

# Daily Devotional

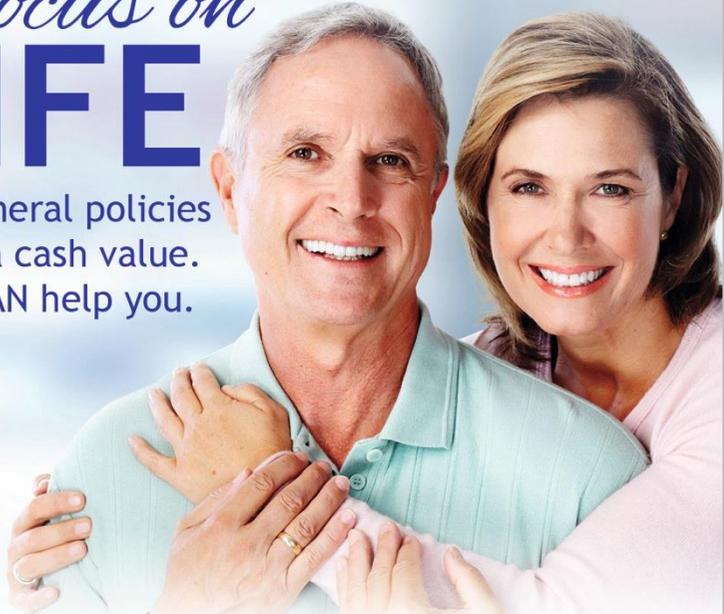
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## Booklet



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# Symbols of Christmas

<b>STAR</b>	Page 01	06 December 2020
<b>GIFTS</b>	Page 08	13 December 2020
<b>THE BIRTH OF JESUS</b>	Page 15	20 December 2020
<b>SANDALS</b>	Page 29	27 December 2020

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## STUBBORN RESISTANCE: DAY ONE

**Read: Mt 2:1-12** (*noting Herod's response to the event of the birth of Jesus*)

Matthew 2 records the star signalling the decisive moment in history. The Christ child – the long awaited and hoped for messiah has been born; God's greatest moment of self-revelation or self-disclosure has happened. Jesus – God in flesh, is born into this world to connect to us, to be in relationship with us, to bring into reality nothing less than the opportunity for us to participate in God's divine life. Jesus is born into this world to address human poverty and hunger in every form in a way that it can't otherwise be addressed. And now the world is required to **respond** to this new God reality.

Matthew 2 also captures human responses to this event. The first is from Herod, a Jew left untouched by this decisive moment. Herod sees the birth of Jesus as disturbing. Herod has plans and personal ambitions. For Herod, the birth of Jesus is intrusive. There is no space for this reality and so Herod blocks out or closes his life to having a Christ reality invade it. The birth of Jesus requires Herod to turn his world upside down, to transform him and the way he lived. In Herod's view, the greatest thing about his life is already happening without any meddling from Jesus. Do you recognise this response to Jesus in others... in you? When have you responded to Jesus with "Jesus, stay out of it; stay out of this area of my life, stay out of my finances, stay out of my sexuality, stay out of my personal agendas, stay out of this habit, stay out of this mess, stay out of this thought, stay out of this conversation, stay out of this relationship, stay out of this dream, stay out of this desire, stay out of this business plan, stay out of my emotional condition – it doesn't need you interfering with it!"

<p><b>Pray:</b> Jesus, forgive my stubborn resistance of your presence in my life. Amen.</p>
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## YOUR WAY OVER MINE: DAY TWO

**Read Matthew 2: 1-12** noting Magi's response the event of the birth of Jesus

Yesterday we noted that Matthew 2 records both the star signalling the decisive moment in history as well as 2 human responses to this event. The second response is captured in those who followed the star – the magi. Their response to this watershed moment in history leaves those who followed the star forever changed. The Magi were from a Median tribe - part of a political movement that unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow the Persians who had superseded the Babylonians. They were a group that relinquished all ambitions for power and prestige and became a class of priest amongst the Persians. They were found as teachers and instructors of Persian kings. They performed temple rituals on behalf of the people. They became interpreters of dreams and people of wisdom who were sought for truth.

