

FRIDAY

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 2,000 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 that would distract me from receiving 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

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Weekend

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.

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. (Psalm 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

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY DAILY MEDITATIONS



Week 52

Monday

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?

...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

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

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)

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 everyone who truly keeps Christmas by celebrating the birth of our Saviour. Amen

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 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