

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY

Daily Meditations



DECEMBER 2025

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

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

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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.

For more recovery resources

Visit us at <http://www.partnersinhope.ca>

or write to us at:

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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 loving relationship with Your Son, Jesus. I ask for wisdom and understanding from Your Spirit in order to live a person who honour s 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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PHOTOS

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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.

NOTES

DECEMBER 1

COMMITTED TO LIFE AND GROWTH

The story is told of a pig and a chicken having a conversation about a meal they wanted to provide for their friends. The chicken suggested bacon and eggs for the menu. The pig responded "Not on your life! For you that's just a contribution. For me, it's a total commitment."

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. (2 Timothy 2:15, Romans 12:1 NIV)

To grow and mature and do well in any area of life requires commitment. To develop their skills, professional athletes consistently practice for long hours, at inconvenient times, over many years. Medical professionals spend huge amounts of time and money to learn the necessary skills to properly care for patients who are injured or sick.

Maintaining our life with God in recovery also takes time and effort. The habits and disciplines we began to practice when we got sober need to be carried on if we are to maintain our sobriety. We improve our conscious contact with God by praying and meditating on His Word each day and then carrying out His will in all our affairs. Sometimes it will be convenient and many times it will not.

Moving away from a focus on God's plan for our lives into a focus of "me and my needs/problems" is a constant challenge for us in recovery and for those who are just living life. Deciding that going our own way will work better than God's instructions and the advice of trusted friends is a temptation we will face repeatedly. Have we decided that God's way is best and committed to His plan no matter what? This is the challenge in turning our will and our life over to the care of God. It's not a one-time pledge but an everyday commitment.

Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you. (Psalm 37:5 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Once again I turn my will and my life – all the plans and ideas I have about today – over to Your care. Show me Your will and help me to walk in it. Amen

To grow and mature and do well in any area of life requires commitment.

FINDING PURPOSE

From time to time some of us get into a rut and struggle to see the purpose that God has for our lives. We have given our will and life over to God's care and are now waiting to see what He will do as we ask for His help to turn our lives around. While we are waiting there is something all of us can do. We can improve our conscious contact with God by praying and reading the Scriptures. This helps us increase our knowledge of God and we will grow in wisdom as we learn what His Word says. We could also join a group who are studying the Scriptures.

Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. (Acts 17:11 NIV)

God has a purpose for each of our lives, but we need to have conscious contact with Him to find out what it is.

Both groups mentioned in the above Scripture were Jewish, but only the Berean group examined the Scriptures every day to see if what they heard was true. With no particular purpose in their lives, they could just have stood around doing nothing. When they heard something different from what they understood to be true they made the effort to verify the truth of what they heard. We also will find purpose for our life when we do the same. We need to know if the things we are being taught about God are true and the only way to find out is to read the Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to give us understanding.

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe. (1 Thessalonians 2:13 NIV)

God has a purpose for each of our lives, but we need to have conscious contact with Him to find out what it is. If we make it our objective to seek God's will, His favour and honor will rest on us, and we will be successful in His plan for our life.

Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor. (Proverbs 21:21 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me the desire to seek You with all my heart and to honour You in all my ways. Let Your Word be a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Amen

THE END AND THE BEGINNING

In just a few hours the new calendar year will begin. After a challenging year with much turmoil around the globe, on what basis do we hope to have a better year? Often, we feel overwhelmed at the start of a new year because we have so much stuff to wade through, so many unanswered questions in our minds, and so many painful things in our hearts. If we have come and gone from recovery in the past year, we might be concerned about our future ability to maintain the peace and joy of sobriety for any length of time.

God's answer is very positive, very simple and very direct. It comes in the form of an invitation: *Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed and get a new heart and a new spirit.* (Ezekiel 18:30b-31 NIV)

As we wait for the countdown to this new year, it's worth remembering that God has promised us a new heart and a new spirit if we turn our will and our life over to His care. If we choose to do so and believe in the finished work of Jesus to redeem us from our sin, we will come into this new year as a new person.

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion (2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT, Philipians 1:6b NIV)

This coming year is a fresh opportunity to go deeper in our experience of coming to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity.

This coming year is a fresh opportunity to go deeper in our experience of coming to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity. We can't fix ourselves, but God can. We may not trust our ability to carry anything through to completion but God "could and would if He were sought." This is our New Year's hope.

Prayer: Loving God, As I enter this New Year, I choose to commit myself to You. I repent of my past sins and lay down my fears and resentments. I receive Your forgiveness, Your comfort, and Your healing. I trust and have confidence in Your assurance that You will complete the good work You have begun in me. Amen

KNOWING GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIVES

In Step-11 we commit through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God. We pray for knowledge of His will for our lives and the power to carry it out. Christmas is a time when we think of the plan that God had for Jesus when He came into this world as a human baby. About eight hundred years before Jesus was born the prophet Isaiah spoke of a sign regarding His birth.

...the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us'). (Isaiah 7:14 NLT)

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Jesus came at God's appointed time and angels announced His arrival to shepherds in the fields. We read in the Bible of many amazing things that God did to protect Jesus from those who wanted to cause Him harm. When we believe in Jesus, whom God sent into the world, God will protect us from any evil that might be planned against us. Jesus spoke often of His Father's love and care for those who accept Him and obey the Scriptures.

Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them. (John 14:21 NLT)

For more than two thousand years people have celebrated God's plan of salvation that was fulfilled through Jesus. Through prayer and meditation on God's Word we can know God's plan for our lives. God does not ask us to fulfill His plan on our own, He gives us the Holy Spirit to help us. Jesus said if we want to be His disciples, we must deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it." (Matthew 16:24-25 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Jesus who came to earth to fulfill Your plan of redemption for mankind. Please show me Your will for my life and strengthen me by the Power of Your Holy Spirit to carry it out. Amen

WALKING WARILY OR TAKING STEPS TENDERLY

Christmas lights brighten the darkness of December evenings and are a reminder to us that no matter how dark this season may be, the coming of Jesus into the world brought light, and hope, and joy. Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is the reason for the season.

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." (John 8:12 NLT)

If we call on Him, God will be our shelter in times of trouble. Where there is darkness in our lives, God will bring light. When we walk with Him, He will lead us to the pathway of peace. In the past we walked alone in our sorrow. Now that God is with us, we need never face our problems alone. God may not be physically visible, but we have His Word that He watches over us and will keep us from harm.

I am GOD, your God, who teaches you how to live right and well. I show you what to do, where to go. If you had listened all along to what I told you, your life would have flowed full like a river, blessings rolling in like waves from the sea. (Isaiah 48:17-18 MSG)

When we allow the light of Christ to shine on our circumstances, His truth will overcome the darkness in our souls. As Christmas lights need to be plugged in and turned on so their beauty can be seen, so we need to be connected to God through faith in Jesus so that the truth and light within us can be seen. As we obey God's principles and are plugged into the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will shine brightly through any darkness we may encounter.

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 1:78-79 NLT)

Prayer: Light of the World, Please guide me out of darkness and lead me into Your glorious light and peace. Amen

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GET EVEN OR GET AHEAD

Time wasted in getting even will never assist us in getting ahead.

Be sure that no one pays back wrong for wrong. But always try to do what is good for each other and for all people. (1 Thessalonians 5:15 ERV)

We feel hurt and violated when someone's unkind words or actions take away our dignity and leave us scared, and in need of healing. We want that person to admit to the harm they have caused us. We want them to make amends. If they don't, something arises within us and makes us want to "get even with them."

When a person verbally abuses us, we may think we will feel better if we yell back at that person or retaliate by publicly shaming them in some way. Research tells us we are no better off even as soon as five or fifteen minutes later. We violate our own soul and our own standards of right and wrong when we shout and behave badly in pursuing revenge. God has a better plan.

Don't do wrong to anyone to pay them back for doing wrong to you. Or don't insult anyone to pay them back for insulting you. But ask God to bless them. Do this because you yourselves were chosen to receive a blessing. A gentle answer makes anger disappear, but a rough answer makes it grow. (1 Peter 3:9, Proverbs 15:1 ERV)

The bottom line is, each one of us has done many wrong things over the course of our lives, and maybe even in the past few days. We come to God and seek His forgiveness for what we have done, and we should. But God links our forgiveness to what we have done to our willingness to forgive others for the wrongs they have done to us. Let's not waste time by trying to get even and instead co-operate with God and really get ahead.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, It's so hard to not seek revenge when I have been wronged. I lay this desire to "get even" aside and ask, You to fill my heart with the higher good of forgiving others for their wrongs as I have been forgiven for the wrongs I have done. Amen

When you are praying and you remember that you are angry with another person about something, forgive that person. Forgive them so that your Father in heaven will also forgive your sins. (Mark 11:25 ERV)

STANDING FIRM

As we come to the end of another year and watch news reports which review the events of the past year, we realize how quickly some things change and yet how slowly other things seem to leave. What do we do with all that has gone on in recent times and how do we safely make the move into the new year?

This is a time to remember that God is in control and will fulfill His purposes. Much more is going on in the world than what we may see and hear in the daily news. When we seek God's help in our personal challenges, we are assured that He will help us and bring about those things He has promised. Even when people think they have failed to live up to the potential God has for them, God remains unwavering in His plans, and He will work out His purpose for those who commit their will and life into His care.

For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. (Psalm 33:9-11 NIV)

We must continue to have faith in God's ultimate control if we are to find peace in this fragile and sometimes frightening world. The invitation to us in this week between Christmas and the New Year is to reaffirm our trust in God's promises and His ability to bring about His purposes no matter how chaotic things may appear. We need to wholeheartedly trust God's Word and His vision for us as we firmly hold fast to His promises.

When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever. (Proverbs 10:25 NIV)

When God says that we will not be overwhelmed, He means it. When God says He will make a way where there seems to be no way, He is able to do just that.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You truly are the Prince of Peace. During this "in between time", come and live in me and strengthen me to follow Your Principles in all my ways. Amen

When we seek God's help in our personal challenges, we are assured that He will help us and bring about those things He has promised.

SHARING THE MESSAGE

Within each personal story of the journey from bondage to freedom is the power of the Gospel to save those who are lost. We are simply sinners saved by grace and kept clean and sober daily by God's mercy. When we tell our story, our lives give witness to God's grace and mercy, and we are fulfilling the great commission of spreading the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others. We are pointing them to the pathway of their own healing journey with Jesus who said:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are oppressed;" (Luke 4:18 NKJV)

Within each personal story of the journey from bondage to freedom is the power of the Gospel to save those who are lost.

The Bible tells us that if someone struggles, we should be gentle and humble as we help them get back on the right path. When we begin to understand where they are at right now, it is important to remind ourselves how unstable we were when we were slaves to our addiction. We need to support the desire in a person's spirit to carry out their new life choices, even while their flesh is weak. We also need to respectfully warn those whom we perceive are in ongoing danger.

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23 NIV)

We are not the Saviour, but we can love others as He loves us. Love goes beyond mere words. Sometimes it is demonstrated in silence or in an understanding touch as we come alongside someone who has strayed from the path of recovery. Love doesn't accuse but rather encourages the person to get back on the path to healing and continue the journey.