From this background, the star that leads them to Jesus takes them from being practitioners of a pagan religion to being recipients of God's revelation. The presence of the Christ child draws them away from their religious practice. They are required to make space in their current religious practice for a reality that will require them to let go of old ways and make alterations to their worldview and consider the demands the Christ child will place on their lives.

The Magi, sense something of this calling to them as they enter into Jesus' presence. They sense something momentous in the presence of the Christ child – someone of surpassing importance. They recognise the moment and pursue the messiah. They begin a worship of the Christ child – an offering to Jesus what they value most. They worship the Jewish Messiah and accept His ways over and above their own. God's moment has arrived and so they adjust their living, grasping that the time for action is now.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to grow into a person who accepts Your way over mine. Amen

## THE BRIGHT MORNING STAR: DAY THREE

**Read Rev 22:16, 2:26-29 & 2 Peter 1:19**

In Rev 22:16 we have Jesus revealing himself as the bright morning star. Reference is made to this phrase earlier in Revelation (see Rev 2:26-29) and also in II Peter 1:19. All three of these references are best understood as references to Jesus himself.

Jesus as the bright morning star breaks the darkness of night. Jesus heralds in a new day after the dark night. Jesus not only begins the offer of salvation, but goes on to offer salvation in all its fullness. Christ's presence may be dimly sensed now, but that dim sense is but a foretaste of the more exalted state ahead where we will ultimately and thoroughly be with him. Thus not only does the star of Bethlehem lead others to the Christ child, but the Christ child becomes the bright Morning Star to the world.

But this is not where it stops. There is one more development to note from these passages. Not only is Jesus the bright Morning Star in royal splendour, He is also the One who gives to every faithful believer the gift to be like Him in royal splendour. The morning star heralds in a new dawn, it rises in our hearts and leads all of God's people to shine in every darkness.

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**Prayer:** Jesus we praise you as the bright Morning Star. Shine in our darkness. Amen

## **GOD'S TRANSFORMING LIGHT: DAY FOUR**

***Read: I Timothy 1:12-19***

The transformation or turn around in the lives of the Magi as a result of seeking the Christ Child that the star pointed out to them, is a work of God offered not just to the magi, but to all people. Just as God led the magi to Christ with a star, so does He lead our lives towards being transformed by Christ. This is just what God does – He will always be found initiating a movement towards us and this enabling grace allows us to respond.

It happened to Paul who in the passage set for today, speaks of God taking someone involved in witch hunts and blinded by arrogance receiving God's saving mercy that transformed him. Elsewhere, in II Cor 5 Paul speaks of people being made new creations; where the old things are left behind and new life burgeons as God in Christ works in us. Many others witness to a moment when they would leave their past and live life differently – with a greater deliberateness, a greater purpose, a greater awe, a clearer vision, with a message to deliver to the world that there is life beyond evil, sin and suffering – a life offered where a good, loving and gracious God is worshipped.

Has your life been sizably altered by the presence of the Christ child? Have you recognised the presence of Jesus in your world as something that changes your current living? Have you acted and where necessary, left all that is familiar, all comfort and safety, and pressed forward tenaciously to find Jesus in your presence and honour him in your living? God awaits for you and for me, like Paul and the magi, to seek our role in God's story and to more firmly establish our roots in His being.

***Prayer: Lord transform me into a new life surrounded by every reality of Your Kingdom. Amen.***

## TAKING GOD'S LIGHT INTO CORNERS OF DARKNESS: DAY FIVE

**Read:** Isaiah 60:1-6

Isaiah gives this wonderful faith statement that the light of God's glory shines over us. Elsewhere we find similar statements about God. In I John 1:5 we are told that God is light, while Jesus spoke of himself as being the light of the world in John 8:12. Paul in II Cor 4:6 says that 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. We have also heard of Jesus being called the bright Morning Star.

Light is part of God's essence. If God is light, He cannot remain hidden, He shines through darkness and is revealed in darkness. As those who follow the bright Morning Star, we too become stars.

