

The background is a dark teal color with faint, light-colored line art icons scattered throughout. These icons include a wreath with a bow, a pencil, a cross, a book, a spiral notebook, a pen, and a figure with a halo. The central focus is the text 'DIY' in a large, bold, red font with a white outline.

# DIY

DO IT YOURSELF

THE STORY OF A KING  
ADVENT 2021

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## PREFACE

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Life is like all the visits to the doctor after you find out you are going to have a baby. You receive the big news with joy, but then unknowns begin to stalk you from a new angle every day. Gender, the heartbeat, baby showers, finances. And why does the doctor feel like that kid you knew that could solve a rubik's cube just a little too easily? All the answers to your questions about health and the future of your family sit uncomfortably (week after week) inside the hands of someone that you hardly know. And, yet, what other option do you have?

Christmas exacerbates life's unknowns. For Christians, it's the time of year we anticipate more than any other; so, why is it such a difficult season? To answer aptly, we have to go all the way back to Genesis and work to the Cross. In Genesis we find the dark tension that stalks us; at the Cross we find the good news of a Divine Doctor (minus the weird rubik's cube).

Advent is a word that means "coming," or "arrival." Christians spend the several days before Christmas in anticipation. We anticipate the first arrival of Jesus Christ in the manger, and we anticipate his second coming when he will make all things new. No more tension. No more stress. No more doctors.

This Advent guide walks through the Creation Garden, through Israel's captivity, to the Cross. Each week will focus on a different theme of the Gospel Narrative. Christmas can seem like a time where everything is spinning out of control. Advent is us looking to our North Star. This guide was designed to help individuals and families recenter their hearts and minds on the Gospel: the good news that Christ has come and will come again.

## THE WAIT BEGINS: CREATION AND FALL

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The good-old-days take on a vastly different meaning when you crack open the book of Genesis. A perfect, infinitely wise God created Earth. He filled it with vegetation, ecosystems, and human life. His glory was perfectly understood. No one was confused about who was the center of the Universe. No one was divided relationally despite their differences. Everyone could be themselves without fear, insecurity, or comparison.

It's almost too distant and difficult of a thought to entertain. What happened? How did we get here? These are not just the thoughts of a wandering heart far from God. This is the inevitable ponderings of every Christian. It is normal to long for perfection. It is normal to have an eternity's-worth of weight in our heart, and not know what to do about it (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Mystery of all mysteries, God's solution to this longing is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If we are going reset our gaze on the Gospel, we will be best served by remembering where perfection began; where the dream broke bad; where relationship met enmity.

This Advent season, let's remember from whence we came. We were created. We were created in perfection. God gave us all of His presence. We chose treason over Treasure.

At that moment, the wait began.

## NOVEMBER 28

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### VERSES

- Genesis 1:1
- John 1:1-3

### DEVOTIONAL

God is the center-piece in Creation. What becomes apparent from the Gospel of John is that Jesus Christ arrived on Earth as God-in-the-flesh. That's not a small truth to believe. One wonder of the Gospel is that the rather average-looking man that carried the name Jesus of Nazareth was present at the moment of Creation. This God-man was given the keys to the Kingdom of God; keys that are important to the meaning of Advent. The Jewish people waited for the Messiah to come; Jesus arrived and shook the meaning of Messiah to its core; Christians now wait for Jesus to return, again.

### PRAYER

*Father, Christmas would not be Christmas without your Son. Before you arrived in a manger, you created the materials needed to make one.*

*I believe; help my unbelief.*

*Help me to understand the importance of Creation to the Gospel.*

*Enliven my heart to the wonder of your power.*

*Awaken my soul to the implications of your Lordship.*

*I await your return by marveling at your arrival.*

## NOVEMBER 29

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### VERSES

- Genesis 1:26-27

### DEVOTIONAL

The Trinity shows its head for the first time in Scripture. Jesus, present with the Father at Creation along with the Holy Spirit, made man in their image. Men and women were created as expressions of what God Himself is like. This God-imaging allowed mankind to relate to God in a way that no other piece of Creation could. Sin wrecked the perfection that was man's ability to bear God's image. But, mercy of all mercies, Jesus took on our broken flesh in a way that uniquely qualified him to be the perfect sacrifice for humanity. Through Christ, we can now tap into the ability we once had to bear God's image in a small way; Christians wait to bear God's image perfectly in the new Heavens and Earth.

