on God's word, seeking God's perspective for my life
today. I will take note of one helpful thing God is saying to me and seek
to behave accordingly.*

*Just for today I will be joyful, optimistic, and grateful. I will take time to
notice the gifts in me, in others, and in my surroundings and let the rest
go.*

*Just for today I will adjust myself to what is and not try to adjust
everything else to my desires. I will trust that God is working all things
for good in my life.*

*Just for today I will be agreeable. I will not criticize, not find fault, and
not try to improve or control anybody except myself. I will pray blessing
on one person with whom I struggle to relate.*

*Just for today I will have a quiet half hour all by myself to relax and enjoy
all that God is giving me.*

*Just for today I will be unafraid, believing that as I trust in God with all
my heart and lean not on my own understanding, He will lead me along
a good path.*

*Just for today I will seek to serve others with kindness, doing what is
right, and walking humbly with God.*

***For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus,
so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:10 NLT***

SOME AREAS OF ADDICTION AND DEPENDENCY

For a variety of reasons, many of us have an underlying structure of disorder that is damaging us and others. We invite God to show us the truth about ourselves so we can personally receive God's forgiveness to set us free and healing to make us strong.

SUBSTANCE ADDICTIONS:	BEHAVIOUR ADDICTIONS:
Alcohol Caffeine Injected or smoked substances such as: Crack, Crystal Meth, Heroin Marijuana Prescription Medications Sugar Tobacco	Anger/Rage/Bullying Cutting Crime Eating Disorders: Bulimia, Anorexia, Binging, Obesity Gambling Hoarding Sex/Pornography Verbal Abuse: Gossip, Lying, Accusing Blaming, Condemning Violence (physical, verbal, cyber)
SOFT ADDICTIONS:	RELATIONSHIP ADDICTIONS:
Digital Use: (Time or Content) TV/Phone/Tablet; video games, Social Networking; Cyber-bullying; Online shopping; Gambling, Pornography Exercise Food (See Eating Disorders) Isolating/Sleep Money: Debt/Fraud Religion Shopping Sports Work/Achievement	Abusive Relationships: Includes: Intimidation, Isolation, Domination, Blaming, Humiliation, Withholding, Forcing acts against one's will Approval dependency Attention Seeking Codependence/Rescuing Power/Control

PRAYER FOR HEALING AND RESTORATION

Loving God, Thank You for rescuing me from the dark power of Satan and bringing me into a loving relationship with Your Son, Jesus. I ask for wisdom and understanding from Your Spirit in order to live as a person who honours You. Heal me. Make me new. Make me a strong follower of Christ. Root me deeply in Your love. I place my trust in Your power that can do far more in me than I dare ask or imagine. Amen.



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How To Enjoy New Life With God In Recovery

God created us to have a wonderful life. In love, God planned for us and carefully put us together. God has always been calling out to us to enter into a relationship of love with Him. He doesn't force us but He invites us. Many of us have learned what a painful and confusing wreck our lives become when we try to live independently from God. Today is a good day to begin to live the full and rich life God intended for us. Nothing in our past can keep us from this life, if we want it and choose for it.

The 12-Steps remind us that our lives are unmanageable without the loving care of God and that we can get to know and come to believe that He is a power greater than ourselves. As we turn our will and our lives over to God's care, we find a solid foundation upon which to build a new life.

When we confess our sin and brokenness to God, repent and turn towards God, He gives us new life. When we invite God to come into our lives we find that He is ready and waiting for us. A simple prayer like the following, offered sincerely, establishes this new relationship with God that will last forever.

God, my life is unmanageable without you. You created me to live in relationship with you. There really is no good way to live on my own. Forgive me for not including you. I turn from my independent ways and surrender my will and my life to you. Thank you Jesus for dying on the cross for my sins and making a way for me to have new life and be filled up with Your Holy Spirit. Come into my heart and wash me clean. Teach me to do your will. Transform my way of thinking. Strengthen me to obey You in all I do. Amen

If you prayed that prayer sincerely from your heart, God forgives you and receives you. God makes you His son or daughter. God wants to show you how to live well and give you strength to do that every day. We would love to provide you with some information to support you as you move forward in your journey with God. Please contact us. You'll find our contact information on the front cover of this booklet.

TAKING TIME FOR WONDER

The hustle and bustle of Christmas shopping and related events is in full swing. With all the busyness some of us hardly have time to stop and think and are grateful at the end of a busy day that we can sit down, put our feet up, and rest for a while. On the night Jesus was born shepherds who had been busy caring for their sheep all day long, were finally sitting down to rest. Suddenly angels appeared in the sky, and their ordinary lives were changed forever.

That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:8-12 NLT)

The shepherds took the angels at their word and went to find this baby. We don't know everything they communicated with Mary and Joseph, but we do know that they took time to tell others about the amazing truth that God had come to be with them.

After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished ... The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them. (Luke 2:17-20 NLT)

This Christmas season, God is ready to break through into our ordinary lives with the amazing reality that His Son came to be with us. Just as the shepherds took time to go to Bethlehem to find the baby Jesus, we need to take time to seek the risen Jesus. When we encounter Him, and spend some time in His presence, we will be filled with joy and peace, and our lives will be wonderfully changed forever.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am so grateful that Jesus came to earth to be with us. I want to pause in this moment to remember the helplessness of the Baby Jesus and let the wonder of this season fill my heart once again. Amen

***We pause
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MATURITY

A mature person is productive and effective and, with the knowledge they have gained, they keep on improving their standing in the community while growing closer to God. Many of us have been called immature in the past because any knowledge we may have had did not lead us to do anything that improved our lives, or make a positive contribution to the lives of others. If we are to become mature, we need to faithfully follow God's principles in all our affairs.

I am the vine. You are the branches. If you remain joined to me, and I to you, you will bear a lot of fruit. You can't do anything without me. If you don't remain joined to me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and dries up. (John 15:5-6a NIRV)

If we are to become mature, we need to faithfully follow God's principles in all our affairs.

A gardener will prune the branches of a grapevine so that the vine will not develop more grape clusters than it can feed. Pruning also forces the vine to grow in a shape that is helpful when harvesting. When we ask God to remove our defects of character we are cutting away those things that will hinder the growth of our new nature. As we put God's principles into effect we will grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus. This is the route to maturity and producing much fruit for the Kingdom of God.