God shines through us into worlds of darkness – God has placed us amongst people and in places that are blind to the light of God and not able to understand it in any significant way. What is needed from us in these places and amongst these people is a willingness to enter into foreign worlds to make contact and let God's light shine in the darkness. What is needed is a deliberate living which is resolute and determined to not get caught up in all sorts of side shows, but to remember the purpose of us being amongst such people and in such places - to allow God's light to shine into the darkness. Can we covenant ourselves to such living today knowing that God will lead us every step of the way?

***Prayer:*** *Lord your light is shining in the darkness – Shine Jesus Shine!  
Amen*

## DESCENDANTS AS NUMEROUS AS THE STARS: DAY SIX

### *Read Hebrews 11:8-12*

In this passage from the letter to the Hebrews, the accomplishments of the faith of Abraham are spoken of. Verse 12 uses an intriguing phrase to describe Abraham – “though he was as good as dead,” descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky were to follow.

In many ways, this is an archetypal depiction of Jesus - the Abraham story begins to hint at some Jesus realities. There was a time in the life of Jesus where He too was thought of as “as good as dead,” yet from Him too came descendants as numerous as the stars.

Not only did a star mark the presence of the Christ Child; not only did the Christ child become the bright Morning Star, but all who follow Jesus too are likened to stars.

From the Matthew 2 story, one way that we become like Christ or follow Christ is offered. The magi bring gifts to Jesus. Following Jesus will always include a sacrificial offer of oneself to the Saviour simply for who he is – the King of all kings, the One who reveals the Word of God, the Healer of all souls, the Saviour who through His death takes away the sins of the world. God is God and that reality alone is deserving of our worship. That Jesus is Lord is reason enough to worship and rejoice.

Life and love find their truest meaning in relationship with Jesus. When we let the gift of God do its work in our lives – when we make space for Jesus to do His work of redemption, adoption, transformation and liberation in our lives, our lives shine like stars. Our quest is not to be loving and life giving – for that is a fruit – a result of something else. Our quest, like that of the magi, is to a committed and passionate seeking of the presence of the Saviour so that we can worship Him and then the fruit of love and life will show itself in our lives.

***Prayer: Lord make me like You. Amen***

## GROUP NOTES

### SYMBOLS OF CHRISTMAS - STAR

The Bethlehem star causes two contrary responses to the Christ child – that of Herod's and that of the magi. Further, Jesus becomes known as the bright Morning star that shines into our hearts and makes us people of light, or little stars who bring light where there is darkness.

#### **Welcome:**

Share either a personal or a second hand account of either:

- The light of Christ shining into you darkness
- You offering God's light to the world
- Someone else who offered light in a dark moment.

#### **Worship:**

Sing along with these two songs of praise:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDZTQkeQdAU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OIwSQmyCg4>

#### **Word:**

Read: Matthew 2:1-12

1. Have you ever witnessed or experienced a response like that of Herod to Jesus?
2. Have you ever experienced of witnessed a response like that of the magi to Jesus?

Read Isaiah 6-:1-6

1. What dark places do you go to to let God's light shine?
2. How do you protect yourself from getting caught up in the darkness you are exposed to in the world?

#### **Work:**

What one act will allow God to shine through your life into some dark reality in the world?

## THE THREE GIFTS PRESENT TO JESUS: DAY ONE

### ***Read Matthew 2:11***

The three wise men travelled to where Jesus was born, they brought gifts with them. Each gift had great meaning and significance. Traditionally people speak of the three wise men because there were three gifts and because of the Christmas carol, this was probably not the case though. The three gifts that were presented to baby Jesus were Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh

Back in the time gold was mostly used for the Kings, it also presented wealth and status. The high priest's robe would have some gold woven into it. Frankincense and Myrrh were used for healing purposes. Frankincense has a very sweet smell that would get rid of the unpleasant smell when burnt. Myrrh was mixed with anointing oil and used to anoint the priest, it was also used as medicine .When we read **John 19:39(NIV)** we are reminded that Nicodemus brought a mixture of spices to spices which was Myrrh and aloes to anoint the body of Jesus Christ after his death. Therefore, Myrrh was traditionally used as part of the burial process.