### PRAYER

*Jesus, you were before all things and through you all things exist. Thank you that in your perfection you can relate to us, and that in our brokenness we can relate to you. Thank you for not leaving us to our own devices; thank you for giving us a future designed by you. Help me to see the plans you have for me as better than what I could conceive. Help me to bear your image, redeeming the world around me just as you have redeemed me. Give me your heart for people.*

## NOVEMBER 30

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### VERSES

- Genesis 2:15-17
- Ephesians 2:8-10

### DEVOTIONAL

Mankind was not created and then left to an eternal free-for-all. We were created for a purpose: to bear God's image, and multiply worshippers of Him into all Creation. God gave us parameters to stay between; parameters that signified our willingness to stay in a loving relationship with our Creator. In breaching these parameters, we invited consequences that God clearly warned us about. Our current longings for something more were once perfectly satisfied. The Gospel promises that these longings will be satisfied again. Though this life will end, eternity will not. In Christ, God gave clear parameters to receive salvation. By faith, we receive assurance that we will not certainly die, but will live with Christ forever!

### PRAYER

*Father, thank you for securing life for us after death. I confess that I am not enough to save myself by good works, but need the sacrifice of your Son to cover all the wrong I have done; without Christ's covering I will certainly die and spend eternity apart from you.\**

*Thank you for not only securing a future life for me, but for giving me a new life now. Help me to walk in all the good works you have prepared for me. Empower me by your Spirit to live for You!*

\*If you prayed this for the first time and truly believe the words of the prayer, talk to a staff member of Connection Church. Choosing to follow Christ as your personal Lord and Savior is a big deal! We want to celebrate with you!

## DECEMBER 1

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### VERSES

- Genesis 3:1-7

### DEVOTIONAL

We have an enemy. Long before mankind rebelled, Satan rebelled. Sin is mankind following the ways of God's enemy instead of bearing God's image the way we were created to. Adam and Eve were led to believe death had no consequences. Satan does not operate from a throne of power, but from a prison of defeat. Deceiving mankind is Satan's final flailings in the courtroom before the Divine Bailiff turns the key on his cell for good. God sent Jesus to reclaim access for mankind to the original life He designed for us. Sin opened us up to death, but Jesus closes the door to death's permanence. Mankind can have more. For the Christian, we *do* have more!

### PRAYER

*Jesus, just as you prayed, deliver me from evil.*

*Deliver me from the Evil One.*

*Satan is not my king; you are my King.*

*Thank you for the security of knowing that Satan has been defeated.*

*I confess that no amount of fig leaves or coverings can hide my sin from you. Thank you for giving Jesus as an eternal covering for my sin!*

*Help me to believe that sin brings death, but that your Word brings life.*

*Help me to live a life characterized by your Word!*



## DECEMBER 2

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### VERSES

- Genesis 3:8-15

### DEVOTIONAL

The Bible's first articulation of the Gospel! "He will strike your head," is the promise that the Messiah will not just wound Satan and his plans, but that the Messiah would crush sin (and therefore, Satan). God's curse of Satan is a lesson to mankind; a life of sin is a life eating dust. We were made for more. Sin is man choosing to operate not only in futility, but also in a way contrary to our design; like a clock being used for a hammer.

### PRAYER

*Father, you are truly great.*

*You didn't wait to begin the redemption process.*

*Your rescue began immediately.*

*I confess that I am no better than Adam and Eve.*

*I hid from you for years. I lived a life characterized by futility. Thank you, Jesus, for not allowing death to have the final word.*

*You gave us a good life from the beginning, and then re-secured it through Christ.*

*My heart aches remembering my hiding; realizing I continue to hide at times.*

*Father, bring me again and again into the Light. Keep my heart ready to repent. Keep me squarely in your will.*

## DECEMBER 3

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### VERSES

- Genesis 3:22-24

### DEVOTIONAL

God's heart toward sin is revealed: things can't stay like this. Mankind may have broken themselves with sin, but God couldn't let them secure the sin-state for eternity. Redemption must occur. The journey would be hard on mankind, but salvation would be worth it. At the perfect time, God would send Jesus to reverse the curse of sin. However, as we see in Scripture, a lot happened between the Fall and the Cross. God's people would struggle to live before God in their fallen state. Noah, Babylon, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Esau; story after story of God's covenant love met with man's struggle to stay faithful to the covenant. God's people could not and would not ever return to the Garden. Advent remembers this reality, because it makes the waiting for a new Garden more precious.

