



DEVOTIONAL PLAN

*Christmas
Devotions
For Families*

SAMANTHA HANNI



Day 1

CHRISTMAS CARD PRAYERS



As we are in the month of December, no doubt your family will begin to receive Christmas cards and photo cards.

It's fun to look at the photos and see how everyone has changed in a year, where they went on vacation, and what their new dog looks like, but what exactly do you do with all those Christmas cards? Do you have a place to hang them up? Or do they end up in a stack on the kitchen counter or coffee table?

A meaningful way to make use of those cards is to pray for each family that sends a card. Whether you display them, or collect them in a bowl or basket, put them where you will regularly see the cards and remember to pray for them as a family.

God's word says to "pray constantly," and what better way to accomplish that than by leaving out those reminders to pray for your friends and family. If you know of specific requests for those families, why not write out those needs on the back of the card?

Let's not forget to lift up our loved ones during this special season.

"For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers."

Ephesians 1:15-16



Day 2

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?



Christmas is only a few weeks away and a new year is just around the corner. What does Christmas mean to you? What comes to mind when you think of the holiday season? Jot your thoughts down below.

When I think of Christmas, one of the main things I think about is love. God loves us –YOU – so much. God wanted to have a relationship with his people and so he sent his only son to accomplish that mission. His son, heavenly royalty, was sent to live a dirty, ordinary human life. And we celebrate the beginning of that life, the coming of hope, at Christmas time.

So amidst all the presents and decorations and food, stop to think about God's love for you. He loves YOU.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:16

Day 3

DEVOTION IN MOTION



When I was growing up, Christmas time was always such a magical season to me. The lights, the music, food, family; it was always such a special, loving time. But for many families, Christmas isn't always bright and shiny, like the glittering snowflakes you may hang up in the house.

As God's kids, we can bring a little extra light and love to those who are hurting during this time of the year. Below are some ways you can put your devotion in motion this month:

Deliver Christmas cards to a local nursing home with a parent or Sunday School class.

Find a local group that is making care packages for soldiers overseas and contribute your own care package.

If your church or school sponsors a gift program for foster kids or an orphanage, find out how you can pick out a gift for a kid your own age who needs some extra love.

"...so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well."

1 Thessalonians 2:8



Day 4

ANCHORED HOPE



What is a symbol? A symbol is an image that stands for a bigger meaning. Your school or favorite sports team most likely has a mascot or symbol that's easily recognizable. The meaning or message of that team or group is summed up in that one picture.

One of the symbols God uses in the Bible is an anchor, and it represents hope. An anchor is a sturdy piece of metal that anchors a ship in port. It holds it right where it needs to be.

In a broader sense, an anchor is basically any item that holds you in place, no matter what is swirling around you.

Our hope in Christ is that anchor in our lives. No matter what storms beat against us, no matter what is falling or shifting around us, God is sure. And God is steady.

We celebrate the coming of hope at Christmas time with the birth of Christ. The tiny baby in a manger represents the anchored hope of everyone; hope of eternal life and of a God who loves us more than we can even imagine.

“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain.”

Hebrews 6:19

Day 5

THAT HOLY NIGHT



Sure it was messy. Most definitely it was stinky and noisy. Lowly? Yes. Undignified? Probably.

But I'd like to think there was a small moment the night Jesus was born that took Mary and Joseph's breath away. That held the shepherds captive for a few seconds. That even the animals ceased from eating, from mooing, and from shuffling in their stalls- just for a moment.

The hushed awe. The reverence. The holiness...it had to be tangible.

"O holy night..."

There is much about Christmas that can be noisy. The crowds swarm, the ads never stop, even certain songs have clamorous lyrics:

"O how they pound, raising their sound!" "Jingle all the way!" "Ding dong merrily on high!"

But this song bids us to still our tongues and quiet our hearts. It bids us to come to a position of reverence and to simply listen and worship.

"Fall on your knees, O hear the angel voices..."

In small ways throughout the season, we can quiet our hearts to worship and listen. Being humble and listening are not qualities our society usually elevates. It's all about making sure your voice is heard and that everyone knows you are the greatest.

But maybe that can be laid aside. By humbling bowing, the shepherds declared that Christ is Lord. May our lives reflect the same this Christmas season.

"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 2:6-7

Day 6

EMMANUEL, GOD WITH US



"O come, o come, Emmanuel..."