When we consider these gifts we realise that they show a very important journey of Jesus Christ. They are a declaration of Jesus being the King of Kings. They declare that Jesus' ministry would be one of healing and love. Finally it points towards His death, which saves you and I from our sin.

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***Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, you are the King of Kings, you are worthy of our praise.***

## JESUS THE GIFT TO THIS WORLD: DAY TWO

### *Read John 3:16-21*

With all the gifts that the wise men brought to Baby Jesus there is a greater gift than those presented to Jesus and that gift is Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus was born into the world in human form to be God with us. To be in this world in human form and walk the earth and be with the people on earth. What a gift that is, to have God himself be the gift!!

His life was and still is a gift to the world, a kind of gift that has a lot of goodies inside such as love, peace, joy, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, freedom, acceptance, compassion and list goes on.

He walked a life that impacted other people's lives, he shared with people who were struggling and through these conversations they received these gifts he carried. He offered the gifts of forgiveness, comfort, freedom, love, acceptance, peace, joy and so forth. Those who shared life with Jesus, or encountered Jesus received all these gifts and more. The biggest gift that Jesus Christ offers, and that God intended to give to this world was freedom, that whoever believed would not perish but have eternal life through Jesus Christ (**John 3:16**)

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**Prayer:** Dear Lord Jesus, may you teach me to be a gift like you are in this world.

## THE GIFTS AROUND US: DAY THREE

### *Psalm 7:17*

There is a picture making rounds on Facebook, saying “This is not the year you get everything you want, this is the year you appreciate everything you have”

That phrase sounds a bit harsh, but we need to be appreciative of what we have, there are a lot of gifts (blessings) around us that we don’t even notice. We sometimes become so focused on what we want and what ‘gift’ we put under the tree we forget about what’s going on around us.

We have so much blessings that God delivers every day, we receive the gift of life, the gift of family, the gift of friendship, the gift of a community and fellowship. There are probably more gifts that you can think of, but we need to appreciate the gifts that has been put in place for us. Mary and Joseph were running away to protect the precious gift that God blessed the world with, they received gifts to help them financially (Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh) but they also received a greater gift of community from those Wise men who visited and gave the those gifts.

Who are you a blessing of community to?

Who is your blessing of community?

Appreciate those people and the support they bring into your life.

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***Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, may you teach me to be a gift like you are in this world.***





## **WE ARE THE GIFT: DAY SIX**

### ***Read Matthew 5:14-16***

Yesterday the theme was that we have something to offer. With having something to offer that makes us gifts in this world.

We are gifts to friends, family and the people we meet every day, we are gifts in this world.

The world is full of darkness, full of lost hope and there is no sense of direction or guidance for the people who feel lost. We as Christ followers are challenged to go be the gift in the world, to go be the light where there is no hope anymore, we are challenged to go and be the light where there is darkness, we are challenged to go be guidance where there isn't.

Jesus gave His Disciples the commission to go make Disciples and to teach them what He has taught them.

With being the light in this dark world and teaching what we have been taught by Jesus Christ we allow ourselves to be vessels, gift vessels to the world.

Who you can you be a gift to today?

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***Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me shine my light bright for the people around me.***

**GROUP NOTES**  
**SYMBOLS OF CHRISTMAS - GIFTS**

**Welcome:** This week spend some time remembering the gifts that God has blessed you with through the walk of life.

**Worship:** Spend some time praising God for all the things that you remember He has done for you. While doing that listen to “I will offer up my life” by Matt Redman

**Word:** **Matthew 2:10-11, Matthew 5:14-16 and John 3:16-21**

We have received the gift, we are called to be gifts and give what we are able to give back to the world. Making it a bright shining place with our lights, that are not hidden under the table, but rather on top. Shining and giving light to everyone around us.

**Work:** This week spend some time looking at what will allow you and challenge you to be a gift and a blessing to those around you. What can you offer for His Kingdom?