### PRAYER

*Father, we need you now as much as ever. Thank you for giving us your Spirit. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for guiding us—even when we don't know about it. Our hearts are prone to wander. They always have been. Recenter my heart on You. Make the Gospel the anthem of my life. Father, thank you for giving us the local church. Thank you for a group of Christians to share the burdens of life with, and to identify with in this new allegiance to a new King. My heart needs You; my life would look so different without the grace of fellow Christians. Even though I can not be in the Garden with you, thank you that you have not left me alone. Help me to love you by loving your Bride. Carry me every day in your arms.*



## DECEMBER 4

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### DIY SATURDAY

Revisit whichever Scripture stood out to you this week, and **pray** it back to God.

- What did you learn about Him that you're thankful for?
- What did it show you about yourself, that you need God's grace for?
- What did God accomplish that compels you to worship?
- What does God's story invite you to do?

## A BROKEN RECORD: JUDGES, KINGS AND CAPTIVITY

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Grace. Sin. Wrath. Repentance.

Grace. Sin. Wrath. Repentance.

A sentiment that appears early in Scripture is, “God remembered...” What a peculiar idea; the God of the Universe, remembering. Sometimes God was remembering a person (Genesis 8:1, 19:29, 30:22). Sometimes God was remembering His covenant to His people (Exodus 2:24). He had never forgotten them (Psalm 105:8). He never would.

God’s people would need God to remember them and His covenant. Israel would weary itself with not resting in God (Leviticus 26:34-35; Jeremiah 25:12); Israel would weary itself with various disobediences (Deuteronomy 7:3; I Kings 11:2; Exodus 32:1; I Kings 12:28). God sent Judges and Kings to retrieve Israel from weariness. What else is sin but a form of weariness; a weariness with perfection driven by the sin mankind was saddled with at the Fall? The Judges and Kings were meant to point God’s people back to Him. God’s people would struggle, as would the judges and kings sent to guide them.

Like the best CD you ever owned—that got scratched.

Grace. Sin. Wrath. Repentance.

A broken record; the wait continued.

## DECEMBER 5

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### VERSES

- Judges 2:16-19

### DEVOTIONAL

Once, when God's people were a long way from the Garden yet still a long way from the Cross, they were led by judges. These judges were men and women that held tightly to God's promises or were supernaturally blessed by God to lead His people. At this point Israel is not just a people, but also a place. Israel occupied a land God promised to give them. They obtained the land not by military might, but by faith that God could give it to them. Faith got them in; faith would keep them; sin would kick them out.

### PRAYER

*Lord God, thank you for sustaining your promises to me even when I don't sustain my promise to you.*

*You are always faithful.*

*Thank you for giving mankind someone more perfect than a judge.*

*Thank you for the Spirit living in us instead of a king living over us.*

*Help me, Father, to have no other god; keep me from dedicating my time, energy, resources, and worship to things that keep me from you.*

*Help me, day after day, to rest in you alone.*

## DECEMBER 6

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### VERSES

- Judges 3:1-6

### DEVOTIONAL

Sin has never been a one-foot-in, one-foot-out kind of thing. Adam and Eve betrayed God. No sooner did Israel enter the Promised Land than they run headlong into relationships with people from foreign lands. That seems completely normal today. However, taking a foreigner in marriage at this time was also taking their gods. The Judges would bring Israel to understand this, only to watch them return to idolatry once the Judge went away. Consider how Christ changes this cycle. We don't have to wait for God to raise up another hero to rally around, or a prophet to guide us. We have an eternal Hero, the fulfillment of all prophecy; a perfect Judge.