The nation of Israel was hungrily looking for the coming of their Savior, for that would signal their rescue, the arrival of their redeemer. Generation after generation had passed since the Messiah had been prophesied. As sons grew up to be fathers and into grandfathers, but no sign appeared of the promised one, how their anticipation must have been growing. Aging eyes eagerly hunting for any signs...

"O come, o come..."

Those simple, pleading lyrics of one of my favorite Christmas carols struck a deeper note with me this year, for it echoes longings we can still identify with today. Awaiting. Expecting. Hoping.

In our chapter of the story, Jesus has indeed come, but we wait for his second final coming. We too anticipate meeting our Savior face to face. On a simpler, daily level, we are all awaiting events and seasons of life it seems, maybe even waiting on something God has promised.

May you take heart anew this Christmas season that waiting is not bad. As Christians, we don't wait alone. The One we look to is indeed present with us now.

"O come, o come Emmanuel..." Emmanuel, the God who is with us; or more precisely "The With Us God." I don't know about you, but I need a "With Us God." This name...the intimacy and love it conveys...it overwhelms me. Emmanuel is not a far-off thought.

He is with us, cares for us and desires to have a relationship with us. He has come, and he will come again.

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

Matthew 1:23

Day 7

PROMISE KEEPER



Today's verse is one of the first verses I ever memorized, and it's a good one to start with because it's talking all about Jesus. This passage was written hundreds of years before Jesus was even born. It was written by a man named Isaiah who was a prophet.

Jesus hadn't even been born and yet this passage talks about his job and his future. Amazing!

There are actually more than 300 prophecies about Jesus in the Bible that came to pass. Can you believe that? More than 300!

This is just one way that God show he is a promise keeper. He always keeps his word. He doesn't lie, change his mind, or forget like humans do. If God can make more than 300 prophecies come true in one person (Jesus), just think of how well he can take care of your life.

You can trust the promise keeper.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.”

Isaiah 9:6-7

Day 8

TO THE SHEPHERDS FIRST



Do you know who first received the news that Jesus had been born in a manger? If you guessed shepherds, you were right. The angels visited some nearby shepherds first to give them the good news.

Now, you might not think there is anything weird about this, but it was odd for the shepherds to get the word first. Shepherds were looked down on in Jesus' time; taking care of sheep was considered lowly, dirty work.

Shepherds definitely weren't the ones you ran to with important news.

Even in our own day, we tend to focus on whoever is the prettiest, the most powerful, and the most popular. But Jesus sets a different example. He isn't concerned about status or outward appearances. He is concerned about your heart. Is your heart in a place to receive him?

The shepherds were in a place to receive Christ that night. Are you in a place to receive from God? Or are you more concerned with what other people think about you?

As you reflect on the fact that shepherds heard the good news first, and the fact that Jesus calls himself our shepherd, may you embrace that same attitude of humility.

“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Luke 2:8-12

Day 9

HOLY DAYS



Have you ever wondered where we get the word holidays? It comes from an old English word for holy days, days set aside for religious reasons. The word was later changed to mean any day that was set aside for celebration, fun, and a break from the regular work.

I love, though, that the concept came from “holy days.” Throughout the Bible, we see God guiding his people to set aside time to celebrate and have fun, as well as to remember the work he had done. That cycle of remembering and celebrating reminded his people of who took care of them, who provided for them, and who was guiding them.

God is not a killjoy who never laughs and never has any fun. Our God loves to rejoice and celebrate and he loves to see his children delight in him. In fact, Jesus’ first miracle was at a wedding, a large party indeed!

So as you go from Christmas pageant, to party, to church, to family time this season, feel free to actually enjoy yourself. Rejoicing in what God has done honors him. Remembering what he has done keeps our heart in tune with his.

“The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine on us.
With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.”

Psalm 118:27

Day 10

THE POTTER'S HAND



Have you stopped to think about Mary, the mother of Jesus, lately? We know from biblical accounts that Mary was very young, most likely still a teenager, when the angel Gabriel paid her a special visit.

She probably had very different plans for her life, but then that angel showed up. And Mary had a choice. Would she accept what God had placed before her, or pursue her own path?

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.” Luke 1:38

Mary allowed God to shape her life, like a potter shapes a clay vase or bowl. Do you allow God to shape you, even when that means unexpected changes in your life?