## THE BIRTH OF JESUS: DAY ONE

### **Read: Luke 2:7**

The birth of Jesus is an event which is very familiar to most believers, and is celebrated every year at this time. Children are so familiar with this story that they can repeat the details with ease. The annual Christmas play or Carols by Candlelight, is eagerly anticipated by Christian parents and children alike and is celebrated as a family event.

It seems strange therefore, that an event as important as this in our Christian calendar, depicts a story of the birth of a “king” in very lowly circumstances.

The Jewish world was eagerly awaiting the birth of a king, yet none of the Jewish leaders were present at “Christ’s” birth, only a few magi and humble shepherds.

When we study Mary and Joseph’s circumstances, we learn that they were poor. The fact that the offering made by Mary for purification at the temple was that of two turtle doves, substantiates this statement. Joseph, also described as an “architekton”, would have worked as a carpenter, builder or stonemason and would have been a labourer who would have had to go to the market each day to find work.

When Mary and Joseph arrived at the inn, to find a place to stay, there was no room for them. The inn was full and they had to move on.

**Consider:** Have you ever been in the position where you have had to choose less than your expectations because of circumstances? Maybe it was because you could not afford it, or as in the case of Mary and Joseph, maybe it was because you had no other choice. How did it affect you? If not, have you been aware of anyone who has been placed in that position?

Mary and Joseph may have felt disheartened, saddened or discouraged by their circumstances. It must have been a desperate situation for them, considering that they were at the end of a very long and tedious journey and that Mary had possibly already gone into labour.

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, we are grateful for your provision and your protection. Please provide for those who find themselves in difficult circumstances. We pray that you would provide them with your comfort and guidance during these times.

## THE BIRTH OF JESUS: DAY TWO

### **Read: Luke 2:7**

Mary, being of the lineage or family of “David”, had travelled to Bethlehem out of necessity. Augustus had ordered a census to be taken of all the Jewish people with the considered expectation of a taxation. As Mary was quite far along in her pregnancy she would probably have not made this journey, had they not been ordered to do so. The family or clan which Mary belonged to were all expected to converge on this small town to register as ordered. It must have been packed to the brim with people. Some family staying with their kin and others in the available lodging in the town.

When we look at the “bigger” picture we are able to see that despite the difficult circumstances Mary and Joseph had to face, God’s hand was there. In Micah 5:1-2, we are made aware that 700 hundred years before Christ’s birth a prophecy revealed that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the Messiah. “Marshal your troops, o city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek with a rod. But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will rule over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” (NIV).

God not only placed Mary and Joseph within Judah (Bethlehem) but He also placed them together with their family lineage, that of the line of “David”. Who would have thought that this young family, who were turned away from the inn to give birth to their son in a stable, would be the earthly mother and father to God’s son?

God had used the decree of the Roman Empire and that of the tyrannical rulers: Herod and Augustus to orchestrate and fulfil His will.

**Consider:** When we are faced with difficult circumstances, we may fail to see how God’s hand is guiding us, protecting us and providing for us. Yet, God is there. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

<p><b>Prayer:</b> Dear God, please help us to trust that you are with us in difficult circumstances. We thank you that during these times, you have a plan and purpose for us.</p>
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## THE BIRTH OF JESUS: DAY THREE

### **Read: Luke 2:7**

Mary and Joseph, probably had arrived late in the town because of Mary's advanced condition and were therefore faced with the almost impossible dilemma of having nowhere to stay. They had to move onto a stable to find shelter.

One might ask the question: Why didn't this small "clan" or family of Mary not take them in and help them, especially considering that Mary was close to or already in labour?

It may have been because of the late hour, or because Joseph, as the head of this small family had no kin or family members to rely on. We can only surmise what the circumstances may have been but it does make one question: Why weren't they treated with more compassion or empathy?

Isaiah 53:3 -5, provides us with some insight into how it was prophesied that Jesus would be perceived. These verses make us aware that Jesus came to be born as was foretold and according to biblical prophecy. Spurgeon puts this beautifully, "Would it have been fitting that the man who was to die naked on the cross should be robed in purple at his birth? Would it not have been inappropriate that the redeemer who was to be buried in a borrowed tomb should be born in the humblest shed, and housed anywhere but in the most ignoble manger?"