You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain joined to me, just as I also remain joined to you. No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain joined to the vine. In the same way, you can't bear fruit unless you remain joined to me. (John 15:3-4 NIRV)

Those of us who have had a spiritual awakening know that we must grow in the knowledge of God's Word and continue to obey what it says. To help us do that we must have conscious contact with God through prayer and meditation on the Scriptures. We must seek God's will for our lives and ask Him for the power to carry it out. This is the way to maturity and God's blessing in our lives.

All these things should describe you more and more. They will make you useful and fruitful as you know our Lord Jesus Christ better. (2 Peter 1:8 NIRV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me to let go of anything that would hinder my growth or impede my desire to know You more. I want to bear much fruit for Your Kingdom. Amen

THE LOVE THAT HOLDS OUR YEAR TOGETHER

As we come to the end of this year, a year filled with both accomplishments and failures, it's time to reflect on the events that brought growth and joy in our journey with God in recovery. Perhaps, as we reflect, we may also have an overwhelming sense of the challenges and struggles that still surround us. However, if we continue to turn our will and our life over to the care of God, we can be confident that He, who began this great work in us, promises to finish it.

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. (Philippians 1:6 NLT)

At the end of each year, we are reminded that the God of time and eternity has for centuries looked on human struggle and growth and on our accomplishments and failures. He has heard people make promises to Him that they did not keep and make choices that He knew would lead them to more pain and heartbreak, but they chose not to listen to His wisdom.

God has planted eternity in each of our hearts. He is ready and willing to supply what we need to have a meaningful and purposeful life in the coming year. We can have hope this New Year's Eve because God purchased eternal life for us through the death and resurrection of Jesus. God promises to pour out His love in our hearts as we put our trust in Him and turn our will and our life over to His care.

Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:5-8 NKJV)

Prayer: Gracious God, Thank You for the love You generously pour out on me. My desire is to persevere through each situation in the coming year by upholding the truth that You are always with me and will guide me as I practice Your principles in all my affairs. Amen

God has planted eternity in each of our hearts. He is ready and willing to supply what we need to have a meaningful and purposeful life in the coming year.

CERTAINTY IN AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Many of us face a new year wondering about the unknown. If we're honest, there's a bit of uncertainty and tension that lies beneath the excitement and anticipation that the New Year brings. What difference does relationship with God bring to our confidence in the events of the year ahead?

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. (John 1:1-5, NLT)

The same power that created the universe is available to help us deal with the events of the year ahead.

The same power that created the universe is available to help us deal with the events of the year ahead. Jesus is the light of the world. He will expose any darkness that tries to manipulate and control our lives. He will cause light to shine upon our unknown future. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus' power has already overcome the power of death and darkness, therefore we have nothing to fear. When we stand firm on the finished work of Jesus, we can accomplish what God has planned for us. God is faithful in His love and care for us. What better way is there to enter the New Year than in the strength of our awesome God?

He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:10-12 NLT)

God's power and wisdom are infinite. In the coming year God will not expect us to create our own solutions for living life to the full. The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the guiding light to show us the way forward.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I welcome and acknowledge the Light of the World in my life. I have nothing to fear in the year that lies ahead because You hold me by Your righteous right hand. Keep me mindful of your unfailing love for me and lead me in the way I should go for I wholeheartedly commit my life to You. Amen

HOLDING ON TO HOPE

This is the first Sunday of Advent. The word Advent means "Coming" and Advent is a season of the church year when many Christians observe a time of preparing for both the celebration of the birth of Christ at Christmas and the return of Christ at the Second Coming. The first Sunday of Advent normally focuses on hope.

We are reassured by people who lived in the past and proved by their lives that, when we focus our hope on God, we will have a wonderful future with Him.

No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame. (Psalm 25:3 NIV)

No matter where we find ourselves in life today, we are encouraged to open our hearts and minds to remember and celebrate that Jesus truly is the reason for the season. We need to invite Him to work in our hearts to get us ready to see Him face to face and to spend eternity with Him in His Father's House.

Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people. He has sent us a mighty Savior from the royal line of his servant David, just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago. (Luke 1:68-70 NLT)

Whether in addiction or recovery we don't have to reflect on our lives for too long before we realize that we are in desperate need of help. The founders of A.A. also recognized that and is the reason the first three steps of the 12-Step Program remind us that: --1) we are powerless; 2) that there is a power greater than ourselves in whom we should believe; and 3) we need to decide to turn our will and our lives over to His care.

We have been rescued from our enemies so we can serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness for as long as we live. (Luke 1:74-75 NLT)

Prayer: Loving God, Thank You that I do not have to live in the shame of my past. I am also thankful for the hope I have today because Jesus Christ came to earth to be my Saviour. Thank You for rescuing me from my enemies so I can serve you without fear, in holiness and righteousness, for as long as I live. Amen

No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame.

***Psalm 25:3
NIV***

JUST FOR TODAY – I Will Pray Blessing

Just for today I will be agreeable. I will not criticize, not find fault, and not try to improve or control anybody except myself. I will pray blessing on one person with whom I struggle to relate.

We may find it easy to bless some people but today we are asked to be agreeable and bless someone with whom we struggle to relate. How do we do that? If we're honest most of us would like to avoid those with whom we struggle to relate. How and where do we find the desire and willingness to bless them?

Just for today I will pray blessing on one person with whom I struggle to relate.

Generally, our desire is that the person who did us harm would acknowledge what they did to us and be sorry for what happened. We may be waiting for them to make the first move. To bless someone with whom we struggle to relate might mean reflecting on our part in whatever went wrong and taking responsibility for it. Making amends for our part may also be how we bless that person. Depending on the incident, sometimes the best way to bless someone we are having a problem with is to forgive them and let go of the issue. Life is too short to hold onto every single wrong word or bad attitude we have experienced or are personally responsible for.

The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. (Proverb 11:25, Luke 6:28 NLT)

We are not familiar with what is happening in another person's life. When we are upset about what someone said or did, perhaps we should first seek to bless that person with kind words so they might be encouraged. Just offering a listening ear or a helping hand may lessen the weight of pressure a person is under. Encouragement is never wasted. Even if a person's efforts fall short of our standard, giving thanks for a work they have done may provide a beautiful bridge to healing.

Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. (Gal. 6:2 NLT)

Finally, it is important to be generous without keeping score of "who owes who" and "whose turn it is." If a score were kept on how many times God has blessed us and how many times we have given thanks, who would win?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, As You have unconditionally loved and blessed me, help me to be kind and to bless any person with whom I struggle to relate. Amen

WAITING FOR THE NEW YEAR

How long are we prepared to do the daily ordinary things we need to do while we wait for God to bring about the plans He has prepared in advance for us to do?

Anna, a prophetess, was also there in the Temple that day. She was the daughter of Phanuel, of the Jewish tribe of Asher, and was very old, for she had been a widow for eighty-four years following seven years of marriage. She never left the Temple but stayed there night and day, worshiping God by praying and often fasting. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she also began thanking God and telling everyone in Jerusalem who had been awaiting the coming of the Savior that the Messiah had finally arrived. (Luke 2:36-38 NASB)

What must it have been like for Anna who for 60+ years waited to see the fulfillment of God's plans regarding the Messiah? Anna was likely in her teens when she married. She was widowed after only 7 years of marriage and then she entered the Temple, probably in her early twenties. From then until she was 84 she had faithfully worshipped God, fasted and prayed, and served at the Temple. Before seeing the child Jesus, Anna had waited expectantly each day for 60+ years doing ordinary daily tasks. She truly was a patient committed believer in the plan of God.

We don't know how long you or I need to wait for the fulfillment of God's promises in our lives. What we do know is that God's plans are good, and God's timing is perfect. God truly has a purpose in each event of our lives. God is in control.

"He is the God who made the world. He also made everything in it. From one man he made all the people of the world. Now they live all over the earth. He decided exactly when they should live. And he decided exactly where they should live. God did this so that people would seek him. (Acts 17:24a, 26-27a NIRV)

Prayer: Loving God, as I come to the end of this year and move into the next, I set myself wholeheartedly to do those tasks You have given me to do and will trust You to fulfill Your plan for my future in Your perfect timing. Amen

God's plans are good, and God's timing is perfect.

GOD RESPONDS TO MY PRAYERS

Most people who are in recovery want to learn from the experience, strength, and hope of others. When it comes to learning how to pray, one hero we might look to is a prophet in the Bible named Daniel. Daniel had a practice of praying three times a day. Even when he knew continuing to pray might cost him his life, he went to his house and, as was his custom, opened his windows and prayed, not caring who saw him. It did cost him an overnight trip to the lions' den, but God protected him from the lions and Daniel was later raised to a place of prominence in the government.

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. (Daniel 6:10 NIV)

**God heard
Daniel and
found a way
to
communicate
back to him
in a way he
could
understand.**

Daniel prayed for numerous things and often confessed His own sins and the sins of his nation. He prayed beyond his own needs. He asked God to give him wisdom and understanding. He needed guidance and God gave it.

While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the Lord my God for his holy hill—while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, ... came to me ...He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. (Daniel 9:20-23a NIV)

While you and I may not see an angel or hear words as directly as Daniel did, his example of constant prayer is what Step 11 encourages us to do – seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God. Daniel's custom of confessing his sins regularly shows us the power of a continuing Step 10 – promptly admitting our wrongs. What is comforting in the above Scripture quotation is the clear affirmation that God heard Daniel and found a way to communicate to him in a way he could understand. God gives answers – sometimes in a way and time that is different from what we would prefer – but always in a way that perfects God's plan for us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am grateful that You listen to the prayers I offer up to You. Help me to be honest as I unburden my heart to You, knowing that You hear my prayers and will respond to me according to Your perfect will and timing. Amen

CHOOSING WELL EVERY TIME

Many people who choose for life with God in recovery think they can live any way they want as long as they attend meetings, complete an honest set of steps, pray on occasion, and don't pick up. They believe these activities put them in right standing with God regardless of the fact they continue to behave in ways they know are disobeying the word of God.

The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil. Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. (1 Peter 3:12, Matthew 7:21 NLT)

Too often we choose to do whatever we feel like doing whenever we feel like doing it. If our desire is to have a relationship with God in recovery, we cannot behave in this way. A person who chooses to live for God will follow God's principles in every area of their life, not just when coping with drinking or drugging or any other destructive habit they are seeking to change.

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. (Isaiah 55:6-7 NIV)

When we are fully surrendered to God we will choose to obey Him because we are committed to doing what God says is right, regardless of our feelings. Obeying God will result in the positive change we are seeking. It may not be instant change but, as we live one day at a time surrendered to God, our relationship with Him and others will prosper and grow and life will take on new meaning.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I surrender every area of my life to You. Help me to know and follow Your principles in every choice I need to make and to love and respect each person with whom I have contact. Amen

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THE REASON FOR OUR BIRTH AND OUR RECOVERY

I wonder what people said on the day that we were born. With very few exceptions there is great joy and great wonder at the appearance of a new little baby full of life with 5 little fingers and 5 little toes and all the little wrinkles and miniature markings. Some folks have names picked out in advance for their baby and others wait, knowing that the personality of that little one will somehow point to the right name. We have hopes and dreams for this new little life.

Regardless of the twists and turns and the ups and the downs of our life since the day of our birth, God's design for us remains constant. He has a perfect plan for us and, when we come into recovery, is ready and willing to bring it about whether we are 18 or 81.

***We grow in
our life with
God in
recovery as
we share
the message
of how God
has changed
our lives.***

John the Baptist was born to be used by God to get people ready for the coming of Jesus to earth. John's message was one of repentance and preparation for the way of the Lord. As we share the story of our sobriety we are encouraged to look to the reason God gave us life in the beginning and is giving us recovery today. Perhaps John the Baptist's message may also be ours to share with others.

"And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins. Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness

and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace." (Luke 1:76-79 NLT)

This Christmas season, and in the coming year, we will grow in our lives with God in recovery as we share the message of how God has changed us. We have found forgiveness, experienced God's tender mercy, and have been guided to the pathway of peace. As we continue our journey we can share our story of God's transforming power and goodness to us, and by doing so, help others to open their hearts to His power of redemption.

Prayer: Loving God. Thank You for making me alive in You. I give You permission to fulfill Your purpose for my life. Live in me that I may have life through You. Help me to share the message of Your forgiveness and healing with those I meet on my journey. Amen

GETTING HELP AND GIVING THANKS

Those of us who have acted on the saying "God could and would, if He were sought" have witnessed the blessing of God in our lives. In our desperation we sought God about our powerlessness over what was going on and are thankful for His counsel, compassion, and love, as He showed us how to live in freedom from the bondage to our addiction. Through faith in Jesus, God received us into His family and now we are thankful to be called sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.