We need to trust God’s vision for our life, rather than cling to our own, just like Mary trusted God to reshape her life completely. And look at what she got to do: she was the mother of Jesus. Let’s follow Mary’s example and let God shape our lives.

“So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.”

Jeremiah 18:3-4

Day 11

MAKING A LIST...CHECKING IT TWICE



I loved making a Christmas list when I was kid. I mean, I understood that the most important things in life weren't "things," but I did still enjoy thinking of toys and books that I wanted.

Do you have some kind of Christmas list? As you make a Christmas list this season, have you thought about making a God list? A God list is a list of qualities you'd like to develop, or things you want to learn about the Lord. A strange idea at first, but if we put so much emphasis on material things, why is it so hard to think of spiritual things we desire?

If I were to make a God list right now, one of the things on there would be help in renewing my mind, resting in his love, and continued courage to wait on him. What would be on your list? Understanding? Patience with your siblings? Something else?

I would encourage you to spend some time as a family making a God list this week. Where do you want to see him move in your family this coming year? Write it out and put it somewhere you will see it every day. In a year's time, it will be so encouraging to see what all you have gained and learned in the Lord.

"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."

Colossians 3:2

Day 12

WISE GUYS



“After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.”

Matthew 2:9-12

We don't know who they were or where they were from. We don't know if they were from the same country. We don't even know if there were actually three wise men that came to see Jesus; there were three gifts given, but there could have easily been more or less magi present.

For all that we don't know about the mysterious magi, we do know one thing: they were courageous. They left their own country and traveled what was probably a great distance. They entered the home of a stranger. They worshipped and offered extravagant gifts to Baby Jesus, risking their lives and defying the wicked leadership of Herod. Bold and brave.

I love their story as they gave those beautiful gifts and worshipped with truth and humility. Let us follow in their footsteps as we offer precious sacrifices and as we worship Jesus with courage, truth, and humility.

Day 13

JOY TO THE WORLD



Did you know that the classic Christmas song, Joy to the World, was inspired by Psalm 98? Isaac Watts penned those famous lines nearly 300 years ago in 1719. But if you look closer, you'll see that Psalm 98 actually refers to the second coming of Christ, not his birth in Bethlehem.

While the lyrics can be applied to his first coming, how does that change how you look at the wording knowing they were penned looking toward that second coming? I love the last verse:

"He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love."

Where do you see the “wonders of his love” this Christmas season? They're all around us. They are in the faces of your kids as they “help” make cookies, they are in the voices raised in song, they are in soft kisses of snow on your cheeks.

In the words of Max Lucado, the wonders of his love are a picture of how close Christ comes to his people, to you. (From "He Lives Within You)

The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Psalm 98:2-3

Day 14

LIGHT OF THE WORLD



One of my favorite elements of Christmas time is all the lights. I love how our living room looks so cozy with the twinkling lights on the tree. Ordinary buildings look festive with strings of bulbs. As a kid, my parents would put Christmas lights on my playhouse. Lights make ordinary things look magical and festive.

A great light also pointed to where Baby Jesus was born and guided the wise men to find him. Jesus then calls us lights in Matthew 5. And light was the first thing to be created in the world. Light is important to God

Just like the star pointed to Jesus, our light points others to him today. Don't hide your light. We don't turn on Christmas lights during the day, do we? No, we turn them on at night. Light shines out most brightly in the darkness and our world is in constant need of light.

It needs the light of Christ shining through you.

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14-16

Day 15

THE GREATEST GIFT



Christmas is finally here! The day that takes so long (if you're a kid) to get here has finally arrived. I hope you have a special day as a family. I know I am looking forward to spending it with my family.

In the midst of enjoying yummy food, opening gifts, playing games, and carrying out trash bags full of wrapping paper, I hope you stop and make room in your heart for thinking about the greatest gift ever given: Jesus.

Clothes wear out and go out of style. Toys break or get donated. Candy gets eaten. But the gift of salvation never breaks, wears out, or goes out of style. If you have chosen to accept Christ as your savior, then you have already received the best gift anyone could ask for.

If you haven't done that, consider making today the day you accept that gift.

“Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” (Luke 2:11)

If you would like to accept the gift of salvation, pray these words:

Dear Jesus, thank you for being the greatest gift ever given. I know I need your gift of salvation because I have messed up and can't fix it on my own. Come into my heart and save me. Help me to learn about you and follow you.

Thank you for your love and grace.

In Jesus' name, Amen.