God's son would come to earth not to be served but to serve. He would preach to the poor, the lonely, the sinful and the destitute. Christ would serve with humility, compassion and love, not with the usual tyranny, force and wrath of the "kings" of the Roman Empire of that time.

**Consider:** How would you have treated Mary and Joseph if they had come to your inn? Would you show them the same compassion, empathy and love Jesus demonstrated in his ministry on earth?

Philippians 2:3 says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves."

**Prayer:** Dear Lord we thank you for your compassion, empathy and love. Please help us to demonstrate that love in our service to others.

## THE BIRTH OF JESUS: DAY FOUR

### **Read: Luke 2:7**

Reading the last part of this verse, one may consider the question: Why was Jesus born under such lowly circumstances? There was no room at the inn so Mary, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger. Martin Luther states, “No one noticed or was conscious of what God was doing in that stable. He lets the large houses and costly apartments remain empty, lets their inhabitants eat, drink and be merry; but this comfort and treasure are hidden from them.”

God chooses to reveal this miracle birth instead, to the shepherds who although regarded in poor esteem by men were honoured and deemed worthy of this amazing news! The words of the angel, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you: You will find him wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (NIV); must have been extremely exciting for this group of lowly shepherds.

One may come to the conclusion that these shepherds would have been more inspired to and would have felt more inclined to serve a king who had not been spared the challenges of the poor. Someone who would understand their needs and hardships. They would believe in him because he understood their concerns and had empathy for the daily challenges they had to face. God had called Jesus to be a witness to the ordinary person on the street, someone who would be available and approachable, someone who having been born into lowly circumstances, could have compassion for and would understand the ordinary sinner.

**Consider:** What effect do you think Jesus’ ministry would have had, had he been born a wealthy king?

2 Corinthians 8:9 states, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. “Christ came into this world of suffering in order to die for our sins so that all who believe in Him may one day experience the wealth and amazing glory of an eternity spent with God.

**Prayer:** Jesus, we know that you have an intimate understanding of our needs and concerns. Thank you for humbling yourself in order to show your infinite love for us.

## THE BIRTH OF JESUS: DAY FIVE

**Read: Luke 2:7**

Considering our materialistic world today; a world that is so focussed on possessions and the promotion of “worldly” things, one may ask the question: Is there any room for Jesus? I recently visited the “Northmead Square”, it was early October and to my surprise and amazement all the Christmas decorations had already been put up! 3 months before we celebrate Christ’s birth. It made me wonder: What were they promoting? Their need to make and meet a specific budget or their need to celebrate with fellow Christians, the miracle of Christ’s birth?

In this modern world, there are many who no longer believe in the love, sacrifice and commandments Jesus established for us. There is no room for Jesus in their lives because it does not fit in with their personal ideology or will. They want to do things their own way, and to orchestrate and decide on their own outcomes.

We hold the keys to the inn (our hearts) in our hands. We are given the freedom to choose to let Jesus in, or to turn him away. There is a beautiful song which encapsulates this train of thought. The words go like this: “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face and the things of the earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.”

The characteristic of a true Christian is to truly believe and accept in your heart and to profess to others the precious gift which Christ has given us: The forgiveness of our sins so that, we may not fall short of God’s glory but so that we may spend an eternity with him.

**Consider the following:** Do you have room for Jesus in your heart? How much room are you willing to give him?

**Prayer:** God thank you for being the perfect example of humility. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I choose to let you in to my heart and to humbly serve you to the best of my ability.

## THE BIRTH OF JESUS: DAY SIX

**Read: Luke 2:7**

To summarise this week's devotional series, we may consider the following:

- Just like the innkeeper, who did not understand the enormity of Christ's birth, it is possible for us to miss Jesus. Do you have an intimate understanding of who he is and what he means to you?
- We may turn Jesus away from our inn (our hearts), or we can choose to let him in and allow him to give our lives true meaning and purpose.
- God chose to allow Jesus to become poor so that through his poverty we might become rich.
- Christ would serve with humility, compassion and love. He chose to value others above himself.
- When we look at the "bigger" picture we are able to see that despite the difficult circumstances Mary and Joseph had to face, God's hand was there.