I will praise God's name by singing to him. I will bring him glory by giving him thanks. That will please the Lord more than offering him an ox. It will please him more than offering him a bull with its horns and hooves. Poor people will see it and be glad. The hearts of those who worship God will be strengthened. The Lord hears those who are in need. He doesn't forget his people in prison. Let heaven and earth praise him. Let the oceans and everything that moves in them praise him. (Psalm 69:30-34 NIRV)

God cared so deeply about the state of the souls of the people He created that He sent Jesus into the world to reconcile us to Himself. God is not willing that any person should perish but that all would come and receive the gift of life with Him forevermore. It is most comforting to know that costly sacrifices are not required to please God. It's our thankfulness that brings Him glory. Even the least of us can give thanks to God knowing that it delights His heart.

In every trouble we encounter we are told to call on God and praise him for His help when the situation is resolved. Our aim should be to walk with God in righteousness and true holiness. If, for whatever reason, we fail to keep His ways, He invites us to humbly come before Him and ask for His mercy and forgiveness. When we do, He will be faithful to forgive and restore us. God is on our side and always deals graciously with us. Therefore, as His sons and daughters who have breath, let us unceasingly praise the Lord. He is good, and His love endures forever.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I give You praise and thanks that when I am in trouble and call on You, You answer me and show Yourself strong on my behalf. Amen

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ORDINARY LIVES NO MORE

After all the hype and preparation for Christmas we now get back to quieter days before the New Year celebration. The shepherds who were visited by angels were back on the hillsides looking after their sheep and yet they would never be the same again because they had looked on Jesus, the newborn baby the angels had told them about. Mary and Joseph likely wore the same clothes, had the same hair styles, and were just as poor the day after Jesus was born as the day before and yet they too were dramatically changed by the birth of the child Mary brought into the world. How were we impacted by the celebration of the birth of the prophesied Saviour?

Perhaps today is a day to assess our everyday lives and seek God to give us direction and purpose for the year ahead.

You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

Psalms 139:16 NLT

God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory. (Romans 8:29-30 NLT)

We are ordinary people but when we encounter God we become those who are dramatically changed forever. The guilt and shame of our past sin is removed and we are given right standing with God. We have been set free from the power of Satan and can stand firm in the dignity, honour, and acceptance of God who declares us whole persons in Christ Jesus.

You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. (Psalms 139:16 NLT)

While we don't yet know the full story of our lives any more than the shepherds and Mary and Joseph knew theirs, God knows what is coming and He is preparing us by working deep within our souls to give us everything we need, so our ordinary lives shine brightly in a way that attracts others to this same wonderful relationship with God through Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You know every day of my life, past, present and future. As ordinary as it may seem to me or others, help me to trust that You are working in me to do something that is wonderful that will have a lasting impact for good. Amen

GOD IS FOR US

The twelfth promise of AA reads: "*We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.*" The Twelfth Step begins with, "*Having had a spiritual awakening ...*" These are indicators that the God we did not know has been there for us all along and has been willing to act on our behalf. Through the surrender of our will and life into His care, God has effectively and powerfully acted on our behalf and has opened our eyes to see His commitment to do for us what we could not do for ourselves.

If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31b NIV)

Going forward we can expect more of the same because God will work for good in everything that has gone on in our lives, including the events that broke us down and the destructive actions we took in response to that.

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28 NIV)

All sorts of things, and perhaps even people, will seek to have power over us in the future. We have come through a few years of coping with the effects of a deadly virus and there is still much uncertainty looming on the horizon. The required social isolation was not good for us who rely on meetings for support. However, as we trust in God, we are promised that He will get us through, one day at a time, one moment at a time. Absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God that Jesus has revealed.

No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:39 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am so grateful that You are for me and not against me, and that I am now able to recognize the many things You have done on my behalf even before I was willing to submit to Your ways. Going forward, please help me to trust Your love and faithfulness through every trial that may lie ahead. Amen

We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

12th Promise of AA

PURSUING WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

Many of us choose to rely on our own understanding of how life works and what is best for us. We are reluctant to change our ways in favour of God's ways even though we are living proof that our own ways do not work. It is a wise person who takes time to pursue the wisdom and knowledge of God as given in the Bible.

Foolish people don't want to understand. They take delight in saying only what they think. (Proverbs 18:2 NIRV)

It is a wise person who takes time to pursue the wisdom and knowledge of God as given in the Bible.

When we are a believer in Jesus we walk in the light and are renewed daily by the Spirit of God. We try to leave behind those things that would violate God's laws. To know what violates God's laws, we need to meditate on His word so we can learn what His principles are. As we improve our conscious contact with Him, the God who sought us and brought us from darkness to light will increase our knowledge of His ways.

Wise men and women are always learning, always listening for fresh insights. Words satisfy the mind as much as fruit does the stomach; good talk is as gratifying as a good harvest. (Proverbs 18:15, 20 MSG)

Listening to knowledgeable people who have walked the recovery path before us may save us from many pitfalls. From experience, they have learned about those things that cause addicts to stumble and fall. They know how vulnerable we are when we fondly look back on our old ways and tend to forget the pain and heartache. God has promised to give us everything we need to live a Godly life. When our former way of thinking is drawing us back towards the darkness, we need to persevere in resisting the lies of the evil one and strengthen ourselves in the Lord who will give us everything we need to live a Godly life.

Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit—you choose. Friends come and friends go, but a true friend sticks by you like family. (Proverbs 18:21, 24 MSG)

The word of God is life-giving, and it is the wise person who heeds correction and gains understanding.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Please give me a hunger and thirst for the knowledge of Your Word and a firm desire to practice what I learn in all my affairs. Amen

JESUS IS BORN FOR US

Jesus is born – born for us. The God who created heaven and earth put on flesh and was born in humble circumstances so we could experience love and find hope for a relationship with God that lasts forever.

None of the activities of this day can even come close to the awe and wonder of what took place on that holy night more than 2000 years ago, and all that it offers to us today. Jesus is the best gift, the gift that keeps on giving!!