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, May my life reflect the joy of living life to the full with You so that others may believe in the power of the Gospel to save and transform lives. Amen

THE UNFAMILIAR

Coming into a recovery group is threatening for many of us. The place is unfamiliar. We don't know the people, and compared to our former lifestyle, the rules seem restrictive. We are not even acquainted with the God we prayed to when we knew we needed help. We are in unfamiliar territory and unsure if recovery is for us. Thankfully, we can repeatedly cry out to God for help to get us through the unfamiliar, and God assures us that He will help.

Ah, God, listen to my prayer, my cry—open your ears. Don't be callous; just look at these tears of mine. I'm a stranger here. I don't know my way—a migrant like my whole family. Give me a break, cut me some slack before it's too late and I'm out of here. (Psalm 39:12-13 MSG)

If we listen attentively, we will hear God's quiet voice encouraging us to be at peace and allow Him to settle our hearts as we make necessary adjustments. If we choose for God and all His ways, rather than quitting, we will be accompanied by the One who is full of wisdom, compassion, and unfailing love for us.

Show me the right path, O Lord; point out the road for me to follow. Lead me by your truth and teach me, for you are the God who saves me. All day long I put my hope in you. (Psalm 25:4-5 NLT)

As we put our trust in God to help us, we will soon relax and become familiar with the routine of the program we have chosen. We will get to know the people around us and allow them to get to know us. If we have surrendered our will and our lives over to the care of God, nothing will be impossible for us to achieve. We will soon be aware that our fear of the unfamiliar has abated, and the power of God will continue to strengthen us as we begin our new life with Him in recovery.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You are ever present with me in my time of need. When I am challenged by the unfamiliar, give me the confidence to remain close to You and do the next right thing. Thank You for being my safe harbour from the storms of life. Amen

We can repeatedly cry out to God for help to get us through the unfamiliar, and God assures us that He will help.

DEALING WITH STRESS – THIS TOO SHALL PASS

When we are dealing with stress the slogan 'this too shall pass' is a helpful principle to remember. God's unfailing love surrounds and supports us in every situation, and His strength is sufficient for all our needs. We can get through challenging days, get the rest we need, and face the next day with confidence, because God is always with us. When our hope is in the living God, we cannot fail. Troubling times will come, but good days will return.

The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning. I say to myself, "The LORD is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!" (Lamentations 3:22-24 NLT)

God will never permit circumstances to break or shatter us. He knows our limits and will not allow us to be stretched beyond what we can bear. God seeks to use our stressful times as opportunities for us to gain His perspective, lean on His strength, and develop perseverance with which we can better run life's course. God may not alter the circumstance that is currently pressing on us. He may not remove the person who is bothering us. He may not heal the condition that daily grates away at our body and soul, but God will dramatically alter our emotions and responses as we improve our conscious contact with Him and seek answers from His Word. As we trust in the wisdom of God to resolve our situations, we will gain spiritual maturity and endurance.

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise—in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? (Psalm 56:3-4 NIV)

We deal best with stress when we call on God for help, acknowledge that He is on our side, and faithfully do what He says. With God's help, "this too shall pass."

Prayer: Heavenly Father, When life is overwhelming and I feel distant from You, help me to remember that You truly are listening when I pray, and are working in every situation for my good. I am forever grateful that You love and care for me. Amen

THE GOD OF CHRISTMAS IS WITH US NOW

The presents have been opened. Most of the turkey has been eaten. With Christmas Eve and Christmas Day behind us, it's a good time to review our lives, our relationships, and even our hopes and dreams for the coming year.

God is righteous, and His wisdom is infinite. There's nothing harsh or unkind in God's nature. We were created to be like God but sin spoiled God's creation. As we have gathered in family groups or with friends to celebrate Christmas, many of us have witnessed sinful ways at work. Sometimes a gathering is ruined by bitterness related to a past event or ongoing addictive behaviour. We are called to love each other yet we still say and do things that disappoint and anger one another.

We truly are sinful broken people living in a sinful broken world. The joy of the Christmas story is that Jesus came to earth to show us God's love and to provide a way for us to be free from sin and brokenness.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. (Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8 NLT)

Many of the new gadgets and devices received as gifts will need to be powered up or have batteries installed. The new gift of life that God is offering us requires that we invite Jesus into our lives and connect to His Power through the Holy Spirit. As we meditate on His Words that are written in the Bible, God will teach us how our lives are meant to be lived and, as we daily seek His help, He will support and direct us in all our ways.

The joy of the Christmas story is that Jesus came to earth to show us God's love and to provide a way for us to be free from sin and brokenness.

The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you." (Psalm 32:8 NLT)
Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for the gift of new life You are offering me. I am willing to accept this new way of life and allow You to guide and direct me in all my ways. Amen

THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

At Christmas, many people make a special effort to return home and be with their family. For those of us, who for many reasons, are unable to gather with family at Christmas, is it still possible to celebrate a full and rich Christmas without being fake? The lives of Joseph and Mary and Jesus teach us that it is possible.

We need to look at our hearts before we look at our circumstances and see the amazing guest who shares this season with us.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. (Luke 2:1, 3-7 NIV)

Joseph and Mary were displaced at a crucial time in their lives. In a stable – a rough cave in the side of a hill where animals were sheltered for the night – they made ready and welcomed Jesus into the world. Other guests came – shepherds who were directed by a heavenly host of angels to where the baby was. Mary and Joseph might not have been where they wanted to be but, together with the shepherds, the animal shelter was turned into a wondrous place of worship.