### PRAYER

*Father, thank you for being a perfect Judge.  
Thank you for giving us your Spirit to guide us through every test in life.  
Life can be so hard. Life can be so unfair.  
I confess that I am a broken person. I need you.  
I pray that you would give me more of your presence.  
I pray that no sin would keep me from you.  
Make me holy, as you are holy.*

## DECEMBER 7

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### VERSES

- Ruth 1:1-5
- Ruth 4:13-17

### DEVOTIONAL

Just when God seems silent, He causes eternity to echo. God—in the midst of Israel wandering, in the midst of the judges corralling a disobedient people—established the Redemptive Lineage. Bethlehem, a land known for being the house of bread, was experiencing famine. Elimelech led his family to Moab, a land filled with people marked by their worship of a sex god. Ruth, a Moabite, returns with Naomi to Israel, and, therefore, to Yahweh. The Lord, never forgetting His people, begins to establish the line of David.

All was not lost in the time of the Judges. Ruth and Boaz gave birth to a son named Obed. Obed's name would become well-known in Israel, just as Naomi prayed: Obed would be the direct ancestor of Joseph, the father of Jesus Christ.

### PRAYER

*Lord God, how great are your mysteries!*

*I could never have written the story of Redemption as beautifully as you.*

*Christmas can be so stressful. My family is far from perfect.*

*Thank you for using broken, difficult people to achieve your glory.*

*Help me to love people differently.*

*Give me humility to believe that what I see in other people is not all that is going on.*

*Help me to be gracious to people, trusting that you have bigger plans for them than I can see.*

## DECEMBER 8

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### VERSES

- 1 Samuel 8:1-9

### DEVOTIONAL

“Give us a new king; Yahweh just doesn’t do it for us.” This was a sad, familiar sound to the ears of God. They wanted a king in their own image—now; God wanted to give them a perfect King at the perfect time. Israel was clearly led by an almighty God, but wanted a human king like the nations that bordered them. They were living by sight, not by faith.

Israel had asked for something similar in the past. While wandering in the Wilderness after leaving Egypt, they literally asked to be allowed to return to slavery in Egypt instead of going further in the Wilderness. Think about that: Israel would have rather been slaves to a king that looked like them rather than continuing the journey to freedom with a God that transcended them.

Now consider the beauty and mercy of the Incarnation.

The perfect King would come in the form of a man—one mankind could relate to.

### PRAYER

*Father, forgive me for rejecting you as my king in the past.*

*Forgive me for doing that even now.*

*Thank you for Christ, the perfect King.*

*Reveal to me where I still reject you, Jesus, by the way I live.*

*I desire to have no King but you!*



## DECEMBER 9

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### VERSES

- 2 Kings 25:8-12
- Nehemiah 2:1-8

### DEVOTIONAL

The end result of having a human king for Israel was captivity. It was not a sin to have a king. God did incredible things through many kings in Israel's history. David established God's people, and caused the land to flourish; he was a man after God's own heart. Solomon built a majestic temple and took Israel to new heights in economic prosperity.

Captivity happened because betrayal happened. God's people chose to follow other gods. God would not allow Israel's sin to get the last word, however. Nehemiah reveals that God's ear was still open to a people that worshipped Him alone. God's gracious hand was not lost, even if the land Israel once knew was.

### PRAYER

*Father, forgive me for selling myself into captivity by my sin.*

*I know that you paid a high price to set me free.*

*Help me to live in that freedom. Help me to cherish that freedom.*

*Use me to set others free for your glory.*

## DECEMBER 10

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### VERSES

- Daniel 1:1-2
- Malachi 4:4-6

### DEVOTIONAL

God took every source of idolatry away from Israel. He laid them flat before Him. Their king was dishonored. Their temple was destroyed. Their land was deserted. Their military was defeated. All that Israel had left was the covenant God made with them. Daniel believed God to be a God that kept His word. Daniel did what God desired all of His people to do; worship Him alone, and live righteously before Him. Even in captivity, God was not silent. He promised to send a new Elijah. Someone that would turn God's people back to Him. Someone that would be able to reorient everyone's hearts to True North.