The virgin will be pregnant and will give birth to a son. They will name him Immanuel. (Immanuel means God with us.) Today your Savior was born in David's town. He is the Messiah, the Lord. (Matthew 1:23 ERV, Luke 2:11 ERV)

What lavish love God has for all of humanity and for each of us, that He would send His only Son to be with us. What depth of willingness Jesus showed in voluntarily laying down all the honour and worship of heaven to be born as a vulnerable baby in the care of displaced parents.

How wonderful that God first announced Jesus' birth to the lowest of the low in the culture – the shepherds – and gave them the wonderful task of joyfully sharing the news with others in their community.

Jesus was born, not in a palace but in an animal shelter. He was wrapped in rags and rested in a feeding trough – a manger. God understands our vulnerability, our simple surroundings, our extraordinary life circumstances, and chooses to enter in and share them with us in a way that fills our hearts and lives with awe and wonder. God is with us.

May our knowledge of the birth of Jesus fill us once again with faith, with renewed purpose, and encourage us to carry the message of God's love and salvation to everyone we meet.

Prayer: Loving God, I meditate again on Your amazing love for me that brought You to earth on that first Christmas. I pray to leave behind anything and everything that would distract me from receiving and living the gift of life You have given me. Thank You for the greatest gift humanity has ever received – a gift for each of us – to transform our hearts and lives and fill us with hope. I choose to receive this gift today with great gratitude. Amen

Today your Savior was born in David's town. He is the Messiah, the Lord

Luke 2:11 ERV

ENDURING LOVE

The very heart of God is enduring love, and nothing will ever change that. This is the love that brought God, as the baby Jesus, to our planet more than 2000 years ago. God's love endures forever and when we give our will and life over to God's care, His extravagant love for us will endure through all eternity. We are encouraged in our relationship with God to have faith, hope, and love but the greatest of these qualities is love.

The three most important things to have are faith, hope and love. But the greatest of them is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13 NIRV)

Why is love so important? Love gives us the strength to endure through every circumstance of life. We have faith in Jesus' redeeming work on our behalf and believe we have been cleansed from all our sin. His unfailing love for us helps us receive healing and restoration from the hurts we have sustained in the past. To move forward in our life in recovery, we need to be strong and embrace God's love as He supports us in the many trials that will come our way. When we see how God works in our lives, we will love Him for all that He does and will continue to do for us.

The very heart of God is enduring love, and nothing will ever change that.

Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God's Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we've embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God. (1 John 4:15-16 MSG)

When we witness the work of God in our lives it inspires us with hope. The perfect love of God casts out all fear of the future for we know that, despite any failings we may have, His love is strong enough to carry us through because it endures forever. Even when we are unfaithful, God remains faithful. When we confess our sin, God cleanses us from all things that would hinder our relationship with Him.

There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love. (1 John 4:18 MSG)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am so thankful that Your love endures forever. Help me to leave fear behind so I can be fully transformed by Your love. My desire is to have hope and strength to persevere through whatever may come my way in the future. Amen

FORGIVENESS RECEIVED

Forgiveness happens when a person willingly forgives the wrongs that have been committed against them by another. When we accept Jesus' death on the cross as payment for our sins, we become children of God and God generously forgives us for the many sins and wrongs we have committed. As God's children, He now asks us to forgive the sins of those who have committed offences against us.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (Matthew 6:12 NIV)

God is love and all God's actions are filled with love. We are truly alive when we purposefully live in God and God lives in us. Anything we think, or say, or do, or even desire to do, that is not filled with love, is something that grieves the heart of God. God loves those who have harmed us in the same way He loves us. God created us to live in a loving, caring relationship with Him and with others. When we continue to refuse to forgive others and are not interested in knowing God's plan for our life, the Bible describes our actions as sins against God for which we need forgiveness.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. (Psalm 51:4 NIV)

Are we willing to turn away from holding grudges and unforgiveness towards those who have harmed us? Are we willing to trust God to be the Judge of the person who sinned against us?

When we truly receive God's forgiveness and acceptance, gratitude and joy will fill our hearts, and forgiving others is something we will do out of thankfulness to Jesus for paying the penalty for our sin.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I ask for Your forgiveness for having an unforgiving heart towards those who have harmed me. Please heal me and give me the desire and the strength I need to forgive others as You have forgiven me. Amen

When we truly receive God's forgiveness and acceptance, gratitude and joy will fill our hearts, and forgiving others is something we will do out of thankfulness to Jesus for paying the penalty for our sin.

CHRISTMAS COMFORT AND PEACE

We are fast approaching the annual celebration of the birth of Jesus, the One God sent to save us and give us peace. These pre-Christmas days may be difficult for many of us as the cost-of-living soars and uphill inflation seems to be never-ending. For a variety of reasons many of us are anxious about our ability to buy gifts or to be with family over the holidays. Our comfort level is challenged as negative thoughts come and go in our minds. Instead of the thought of Christmas bringing us joy we find our hearts are uneasy. Countless thoughts have filled our minds in the past days or weeks, but the significance of Jesus' birth is the greatest life-changing event that ever remains at the heart of Christmas.

God was not lost in the challenges of that first Christmas and He is not lost in the challenges that we face.

GOD made my life complete when I placed all the pieces before him. When I got my act together, he gave me a fresh start. Now I'm alert to GOD's ways; I don't take God for granted. Every day I review the ways he works; I try not to miss a trick. I feel put back together, and I'm watching my step. GOD rewrote the text of my life when I opened the book of my heart to his eyes. (Psalm 18:20-24 MSG)

For Mary and Joseph that first Christmas contained many challenges and anxious moments as they made their way to Bethlehem in the late stages of Mary's pregnancy. After months of enduring the probable whispers and gossip in Nazareth about Mary being pregnant before she and Joseph were married, a governmental census required them to travel to Bethlehem, their town of birth. On arrival Mary went into labour and Joseph struggled to find a place for her to give birth in the overcrowded town. Their comfort level was likely as low as it could get.

However, God was not lost in the challenges of that first Christmas and He is not lost in the challenges that we face. Our part is to give God all the pieces of whatever is going on and trust Him to work them together for our good. God will bring us comfort and will fill us with peace for each event we struggle with.

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all. (2 Thessalonians 3:16 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, As I prepare for Christmas I ask that You fill my heart with love so that, together with others, I can have peace and celebrate Christmas well. Amen

JOY AND ANTICIPATION

Many children will go to bed tonight with the thought "One more sleep until Santa Claus comes." They have joy and anticipation of what the next few days will bring.