At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus who chose displacement from His Father in Heaven and came to earth in the form of a human baby so He could redeem us from the power of sin. Until the fulfillment of time and the invitation to come to His Father's house, Jesus, in the power of His Holy Spirit, will be with us wherever we may be here on this earth. This Christmas we need to look at our hearts before we look at our circumstances and see the amazing guest who shares this season with us. Life may not be as perfect as we would like it to be, and we may be struggling to cope, but Jesus is with us! Let's be at home with Jesus this Christmas season as we celebrate His birth.

Prayer: Thank You Jesus for coming to be with me in my imperfect world. I want to make room for You in my heart and share each day of this Christmas season together with You. Amen

THE EFFECTS OF OUR CHOICES

The choices we make affect not only our own life but the lives of our loved ones as well. When we do not seek God or acknowledge that He exists, then we are choosing to rebel against Him. If we are not loving God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength, and loving our neighbor as ourselves, then we are choosing to disobey God, and this will have a negative impact on all our relationships. Unkind actions, and the gaps created by our failing to reach out with care and blessing, will affect everyone in our family and circle of friends.

God describes this condition this way: *Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster ... love the Lord your God and keep his commands, decrees, and regulations by walking in his ways. If you do this, you will live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you ... But if your heart turns away and you refuse to listen, and if you are drawn away to serve and worship other gods, then I warn you now that you will certainly be destroyed. (Deuteronomy 30:15-18a NLT)*

To a sensible person these would seem like easy choices – life over death; prosperity over disaster; blessings over curses. Unfortunately, many of us choose to follow our own ways and desires and suffer the harmful consequences of doing so. Why? We don't want to give up our sinful pleasures and we want to maintain control of our circumstances. Getting our own way seems like the most convenient and pleasant path for a time. That's why we choose it. God, through the death of his beloved son Jesus, has shown us the cost of our sinful choices. Jesus died a punishing death on a cross to pay the price for our sin.

God's unfailing love and forgiveness are available to us even when we have made unwise choices. By His grace we are strengthened and made strong to overcome any weaknesses that may still exist within us.

Prayer: Loving God, I ask for forgiveness for my rebellious ways. Strengthen my resolve to obey You in all I say and do. My desire is to love You with all my heart, soul, and mind. I am forever grateful for Your Power which will help me overcome my weaknesses. Amen

If we are not loving God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength and loving our neighbor as ourselves, then we are choosing to disobey God, and this will have a negative impact on all our relationships.

NEW PERSON – NEW RULES – NEW ACTIONS

Step-9 requires that we make direct amends to the people we have harmed, except when to do so would further harm them or others. Making a list of those we harmed was not easy for us and becoming willing to make amends seems even harder. God was likely not on our radar when we did the things that harmed others but by our offense against them, we also offended God.

God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness. (Acts 3:26 ESV)

We make direct amends to the people we have harmed, except when to do so would further harm them or others.

The new person we have become acts with different rules than the old person we once were. That's because we gave our will and life over to the care of God and were reconciled to Him through accepting the finished work of Jesus on our behalf. The offences we committed against God have been acquitted and we have been restored to that place where we are free from all our sin. In the eyes of God, we are just as if we had never sinned.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:17-18 ESV)

God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, just as we came to God and asked His forgiveness, we now need to go to those we have harmed and ask for their forgiveness. The work that God has done in us and the new nature we have received will help us do those things that God desires for us to do. We have been given a Power greater than ourselves, the Holy Spirit, and He will strengthen us to do those things we need to do so that we may be reconciled with others.

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for Jesus who paid the price for my sin and reconciled me to You. Please give me the will and desire to make direct amends to those I have harmed and where possible seek reconciliation. Amen

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Christmas -- it really happened! God came to our planet. We may never comprehend how or even why He chose to do this, but the fact remains, He came by way of a Bethlehem manger. We matter to God, the God who created the heavens and the earth.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? (Psalm 8:3-4 NIV)

Jesus was born as the prophets foretold, conceived by an act of God, born of a virgin. He was born at the time, in the place, and to the people God planned from before creation. Throughout time God sent various signs so people would recognize Jesus as the One He sent to save us. Some did. Some didn't. The fact is, Jesus came to save us and obeyed the plan of His Father even to death on a cross.

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14 NIV)

We are significant people because of our connection to God through Jesus Christ whose birth we celebrate on Christmas Day. Throughout His life Jesus clearly demonstrated who He was as He taught and healed people who came to Him. Jesus drew individuals to Himself with His tender compassion and miraculous power. Jesus invites us to respond to Him on this Christmas day.

The fact is, Jesus came to save us and obeyed the plan of His Father even to death on a cross.

Yet I was the one who taught Israel to walk. I took my people up in my arms, but they did not acknowledge that I took care of them. I drew them to me with affection and love. I picked them up and held them to my cheek; I bent down to them and fed them. (Hosea 11:3-4 GNB)

The coming of Jesus to our world, and to us, is a powerful witness to the truth that our ordinary and simple lives matter to the God who created us. When we turn to God, we are assured of His love and acceptance because of the finished work of His son Jesus here on earth. Jesus' birth changed everything for us. Merry Christmas!

Prayer: Gracious God, Thank You for Jesus who was born into this world to be my Saviour and to show me that my life has meaning and purpose. Thank You for the love and acceptance I receive from You because of Jesus' obedience to Your will for His life. Amen

THE GIFTED LIFE

Statistics tell us that 7 out of 10 shoppers on Christmas Eve will be men doing panic shopping for those they love. Thankfully, God is not a last-minute planner. From before the creation of the world God planned, through Jesus' death and resurrection, the amazing gift of forgiveness and eternal life with Him for each one of us. God's gift is perfect and complete and just right for you and for me.