The wait for the King was almost over.

### PRAYER

*Maranatha, Lord. Come, quickly!*

*You never desired a temple filled with treasure.*

*Rather, you desired to be our temple and our treasure.*

*Holy Spirit, help me to participate in your story of Redemption.*

*Help me to relish the gospel as the life-changing news that it is.*

*I pray that you would use me to love someone sacrificially this Christmas.*

*Use me in a way that unproportionate to my gifts, so that you alone can receive the glory.*



**DECEMBER 11**

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## **DIY SATURDAY**

Revisit whichever Scripture stood out to you this week, and **pray** it back to God.

- What did you learn about Him that you're thankful for?
- What did it show you about yourself, that you need God's grace for?
- What did God accomplish that compels you to worship?
- What does God's story invite you to do?

## THE KING IS HERE: JESUS CHRIST

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It is not a stretch to say that God made several unexpected entrances into the World. A burning bush (Exodus 3). A pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire (Exodus 14:24). A cloudy-fiery presence in the Tabernacle (Exodus 40). Did Israel grow tired of such supernatural appearances?

It is also not a stretch to say that Jesus being born of a Virgin *should* have been expected. It *should* have been anticipated (Isaiah 7, 9, 53). In a sense, it was. Jesus garnered a following quickly. People recognized that there was something special about Jesus of Nazareth. Israel wanted a king! They were tired of being under Roman rule. They were willing to crown Jesus.

The problem, a familiar one: Israel wanted a king after their own image. Grace upon grace, Yahweh had taken Israel's weakness into account. Israel would reject the King God had sent. This rejection would result in Jesus' death. Jesus' death echoed in eternity. It resulted in the salvation of not just Israel, but the World.

The wait was over.

## DECEMBER 12

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### VERSES

- Luke 1:26-38

### DEVOTIONAL

God chose an unmarried, small town virgin to give birth to His son. He even promised her that Jesus would be a King—a King greater than David! Mary had faith that what God was calling her to was greater than what she could see or understand alone. She understood that One greater than herself was on the way. “Not my will, but your will be done;” a sentiment present at Jesus’ birth and death.

From the most unlikely of places, through the most unlikely person, at the most unlikely of times, by the most unlikely of means. “Nothing will be impossible with God;” an assurance that salvation would be attributed to God, and God alone.

### PRAYER

*Nothing is impossible with you, oh Lord.*

*Your ways are not my ways.*

*My thoughts are not your thoughts.*

*Father, as unlikely of a candidate as Mary was to be used by you, so am I.*

*Thank you for giving me salvation.*

*Thank you for placing me inside a faith-family.*

*Help me to center my life on you, and*

*to love the church as you love the church.*

## DECEMBER 13

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### VERSES

• Luke 1:5-25

• Luke 1:39-45

### DEVOTIONAL

Have you ever had a situation that made you feel totally alone—something others couldn't identify with? Maybe you were the only person with divorced parents; the only single mom on the PTA at your child's school; the only Christian at your gym. Mary had to have felt that too.

The Church is God's gift to mankind; the ultimate "me too!" society. For the unbeliever, the Church says "I've been through what you're going through, let me tell you how Jesus helped me?" For the believer, the Church says, "Remember how we were so broken? Praise God for not leaving us there!"

Mary was not left without someone to vouch for the divine nature of her pregnancy. Elizabeth too was going through this herself. She would be a friend and advocate for Mary just like her son would be for Jesus. Elizabeth's son would prepare the way for Jesus and Elizabeth would be a haven for Mary. Elizabeth knew what Mary knew: the children they carried had a calling from God bigger than their understanding.

### PRAYER

*Father, you could have chosen any number of ways to bring Christ into the World. It is out of kindness that you chose to give Mary community in her conception. Give me eyes to see the Church this way. Help me to be to others what Elizabeth was to Mary. Help me to be a haven to someone who is alone. Give me eyes to see people the way you see people.*

## DECEMBER 14

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### VERSES

• Isaiah 7:14

• Luke 1:46-56

### DEVOTIONAL

Mary considered her pregnancy as God remembering His covenant love for Israel. God remembered. Not a different god, but the same God that related to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Mary saw the mercy God showed in choosing her to carry Jesus as God's mercy to the entire World. Jesus would be Immanuel, a title meaning "God with us."