The celebration of the birth of Christ is such a profound and transformative event that for centuries people around the world have marked this event with worship and gratitude. God took on human flesh. Human and divine were brought together in a vulnerable infant born in humble surroundings in the little town of Bethlehem. The Saviour of the world was born.

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6 NLT)

The birth of Jesus on that quiet winter night brought so much more to us than any pile of presents that a child will waken up to on Christmas morning. God has extended forgiveness, love, and acceptance to each of us regardless of what we have done, or how many people we have hurt, or how many times we have failed.

God has chosen to save us from our past, from our sin and brokenness and pain, provided we receive the gift He has made available to us – the life of Jesus Christ. Will we receive this gift and put our faith and trust in Jesus as simply and enthusiastically as a child accepting and opening a present on Christmas morning?

It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him. (Hebrews 11:6 NLT)

Jesus is the gift that lights our path so we can walk together with others in righteousness, compassion, and the love of God. What a treasured gift to joyfully receive today.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for the amazing gift of Jesus who came into this world that I might be made whole. He was without sin but died to pay the penalty for my sin. With great gratitude I put my faith in the finished work of Your beloved Son Jesus and turn my will and life over to Your care. Amen

This is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 NLT

DECEMBER 22, 2023

CHRISTMAS – THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR

The celebration of Christmas encourages us to give gifts to those we care about. Is this because God cared about us and gave us the greatest gift of all? On that first Christmas, angels came from heaven to earth and with great joy proclaimed Jesus' birth to shepherds who were guarding sheep in nearby fields.

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!" (Luke 2:9-11 NLT)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23 NLT

The birth of Jesus was such a great event in Heaven that angels came to earth singing and celebrating as they told shepherds in the hills around Bethlehem that they were bringing ***"good news that will bring great joy to all people."*** The angel, who appeared among the shepherds, was surrounded in the radiance of the Lord's glory and these lowly shepherds were terrified by what they were both seeing and hearing. These shepherds were most likely low on the social order in their society, but they were first on God's list to be included in the celebration of angelic beings bearing the good news of the birth of the baby Jesus. A song that is sung during this season tells us that Christmas is "the most wonderful time of the year" and includes the words "There'll be tales of the glories of the Christmases long, long ago."

They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened. The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them. (Luke 2:16-17a, 20 NLT)

If you are feeling low on the invite list to Christmas festivities, remember God's invitation to you is to celebrate the birth of Jesus with those who love Him.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for reminding me that You care about me and those who truly keep Christmas by celebrating the birth of our Saviour. Amen

DEALING WITH STRESS – PLAN AND PRAY

Stress comes with daily living. Problems show up without notice. We need to have a plan in place to handle the unexpected events and stress that life brings.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8 NIV)

God is aware of all our circumstances. There is nothing that is a surprise to Him. When we pray and seek His input, God is available and willing to give us wisdom in each situation we encounter.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV)

We have an enemy of our soul who lurks around seeking someone to destroy. Satan's desire is to drive us to breaking point as he attempts to deceive us into thinking we can, or must, handle the stress of our problems with our own limited capabilities. As we obsess on troubling events and our helplessness to handle them, the evil one will cause us to be fearful and that will weaken our trust in God. The key to handling stress is to seek God's help at the initial stage of any problem. Knowing and trusting in God's unchanging Word is an essential component of a stress reducing plan. We gain strength as we allow God to stabilize our emotions with His peace, infuse our hearts with His joy, and provide us with His wisdom.

We gain strength as we allow God to stabilize our emotions with His peace, infuse our hearts with His joy, and provide us with His wisdom.

A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. (Ephesians 6:10-11 NLT)

The Bible is a toolbox and contains various tools for handling stressful situations. Let's not neglect to find and use these tools in every situation we encounter.

Prayer: Loving God, Forgive me for the times I have allowed a stressful situation to devastate me. Help me to remember that You could and would help if You were sought. Amen

GOD'S WILL REVEALED

Meditating on God's word in the Bible and prayer to our Heavenly Father are positive daily habits that help us rebuild our lives. In our daily devotions, we are not seeking to learn facts about God but rather to come to Him and get to know His character and His ways. As our relationship with God develops we discover that we have a loving friend who knew us before we were born, knows all about us, and cares deeply for us.

There are "friends" who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24 NLT)

Underneath all these "spiritual exercises" is God's desire to affirm the unfailing love He has for each one of us.

God created us with a desire for intimate sharing, understanding, trusting, and being trusted. God wants to fulfill these longings in us, first through relationship with Him and then through relationship with others. God wants to share with us, heart to heart, about the things that matter to Him.

The LORD confides in those who fear Him; He makes His covenant known to them. (Psalm 25:14 NIV)

The prayer and meditation to which Step 11 invites us is more than just trying to figure out what God's plans are for us. Reading Scripture and meditating on it reveal to us the nature of God and all the promises He has made to us. Underneath all these spiritual exercises is God's desire to affirm the unfailing love He has for each one of us.

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. (Jude 20-21 NIV)

Improving our conscious contact with God will strengthen our faith as we seek to do His will in all our ways.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your unfailing love for me. I ask for strength to live as a person who honours You in all my ways. Draw me near to You that I might gain knowledge of those things that are close to Your heart. Amen

LONGING FOR LIGHT

For those of us who live in the northern hemisphere this is both the shortest day and the longest night of the year. We, at some point soon, will be longing for more light and less darkness. It will surely come, but not for a while.

We often hear stories from a person who will say they "hit bottom" and that is a dark moment for sure. However, it is also a moment of hope, because in desperation when we were at the bottom, we somehow heard God whisper to our hearts and shine a light into the deep darkness of our soul which resulted in us seeking help.

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. (Isaiah 9:2 NLT)

God continued to call out to us in our dark and lonely space until we chose to respond to his kind offer of help and healing. This is the true God that we have come to know and put our trust in – the God who never gave up on us despite knowing every horrid detail of our destructive lifestyle.