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT)

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Christmas is a time to give thanks for the birth of Jesus. This Christmas we can bless others, not so much by spending lots of money on gifts, but by sharing ourselves with them. The extravagant love of Jesus flowing through us will help us love and serve our family and friends. Just being with family and friends will bring more joy into our lives than anything we could ever purchase in a store or online.

Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word. And we, out of all creation, became his prized possession. (James 1:17-18 NLT)

What gifts of thankfulness and worship will we offer to Jesus this Christmas season? What have we received from God that we can share? What ability do we have to help others? Just spending time with someone can make a difference in their lives. Listening to what is troubling another and perhaps offering help in the situation may be significant. In what small or large ways can we offer something to another person that says, "I care about you."

I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. (John 15:11-12 NLT)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for the gift of forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus. Help me to give the gift of love and caring to others as together we celebrate Christmas. Amen

CITIZENS IN A NEW KINGDOM

Your kingdom will never end, and you will rule forever. The Lord can be trusted in all that he says. He is loyal in all that he does. The Lord lifts up people who have fallen. He helps those who are in trouble. All living things look to you for their food, and you give them their food at the right time. You open your hands and give every living thing all that it needs. Everything the Lord does is good. Everything he does shows how loyal he is. The Lord is near to everyone who sincerely calls to him for help. He listens to his followers and does what they want. He answers their prayers and saves them. (Psalm 145:13-19 ERV)

The kingdom of God is an everlasting kingdom in which we, who have given our will and lives over to the care of God, are citizens. Through Jesus we have been reconciled to our Heavenly Father. While we are here on earth we are to be God's representatives of Christ's heavenly kingdom. God wants to work in us and through us to help us become the persons He created us to be, and also to be a blessing to others. That means allowing the Holy Spirit to teach us and guide us in the ways of God. It also means getting rid of the self-centered desires of our fleshly nature.

The above Psalm lists the human need for things like food, shelter, comfort, and protection, and states that God will provide these at just the right time. God truly is a faithful loving God who is near to those who call on Him for help. Jesus, God's only begotten son, humbled Himself and came to earth as a man. Jesus said that those who have seen Him have seen His Father.

In the Bible, we read about the life of Jesus and can only imagine what joy awaits us when we finally reach our heavenly home. The Bible tells us it has not entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him. Do we have a passport issued by the Kingdom of Heaven? In our life in recovery today, are we experiencing the joy and satisfaction of serving the King of kings and Lord of lords?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for loving me enough to send Jesus into the world to restore my relationship with You. I am blessed to know that, as Your beloved child, I have the deposit of the Holy Spirit living in me, guaranteeing what is to come. Amen

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HOPE FOR WHAT CONCERNS ME TODAY

Troubles come, sometimes one on top of another. Pressure builds. Sadness deepens. We ask, "Where is God in the middle of my troubles?" As we move towards the Christmas celebration of Jesus coming into this world of darkness and the chaos of life on this planet, let's really celebrate that He came to bring peace and hope to those who put their trust in Him.

This is GOD's Message, the God who made earth, made it livable and lasting, known everywhere as GOD: 'Call to me and I will answer you. I'll tell you marvelous and wondrous things that you could never figure out on your own.' (Jeremiah 33:2-3 MSG)

Jesus longs to comfort and strengthen us in our times of vulnerability. If we ask for His guidance, He will show us the right way to handle any problem we may encounter. He may even show us new ways to resolve lingering issues, ways we never even thought about or considered.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch out Your hand and will save me. The Lord will enemies, And Your right hand will save me. Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; Do not forsake the works of Your hands. (Psalm 138:7-8 NKJV)

Those of us who have chosen to give our will and our life over to God's care now believe that there is a solution to every problem in life because God is with us. In every situation we do the things we know to be right, then prayerfully wait in God's care and protection until our problems are resolved. God is always with those who believe in the finished work of Jesus. So, we can refuse any hopeless thoughts that say nothing works or nothing will ever change. We can keep looking to God and His amazing power to fulfill His good purposes in everything that concerns us.

Seems like a good plan to carry forward as we begin to close out this year and move into the next.

Prayer: Gracious God, I choose to stand with You and trust You to show me the way forward in every situation that concerns me. Thank You for Your care and guidance. Amen

In every situation, we choose to do the things we know to be right, then prayerfully wait in God's care and protection until our problems are resolved.

People often travel from one end of the country to the other to be with family during the Christmas season. Christmas celebrations with family are meant to strengthen the bonds of love and caring as together we remember God's unfailing love and care for each person. However, for many of us, memories that trouble our hearts begin to surface as we think about things that happened to us in the past. God's desire is that we think of Christmas in a different way this year.

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)

Jesus came to earth to pay the penalty for the world's sin which includes ours. The penalty for sin is death. Jesus died a cruel death so that our sins could be forgiven and our relationship with God restored. When we repent of our sin and accept that Jesus paid with His life for our sin, we will choose not to withhold forgiveness of others who sinned against us. God's grace has been freely poured out on us, so we have ample supply to generously grace others with the grace we have received from Him.

Silent night, Holy night: Son of God, Loves pure light. Radiant beams from thy holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace.

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 and family gatherings, I ask you to fill my heart with Your love so that, together with others, I can celebrate Christmas well. Amen

CHRISTMAS COMFORT AND REDEEMING GRACE

A CROWDED CHRISTMAS

Three days before Christmas and it seems like it's crowded and busy everywhere. Traffic on the roads and in parking lots is clogged. Airports are full of people on the move. People in long lineups wait to have their purchases scanned and paid for. People, people everywhere!

Jesus was born into a busy crowded world. His parents, along with thousands of others, had to leave their hometown and travel several days on foot to get to the crowded city of Bethlehem so the census ordered by the Roman government could be taken. The only place Mary and Joseph could find to rest was in a smelly cave which housed animals. That's where Jesus was born.