The King was with us.

### PRAYER

*Lord, no eye has seen or heart conceived how great your plans are.*

*I pray that you would cause my heart to rejoice in the movements of your hand.*

*I know that you are working something greater in the World around me than I can see.*

*Empower me to participate in your work.*

*I pray for my neighbor, knowing that there are many who do not know how good you are, or worship you at all. Open their hearts to the wonder of the gospel, just like you opened Elizabeth's heart to rejoice in Mary's pregnancy.*

## DECEMBER 15

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### VERSES

- Luke 2:1-20

### DEVOTIONAL

Luke records with historical specificity and fantastic detail the entrance of Jesus into the World. King Herod reigned and a festive choir of angels appeared singing carols! And, of course, shepherds were there. Luke does not differentiate one detail as more believable than another. It all steeps together to brew a birth of eternal importance. The rather destitute detail that a birth just occurred in a sheep barn is overshadowed by the majestic events surrounding it. Yet, even in the dirtiest of detail, God used it as a sign of His power. The shepherds were promised not only to see a baby, but a baby wrapped in cloth lying in a manger. Bethlehem, which experienced God's judgement during Ruth's time, was receiving the Son of God. Redemption was occurring—on all fronts.

### PRAYER

*Father, thank you for making the moments in life that feel like a total mess into something glorifying to you.*

*Your love knows no limits.*

*You spared no detail in ensuring the coming of your Son was planned perfectly.*

*Lord, I want your hand to steer every turn in my life. Whether I turn to the right or to the left, I want you to guide. I lay my yes before you, and anticipate by faith where you will lead.*



## DECEMBER 16

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### VERSES

- Matthew 2:1-12

### DEVOTIONAL

Every story has an antagonist—someone working in opposition to the main character. Sometimes, the protagonist can be their own antagonist (like Samson or Gideon). The antagonist in Matthew 2 at first seems to be Herod. Seeking to murder Jesus is no small thing. If you were to think back, though, the enemy is really the title “king.” It could have been Herod, Darius, David, Jehosaphat, or Saul; mankind cannot serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or vice versa. Israel could not serve Herod and Jesus.

There was a reason Jesus did not come waving a banner and carrying a sword. Not because he would have been defeated, but because He chose to take the form of a normal man. Israel did not need another monarch of man’s devising. That’s the point of God’s sorrow in I Samuel. Jesus could have come as a man of military might, but it would have kept him from something greater; the Cross.

### PRAYER

*Father, I confess that if I had things my way I would choose the easy way. I would have chosen a king after my own image and likeness. Lord, you revealed your heart for the whole World in so many ways: the Garden, your covenants, the manger. Give me your heart for the Nations. The World is yours, and everything in it. You could have avoided the Cross. I praise you because you are worthy to be praised. Save me from seeking to be the king over my life.*

## DECEMBER 17

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### VERSES

- Isaiah 9:2-7
- John 1:14
- Isaiah 53:2-12

### DEVOTIONAL

Like Charlie Brown trying to kick a football while Lucy holds it, we should have saw this coming. That's the irony of sin throughout the Bible. The results were nothing new. God promised things would be this way. Whether judges or kings or temples or tassels; it's all just lipstick on a pig. God wanted something for mankind that was not achievable after the Fall; not achievable by mankind alone, anyway. That is what makes the build up to the Cross so powerful. The Cross changed everything. The Messiah was not an earthly monarch, but a suffering servant. Jesus was not military leader, but a friend to sinners. And, lo and behold, God had been telling Israel just as much the whole time. Literally, we could have seen this coming.

### PRAYER

*Father, our disregard for facts and warnings like those in Isaiah serve as a strong reminder to how much we need you. Surely if you did not take on flesh and dwell among us, we would have continued in futility. God, I pray that you would keep sin far from me that I would be able to hear your voice clearly. Sin has broken me, and I have so far to go in being made whole. Thank you, in a way I can't comprehend, that I am wholly accepted but still given room to grow. Grow me, Father, for your glory and name's sake.*



**DECEMBER 18**

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## **DIY SATURDAY**

Revisit whichever Scripture stood out to you this week, and **pray** it back to God.