May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. (2 Peter 1:2-3a, 4b NLT)

The message of Christmas and of our recovery is that we are powerless to change ourselves, and our lives are unmanageable. We need someone to give us a new set of rules – a new ruler so to speak – over our thoughts and actions. God generously sent Jesus to be that for us. This Christmas, the best gift we can receive is Jesus. When invited, Jesus will come to live in our hearts and give us everything we need to live a Godly life. Through Jesus we escape the corruption caused by our human desires.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, come into my heart and take control of my life. I cannot manage life on my own. I am powerless to do so. Thank You for coming into the world as a helpless baby so that I could become a participant in the divine nature of God. Amen

In desperation when we were at the bottom, we somehow heard God whisper to our hearts and shine a light into the deep darkness of our soul which resulted in us seeking help.

AVAILABLE

What came first, the chicken or the egg? When we called out to God in our powerlessness, did we suddenly show up on His “locating system” or was He already waiting for us to call so He could help us? From before we were conceived in our mother’s womb God knew us and was reaching out and available to help us.

I reached out day after day to a people who turned their backs on me, People who make wrong turns, who insist on doing things their own way. (Isaiah 65:2 MSG)

God knew all about the virgin Mary before she knew that she had found favour with Him. It was quite a surprise to Mary to be visited by an angel and told that she was to conceive a child by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that this was God’s plan for her life. Mary was available to God to follow the direction He had for her life, even in these unexplainable circumstances. Are we available to God to follow the direction He has for our lives, even if the timing is inconvenient?

***From before
we were
conceived in
our mother’s
womb God
knew us and
was reaching
out and
available to
help us.***

..the angel assured her, “Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus. And Mary said, Yes, I see it all now: I’m the Lord’s maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say. (Luke 1:30-31, 38 MSG)

To know what God’s will is for our lives, we need to be available to Him through prayer and meditation on His Word. As we build our relationship with God, He will show us His plan for our life and, as we become willing to do what He says, He will give us the will and the desire to fulfill what He has planned.

Because we know that this extraordinary day is just ahead, we pray for you all the time—pray that our God will make you fit for what he’s called you to be, pray that he’ll fill your good ideas and acts of faith with his own energy so that it all amounts to something. (2 Thessalonians 1:11 MSG)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, My desire is to know Your will for my life and to be willing and available to do whatever You say. Please help me! Amen

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

As kids many of us sang an action song with the words, “The head bone connected to the neck bone, the neck bone connected to the shoulder bone” and on and on down the bones to the toes. With each bone named, kids would touch that area. It was lots of fun. Our bodies are a wonderful metaphor of the connection and support God wants us to have in community. We all need a support system, and to be part of a group that supports one another.

But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. (1 Corinthians 12:18-20 NIV)

Each body part has a specific function. An eye sees and a hand holds. An ear can’t smell, and a nose can’t hear. We each need input from one another so that together we make a functioning whole. Our little toe is not a big part of the body but stub that little toe and the whole body adjusts to cover for the pain it is feeling. We cannot see the enzyme called magnesium but if we don’t have enough of it in our bodies many things suddenly don’t work the way they should.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NIV)

We each have different personalities and family backgrounds. We choose sponsors and create personal networks with people we can communicate with. Support for one another is the reason we gather in meetings and share our stories. Our input is required just as much as the next person’s input. Each person has different skills and so it is only together that we support one another and provide for a particular need. The experience of old timers is as necessary as the input from those who just cleaned up in the past 24 hours.

None of it works well without “the head” who is Jesus. We also need the Word of God and the grace of God. We need to stand firm on the truth of God’s Word which will help us filter out every other thought or sound that seeks to bring us down.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to know You more and stay connected to You so I can uphold Your Word and be an effective link to help others in my community. Amen

***We all need
a support
system, and
to be part
of a group
that
supports
one
another.***

LIVING SOBER

We all know that staying sober starts with not picking up a drink or our drug of choice, or returning to whatever our destructive habit was. However, maintaining a sober life has more to do with listening to God's direction and aligning our thoughts and behaviour with His will. In this way we will live beyond our defects of character and learn to grow in positive character qualities which will enhance our life and relationships.

We are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God. (Titus 2:12 NLT)

While our “DOC” whether alcohol or something else, is “cunning, baffling, and powerful,” the enemy of our soul is not our obsession to use it. God’s word is very clear that there is a battle going on for our very lives. The devil wants to destroy us person by person. God wants to advance His amazing plans for our life. Whose influence will we choose today?

To live sober is to always give God the last word in any set of circumstances we are facing.

Keep a cool head. Stay alert. The Devil is poised to pounce, and would like nothing better than to catch you napping. Keep your guard up. You’re not the only ones plunged into these hard times. It’s the same with Christians all over the world. So keep a firm grip on the faith. The suffering won’t last forever. It won’t be long

before this generous God who has great plans for us in Christ — eternal and glorious plans they are!—will have you put together and on your feet for good. He gets the last word; yes, he does. (1 Peter 5:8-11 MSG)

To live a truly sober life is to be both vigilant and relaxed at the same time. How do we do that? We walk carefully – alert and trusting. We watch out for the attacks of the evil one and bring ourselves back again and again to the truth that God is working out His amazing plan for our life. God will never fail to accomplish the good work He has begun in us.

Daily circumstances may challenge our emotions and attitudes and even trigger thoughts of picking up. However, the suffering will not last forever. To live sober is to faithfully obey God’s Word in any temptation we may be facing.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I want to live sober today. Just for today help me keep my guard up and remember that this suffering will not last forever. I choose to obey Your Word for You have promised to have the last word on my behalf. Amen

IT’S TIME TO CELEBRATE

In the Bible we read of many festivals that the people of Israel celebrated because God had intervened on their behalf. As Christians we also have festivals that we celebrate because God has intervened on our behalf. Christmas is a celebration of Jesus coming to earth in human form so that He could legally pay the debt for mankind’s sin. At Easter we celebrate Jesus’ death for our sins and His resurrection. Those who believe in Jesus’ finished work here on earth are assured of acceptance by God and are promised life with Him forevermore.

Here is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only Son into the world. He sent him so we could receive life through him. Here is what love is. It is not that we loved God. It is that he loved us and sent his Son to give his life to pay for our sins. (1 John 4:9-10 NIRV)

When we gather in recovery meetings and receive tokens indicating our time in sobriety, we are also celebrating how God intervened on our behalf and brought us out of the darkness of our unmanageable lives. God did this because we were utterly powerless to change ourselves.