Whatever we are feeling during these busy times before Christmas Day, God invites us to stop, take a break, and be filled with His presence and peace.

When the world around us is busy, it's easy to feel forgotten and uncared for. The needs we have might go unseen and unmet by others. We are left alone to sort out challenges that are made harder by the many events of the holiday season. Life feels unmanageable and we are faced with our own powerlessness.

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)

Whatever we are feeling during these busy times before Christmas Day, God invites us to stop, take a break, and be filled with His presence and peace. The birth of Jesus Christ demonstrates clearly that God sees us, God cares about us, and if invited, will come close to us. Jesus became a human being and entered our earthly experiences and our pain. He can sympathize with all our weaknesses. If we invite Him, God is truly with us in every situation.

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" Says your God. (Psalm 40:1 NKJV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Help me not to get caught up in the mad rush of these pre-Christmas days. Help me to take this day one moment at a time and give thanks for your love and grace in sending Jesus into the world to be my Saviour. Amen

REPENTANCE and FORGIVENESS

One of the greatest obstacles to receiving and living in God's absolute forgiveness is that we have not truly repented. We have not changed our mind and our heart's attitude toward God, and we do not acknowledge that living in sinful ways is *wrong*.

For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death. (2 Corinthians 7:10 NLT)

When we struggled in the chaos of our addiction, we acknowledged that some of our actions were harmful. However, we generally blamed the occurrence of negative events in our past to justify our ongoing selfish behaviour. People who harmed us or our former life circumstances were to blame. We became greedy, self-indulgent and self-centered individuals and decided to shape our lives around what we thought we needed, deserved, or what we determined needed fixing. The building block for living well in recovery with God is changing our mind about who is responsible for our brokenness and how we got to where we are.

Our chance at having a real life comes when we humbly turn our will and life over to God's care and accept the responsibility for our sinful responses. We also need to admit that we messed things up for ourselves and others by trying to sort out past events on our own.

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. (Acts 3:19 NIV)

When we begin the journey of our new life in Christ, there may be times when we fail to live in love. Genuine sadness over our behaviour and a willingness to change our old ways and seek God for cleansing and healing is true repentance that honours God and restores our relationship with Him

Prayer: Gracious God, Forgive me for ignoring You and not taking responsibility for my past behaviour. Cleanse and heal my heart and renew a right spirit within me. I desire to honour You in all my ways. I am grateful that You love and care for me. Amen

The building block for living well in recovery with God is changing our mind about who is responsible for our brokenness and how we got to where we are.

MISSING THE MEANING

Christmas decorations have been up for weeks and malls are bustling with shoppers who are captivated by the Christmas displays and lights while they shop for special gifts for family and friends. Often there's a winter wonderland with lighted Christmas trees or a special "North Pole" room for Santa to greet his little friends. In some places a nativity scene with figures of Mary and Joseph, shepherds, and the baby Jesus are displayed. Today, let's pause and remember and give thanks for Jesus, the reason we celebrate the 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)

Christmas day is approaching and many people, perhaps even we ourselves are pre-occupied with getting things done for the planned festivities, so we have no time left to celebrate Jesus. We complain about the demands and activities of the season while others are struggling with loneliness. Some may be overwhelmed with shame regarding their current position in life. Some are distant from their families. Others may struggle financially to provide gifts for their children.

Today, let's take time to intentionally leave behind the busyness of the season and spend time 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 season with direction and meaning as we include Jesus in our thoughts and activities today, and every day.

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 troublesome or out of my control, and truly celebrate Jesus, for He is Immanuel, God with us. Amen

DEFEATING ACCUSATION AND CONDEMNATION

Our weaknesses are no surprise to God. God strengthens us in areas where we have grown and encourages us in the areas where we still need to grow. God reassures us that His grace is sufficient to meet all our needs, and His power is sufficient to support us when we acknowledge our weakness.

You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry. (Psalm 10:17 NIV)

Where the evil one says, "Failure," God says, "You are growing more and more like Jesus." How comforting and reassuring it is to know that God is aware that on our journey we will make mistakes as part of our growing and maturing.

And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness ... we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us ... the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. (Romans 8:26-28 NLT)

How do we defeat discouragement in life and recovery when others accuse and condemn us? Jesus tells us: **"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."** (Luke 6:27-28 NIV)

We need to let go of negative words from others or from our own self-criticism. God speaks the truth to us in love and He challenges us to do the same when we speak to others, or to ourselves. When we confess our sin and shortcomings to God and turn away from sin, God sees us through the blood of Jesus, which purifies us from all the wrongs we have done. God's word is trustworthy, and He will never accuse or condemn us for past sins which have been washed in the blood of Jesus.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I am glad that my weakness is no surprise to You. Thank You that I am free from all accusation and condemnation as I grow in my new life with You. Amen

God is aware that on our journey we will make mistakes as part of our growing and maturing.

ORDINARY DAY IN AN ORDINARY WEEK

Is it possible that God could do something so wonderful in us today that our lives would impact history for the Kingdom of God? How might we live in this ordinary day that would make us available for the extraordinary?

Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!
(Luke 1:45 NIV)

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in us.***

God had an extraordinary day planned for Mary when He sent the angel Gabriel to tell her she would conceive God's Son and give birth to the Saviour of the world. While shock, confusion and fear may have been some of her initial feelings, Mary was quick to embrace God's plan for her. Her response to the angel's news was, ***"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."*** (Luke 1:38a NIV)

Mary saw herself as the Lord's servant, willing to do whatever He asked. She wasn't concerned about what her parents might think, or even her friends. Mary's confidence was in her knowledge of God and His perfect love for her.