- What did you learn about Him that you're thankful for?
- What did it show you about yourself, that you need God's grace for?
- What did God accomplish that compels you to worship?
- What does God's story invite you to do?

# CHRISTMAS WEEK

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Within our church, we encourage our faith journey to move from a Sunday only experience to a 7 day a week lifestyle. One way we encourage that is through the DIY Method. For the next few days, "DIY" your prayers and devotions leading up to Christmas Eve! A prompt is added below for each day.

**December 19:** *pray for family members that are going to be at your Holiday events*

**December 20:** *pray for people within our church that spend the Holidays alone*

**December 21:** *pray for your neighbors*

**December 22:** *pray and tell God everything you're thankful for*

**December 23:** *pray a "listening prayer;" have some paper handy and write down what you hear God saying to you. If your mind wonders, try returning to listening by simply saying, "Father, unclutter my mind that I might hear your voice."*

Don't be discouraged if your time is mostly or all silence. Sometimes God, as our Father, just wants time with His kids in His presence.

# CHRISTMAS EVE

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## VERSES

- Matthew 1:17-25

## DEVOTIONAL

He's here! The King is here! Take Christmas Eve, and read this story with your family; be that immediate or church family. Tell your family what moves you about this story. Tell them how God has re-centered your life this Advent season. Confess what you have a hard time believing about the Gospel.

Write out your prayers below. A small prompt is provided, but otherwise make this personal. Have your kids draw a picture of what Christmas means to them. Make some hot chocolate (with tiny marshmallows, of course!) or tea, and meditate on the Christmas story. Imagine what Mary must have felt. Image what Joseph must have felt. Put yourself in the shoes of the shepherd two days after being led by angels to a barn.

Focus. Recenter. Christmas is tomorrow!

## PRAYER

*Father, this Christmas I am thankful for*

*Jesus, I need you so badly to*

*Holy Spirit, guide me in*

*Lord, I love you so much because*

# CHRISTMAS DAY

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## VERSES

- Galatians 4:4-5
- John 3:16-18
- Matthew 16:13-17

## DEVOTIONAL

The manger is made mighty by the cross. They are not competing phenomenon, but rather partnering pieces of the same puzzle. God had remembered His promise, and had made good on it. The Garden would be restored. Sin would be defeated. God and mankind would live in unbroken relationship again.

God sent His Son—directed the entire Christmas story, scripted the King’s entire story—so that broken people could be restored to Him. The King humanity waited so long for has come. When He comes again, He will come to stay forever. We will see Him as He is because we will be like Him (I John 3:2). We will worship Him for eternity (Revelation 7:9).

So, again, we wait.

## PRAYER

*\*Our Father in heaven,  
your name be honored as holy.  
Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And do not bring us into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.*

\*Matthew 6:9-13

## AWAITING ADVENT II

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### VERSES

- Matthew 28:18-20
- Hebrews 1:1-4

### DEVOTIONAL

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) was heard by the Disciples and their response was to start new churches. The quest to establish Jesus as King was finished; Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father. The solution to sin has been provided, and the work to tell people about this solution has begun. Everywhere the Disciples went they told people about Jesus, and with the people that believed they gathered them into groups called churches. It was not just one group—though all Christians everywhere make up “the Church.” The Disciples specifically and noticeably gathered local churches that served as community to small gatherings of Christians. Our duty, until the King returns, is to do the same.

### PRAYER

*Father, make me a magnet for lost people.*

*Help me to be known like your Son was known,  
as a friend to sinners.*

*Make me the aroma of Christ in my neighborhood.*

*Make me bold with the Gospel.*

*Root my identity deeply in Christ.*

*Make me a lover of the local church.*

*Thank you for bringing the Gospel all the way from  
Jerusalem to where I live.*

*Thank you for making the Gospel timeless, and  
without geographic ineffectiveness.*

*Show me where I fit in the  
work of the Great Commission.*

*Maranatha; come quickly Lord Jesus!*