When we were utterly helpless, with no way of escape, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners who had no use for him. (Romans 5:6 TLB)

The Bible tells us to celebrate that God is good and that His love endures forever. Jesus said He did not come to judge the world but to save it. However, Jesus also said that those who reject Him will be judged on the “Day of Judgment”, because they refused to accept the truth of God’s word. So, through prayer and meditation each day, let’s improve our conscious contact with God and choose to believe whatever He reveals to us through His Word.

Let’s get to know and celebrate the God who is faithful to all His promises and loves each of us with unfailing love.

But all who reject me and my message will be judged at the Day of Judgment by the truths I have spoken. (John 12:48 TLB)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Please help me to understand Your Word and to celebrate what You have done, and will do for me, as I practice Your principles in all my affairs. Amen

Let’s get to know and celebrate the God who is faithful to all His promises and loves each of us with unfailing love.

MISSING THE MEANING

Christmas decorations, inside and outside malls, stores, and homes, have been put up to celebrate the Christmas season. Malls often prepare a winter wonderland with a special "North Pole" room where Santa can greet his friends. In some places a nativity scene featuring figures of Mary and Joseph, some shepherds, and the baby Jesus is displayed. Today, perhaps we should pause and reflect on the fact that the birth of Jesus is the true reason for the season.

Let's fill this time of the year with direction and meaning as we include Jesus in our thoughts and activities today, and every day of the Christmas season.

The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:9-12 NLT)

Many people, and perhaps we ourselves, are so pre-occupied with the activities about Christmas that we ignore Jesus. Some may be exhausted by the demands of the season and others may struggle with loneliness. Some of us may be preoccupied with shame and guilt about being in a position in life where we are distant from our families or perhaps financially unable to provide gifts for our children, or for various other reasons.

Today is a wonderful opportunity to intentionally leave behind the busyness of the season and spend time together with God. Jesus is the reason for the season. Let's invite His presence into our lives. Let's simplify the things that need doing. Let's shift from exhausting activity to the joy of being receivers of God's generous love. Let's

fill this time of the year with direction and meaning as we include Jesus in our thoughts and activities today and every day of the Christmas season.

In those days and at that time I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. (Jeremiah 33:15 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for the gift of Jesus to the world. Help me to stop fretting about things that are out of my control and celebrate Jesus, for He is truly Immanuel, God with us. Amen

IS THE BIBLE RELEVANT TO OUR LIVES TODAY?

Many of us have struggled to believe the Word of God as written in the Bible. Perhaps we thought the Bible was an ancient book and not relevant to our lives today. Each year there are people around the world who celebrate events that were written in the Bible hundreds of years before they happened, and many events written there are still to come.

At least 700 years before the birth of Jesus took place the Bible records a prophesy about a coming King who would be born in the small town of Bethlehem in Judea. This prophesy was made long before Rome became a major power in the known world.

O Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are but a small Judean village, yet you will be the birthplace of my King who is alive from everlasting ages past! (Micah 5:2 TLB)

Caesar Augustus, a Roman Emperor, decided that a census should be taken throughout the occupied nations. Each person was required to return to their city of birth for registration. Mary and Joseph were required to travel from Galilee to Bethlehem to be registered.

And because Joseph was a member of the royal line, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, King David's ancient home—journeying there from the Galilean village of Nazareth. (Luke 2:3 TLB)

The prophet Micah did not know that a Roman census would be required to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and yet he wrote about the event as God directed him hundreds of years before it happened.

Do we believe the Bible when it tells us of plans God has for us? We can't see into the future, but God knows the beginning and the end of all things, and He is faithful to perform what He says.

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11 TLB)

Prayer: Dear God, I need help and guidance to live a purposeful life. Please help me to find and follow Your principles as recorded in the Bible, and please help me put them into effect as You reveal the good plans that You have for my life. Amen

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

***Psalm
119:105 NLT***

GOD IS LISTENING

How are we expected to know what is right? How do we know what is wrong? What is helpful? What is harmful? How can we be sure that we are making the right choices? God knew we would need help in these areas and gave us moral laws that instruct us how to live a purposeful, satisfying life. The Bible tells us that God has a plan for each person's life and, if we seek Him, He will give us the wisdom we need to make wise choices in each step of our journey.

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Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. (Proverbs 3:5-6 MSG)

One of the practices we are encouraged to maintain in recovery is taking daily inventory with God. This practice has us reflect on the happenings of each day. We inventory what we have done right. We inventory what we have done wrong. We also look at those events which we know have the potential to draw us back into the darkness, resentment, and shame that we have been journeying away from. The purpose of a daily inventory is to expose and, if necessary, deal with any lingering shortcomings that might cause us or someone else to stumble.

See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Hebrews 12:15 NIV)

As we review the events of today, let's be conscious that God's presence was with us wherever we went. Let's ask Him to help us accept those things we cannot change, for the courage to change those things we can, and for the wisdom to know the difference.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am thankful that You are with me wherever I go and, if I seek Your guidance, You will keep me on track in my recovery. My desire is to bring glory to Your name in all I say and do. Please shelter me and be my constant guide to the pathway of peace. Amen

THE JOY OF NEGATIVE MEMORIES TRANSFORMED

As we prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ's birth, some of us may have negative memories and regrets about past Christmases. Dysfunctional families, addiction, poverty, and loneliness may have been part of our history. However, regardless of the many disappointments we may have experienced, God knows and cares about us and where we are at today.

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born the prophet Isaiah prophesied, ***"The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine."*** (Isaiah 9:2 NLT) We are the people on whom the light is now shining and for whom this great prophecy has been fulfilled.

At times in our past, life may have been unmanageable, and we were powerless to do anything about it. We felt unnoticed by family members, teachers, and others, and resolved in our hearts that no one understood or even cared about us. The truth is that God sees, God understands, and God cares about us. Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, in His humanity entered our human experience and therefore can identify with our pain. Jesus is known as Immanuel which means, God with us.

This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. (John 3:16-18 MSG)

God's invitation to us today is to turn our bad memories and regrets over to His care and allow Him to heal our hearts. As we give God our past hurts we will receive from Him the purposeful future He has planned for us. What a great exchange! This is the gift that Christmas offers every person.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for the gift of Jesus. May I ever be mindful that Jesus came to earth that I might have life and have it to the full. Amen

God's invitation to us today is to turn our negative memories and regrets over to His care and let Him heal our hearts.