God has wonderful plans for each one of us just like He had for Mary. As we follow Him, His plans may gradually be revealed to us, or they may leap into our lives in an instant. God's plans for Mary were shocking, inconvenient, and beyond all that she could ever have thought of, or imagined.

The work that God has planned for us to do may be emerging with amazing revelation or it may be quietly growing and developing in our hearts. Either way, today is an extraordinary day because the living God is making His good plans known to us. Just like it was for Mary, this ordinary day may become a not-so-ordinary day if we are willing to embrace God's plan for our lives and allow God to work in us.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Together with Mary I pray, "May your word to me be fulfilled." Help me to trust You and embrace the extraordinary things You desire to do in my seemingly ordinary life. Amen

FILLED WITH WONDER

The Christmas season is one that is filled with wonder. It's not just about the excitement we see in the eyes of children as they see lights and presents and think about Santa Claus. It is about allowing our hearts and minds to be opened to the wonder of what actually occurred that first Christmas when Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told. (Luke 2:18-20 NIV)

It is amazing that the God who created the heavens and the earth cared so much about mankind that He sent His Son into the world to be born as a vulnerable baby and to experience life on earth. God did this so that Jesus, who knew no sin, could pay the penalty for all sin, which is death. The birth of any baby fills us with awe and wonder but the birth of Jesus was even more amazing because of who Jesus is, and the glory He set aside to come into this world and, by His sinless life, pay the penalty of sin for all mankind.

Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19 NIV)

Too often we get jaded and disappointed by events and situations that don't turn out the way we want them to. Perhaps it's time to allow the great things that God has done to fill us with wonder and amazement. This God is beyond our wildest imagination and stands ready to gift us with His power and presence this Christmas season. Our part is to simply turn our will and life over to God's care and then watch in wonder and amazement at what He does on our behalf.

Many, Lord my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you planned for us. (Psalm 40:5a NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Fill my heart with Your love so I can be open to the wonder of journeying together with You as You reveal Your amazing plan for my life. Amen

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who Jesus is.***

PRINCIPLES BEFORE PERSONALITIES

As the Twelve Traditions are read at meetings we attend, we usually join the reader on the final phrase with the words, "principles before personalities."

Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him." (Luke 1:46-50 NLT)

God sees all of us as individuals. We don't have to be rich or famous. God finds the little ones, the hurting ones, the forgotten ones, and does such amazing things in each of our lives that generations down the line will have stories to tell of how we were blessed and were also a blessing to others.

Our lives are not lived in isolation. Not only are we connected to the family members we know, but to a long line of ancestors and those who will come after us, those still to be born. We don't know all the people our lives will impact but God does. As we give our will and our life into His care, He will pour His strength and love and forgiveness and healing into us, which in turn, will enable us to forgive the sins of those who have harmed us in the past and also give us the desire to assist those who need our help now and in the future.

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.
Tradition 12-A-A.

We are the most unlikely of persons to influence others for good and yet that's exactly who we are because it is "principles before personalities" and the principle that God operates on is that He can make something wonderful out of every life surrendered to Him. It's not our own strength we rely on because we know we are powerless, but the Mighty One, the God who did great things for Mary, is also ready and able to do great things for us. With Mary our hearts respond and say, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord, how my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I desire to be a person who is known for great good rather than for great harm. Thank You for taking notice of me and for doing great things in and for me. Help me to be a person who will do great things for others because You live in me. Amen

CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return. They will enter Jerusalem singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness. (Isaiah 35:10 NLT)

Christmas and music -- they just go together, don't they? 'Mary's Boy Child', a modern Christmas carol is a favorite of many people. It was written by Jester Hairston, a grandson of American slaves. Jester knew that, despite the injustice and pain suffered by his ancestors, God's love overcomes all things.

"Long time ago in Bethlehem, so the Holy Bible said, Mary's boy child Jesus Christ, was born on Christmas Day. Hark, now hear the angels sing, a king was born today, And man will live for evermore, because of Christmas Day Now Joseph and his wife, Mary, came to Bethlehem that night. They found no place to bear her child, not a single room was in sight. By and by they found a little nook in a stable all forlorn, And in a manger cold and dark, Mary's little boy child was born."

There is still hatred and violence in our world today. However, God's unfailing love will overcome and bring salvation and eternal life for all who believe in the finished work of Jesus who came into this world as a baby, just as each one of us did. Whether it's individuals struggling with addiction, homeless people living on the streets, refugees fleeing violence and terror attacks, or people caught up in the insecurity of finances needed for everyday living, God comes to let us know He is with us. God has a life planned for us that will last forever. Jesus was triumphant over all injustice. Because Jesus lives for evermore, we also will live for evermore. That's truly worth singing about, isn't it?

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. (1 Timothy 1:15 NIV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank You for sending Jesus to earth to save us. He was not born into luxury but was born in a cold dark stable. You chose Jesus' birthplace and we believe it was to give us hope that whatever our circumstances, You have a plan for us, for You are Immanuel, God with us. Amen

"Hark, now hear the angels sing, a king was born today, And man will live forevermore, because of Christmas Day"

HOSPITALITY AT CHRISTMAS

Jesus existed with God before the beginning of time. For love of us, Jesus was willing to leave the glory of heaven to come to earth to live in human form. Jesus entered a world unfit for His Royal Presence.

Before Jesus was born, a census was ordered by a Roman ruler which required each person to return to their city of birth to be counted. Jesus parents returned to Bethlehem along with so many others that the town overcrowded. Jesus was born in an animal shelter, and His cradle was a feeding trough. The animal shelter was most likely poorly lit and would have smelled strongly of the animals and all that goes with them.

The true purpose of Christmas is God's plan to give us eternal life through Jesus. He awaits an invitation to come into our lives and make His home with us.

Because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea ... He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was now obviously pregnant. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them. (Luke 2:4-7 NLT)

The Christmas story reminds us that we don't have to clean up our lives before we make room for Jesus. God comes to us in the muck and mire of our daily existence and says, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"*. (Matthew 11:28 NIV)

God's plan of redemption through Jesus began on that first Christmas. Jesus came to earth to pay the penalty for our sin. No matter how unworthy we believe ourselves to be, the truth is, God desires to make His home with us. He awaits our invitation.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6 NIV)

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, Let Your light shine in my heart. Forgive me for my sins and let me inherit eternal life. Come into my heart and make me new. Fill me to overflowing with Your love and goodness so I can share the good news of Your salvation with others. Amen

WHAT DOES GOSSIP SOUND LIKE?

Gossip shows up in our lives in many forms. God hates them all because He knows how harmful destructive words are to our dignity and our relationships. Here are some types of gossip and what God's Word says about each of them. In which of the following categories does the tendency to gossip affect me?

1. Slander spreads rumors or lies about a person in order to damage them. ***Hiding hatred makes you a liar; slandering others makes you a fool.*** (Proverbs 10:18 NLT)

2. Rumors abound. We hear something and even though it's not confirmed we pass it along. Gossip spreads and harm is done. ***Careful words make for a careful life; careless talk may ruin everything.*** (Proverbs 13:3 MSG)

3. Speaking with innuendo and planting seeds of doubt which question another person's character or actions, is another destructive form of gossip. ***By our speech we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it, smoke right from the pit of hell.*** (James 3:6 MSG)

4. It's easy to complain about things which are not perfect or aren't going our way. This "behind the scenes gossiping" can cause great harm. ***Complain if you must, but don't lash out. Keep your mouth shut, and let your heart do the talking. Build your case before God and wait for his verdict.*** (Psalm 4:4-5 MSG)

5. Bad-mouthing, back-stabbing, back-biting. These words seek to describe the harmful practice of speaking negative and harmful words about someone who isn't there to defend themselves. The Bible says: ***Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Don't speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God's law.*** (Matthew 7:1; James 4:11 NLT)

God hates gossip. God wants us to use kind words in all circumstances so that the practice of gossip will decrease or stop altogether.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You hate gossip because of the harm it does to everyone involved. Help me to speak kind words and deal with difficulties in an open, kind, and truthful way. Amen

God wants us to use kind words in all circumstances so that the practice of gossip will decrease or stop altogether.

SELF-ESTEEM

Our self-esteem is based on how we evaluate and see ourselves. Some people see little value in themselves while others rate themselves highly. A person with low self-esteem may have trouble expressing their needs and ideas to another and may have little confidence in themselves to make right decisions. They are more likely to criticize themselves to someone else. The opposite is true of those who rate themselves highly. The truth is, God made all of us. We are His creation and God has put high value on each person regardless of their status in life.

Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay. You are the potter. Your hands made all of us. (Isaiah 64:8 NIRV)

God puts high value on each person regardless of their status in life.

When we have made a mess of our lives, we often think that the consequences of our actions in the past define who we are in the future. We have low self-esteem and do not see a way forward. Our pride may stop us from seeking the help we need. God sees things differently from us. Just like a potter, God will take a piece of flawed clay and rework it until what He has formed is perfected for the use he has in mind. When we are weary and burdened with life, God wants us to come to Him and be made new.

Come to me, all you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest. Become my servants and learn from me. I am gentle and free of pride. You will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29 NIRV)

God does not want our self-esteem to be less than the value He places on us, and He does not want us to be prideful and think of ourselves more highly than we ought. He wants us to think of ourselves with sober judgment and in the light of His love for us. God wants to reproduce His character in us.

You were taught to be made new in your thinking. You were taught to start living a new life. It is created to be truly good and holy, just as God is. (Ephesians 4:23-24 NIRV)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please help me to see myself as You see me. Help me to take every thought captive to You so that You can perfect my way of thinking and enable me to become the person You created me to be. Amen

DEALING WITH CRISIS

Joseph and Mary were a family in crisis. Mary, by God's plan and action, was pregnant prior to being married to Joseph. They had probably dealt with the undeserved community backlash for several months and now with the birth of the child imminent, they needed to make a long journey to the hometown of Joseph's ancestors to be counted in a census that was related to being taxed.

Throughout this past year, most nations in the world seem to have stumbled from one crisis to another. Those of us who have come through addictive and destructive lifestyles know about un-ending crises. The good news is that when life throws us a curve ball, God wants us to experience the stabilizing comfort of His presence and to trust His promise that He is with us every step of the way.

In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (John 16:33b, Philipians 4:6 NIRV)

We do not face any crisis alone, we do it with God, and He has committed to helping us be overcomers. Our part is to include God in what is going on and to seek His guidance in every situation. It is best to learn to do that when the pressure isn't on, but we can be assured that whenever we do call out for God's help, He hears us and is available to help.

We do not face any crisis alone, we do it with God, and He has committed to helping us be overcomers.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2-4 NIRV)

God may not immediately change our situation. He may change us so we are able to do more than we thought possible, and in the process benefit from becoming wiser. In the middle of pressure, none of us like the seemingly endless endurance, but God knows what we need to face, what is yet to come, and He carefully prepares us for what is ahead – even in times of crisis.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please comfort and quiet my heart and help me to trust You. Teach me Your ways that I might gain wisdom. I want to become mature and, as You direct, persevere through any pressure I might face. Amen