The words of the following poem remind us about the true meaning of:  
**Christmas**

If you look for me at Christmas, you won't need a special star,  
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem, I'm right there where you are.  
You may not be aware of me amid the celebrations – You'll  
have to look beyond the stores and all the decorations. But if  
you take a moment from your list of things to do and listen to  
your heart, you'll find I'm waiting there for you. You're the one  
I want to be with, you're the reason that I came, and you'll  
find me in the stillness as I'm whispering your name.

**Love Jesus.**

**Prayer:** Thank you God for giving us the opportunity to celebrate the birth of your son at Christmas time. May we be reminded of your faithfulness and of your love for us.

## **GROUP NOTES**

### **THE SYMBOLS OF CHRISTMAS: THE BIRTH OF JESUS**

- When we study Mary and Joseph's circumstances, we learn that they were poor. Mary and Joseph may have felt disheartened, saddened or discouraged when they arrived at the inn after a long journey and there was no room for them.
- When we look at the "bigger" picture we are able to see that despite the difficult circumstances Mary and Joseph had to face, God's hand was there. God not only placed Mary and Joseph within Judah (Bethlehem) but He also placed them together with their family lineage, that of the line of "David".
- God had called Jesus to be a witness to the ordinary person on the street, someone who would be available and approachable, someone who having been born into lowly circumstances, could have compassion for and would understand the ordinary sinner.
- We hold the keys to the inn (our hearts) in our hands. We are given the freedom to choose to let Jesus in, or to turn him away.

**Welcome:** **Prayer:** May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ child. Almighty God, father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever. By: Ray Pritchard

**Worship:** Christmas offering - Casting Crowns (YouTube)

**Word:** Read: Luke 2:7

**Work:**

- Have you ever been in the position where you have had to choose less than your expectations because of circumstances? How did it affect you?
- When we are faced with difficult circumstances, we may fail to see how God's hand is guiding us, protecting us and providing for us. Yet, God is there. Read: Romans 8:28.
- What effect do you think Jesus' ministry would have had, had he been born a wealthy king? Please read: 2 Corinthians 8:9.
- Just like the innkeeper, who did not understand the enormity of Christ's birth, it is possible for us to miss Jesus. Do you have an intimate understanding of who he is and what he means to you?

## **SANDALS: DAY ONE**

### **The holiness of Christ**

John the Baptist shares these iconic words with the pharisees in Matthew 3:11, " ...someone is coming soon who is greater than I am, so much greater that I am not worthy to be his slave and carry his sandals." What strikes me about this statement is John's awareness of the Holiness of Jesus! He knew that Christ was more than a man. He knew that Jesus was God in flesh, Emmanuel, God with us! We see it clearly in his words in the gospel of John. "I have seen, and I testify that this is God's Chosen one."

John even lived with this awareness in the womb! Do you remember? When Mary visited John's mother, Elizabeth, while they were pregnant, John leaped for joy in his mom's womb! Perhaps it was an awareness of Jesus' sovereignty that gave John such clarity of purpose and such confidence in times of trial.

The writer of the Hebrews knew this about Jesus, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being". Paul offers us similar words in Colossians, "The Son is the image of the invisible God."

As We walk towards a new year, may we know and experience Jesus as our friend, healer, redeemer and Prince of peace, but, may we remember that He is so much more! As we reflect upon the sandals may we know that the One who calls Himself our friend is holy. He is God. The Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the end. He is the one who holds everything together and it is through Him that all things were created. Our Jesus is sovereign, mighty and powerful. He is in control. May the sandals bring us comfort because no matter what storms lie ahead in 2021, we serve a Jesus who calms the winds and waves with a single word.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you that in your glory, splendour and majesty you still choose to call us friend.

## SANDALS: DAY TWO

### True Humility

It is evident in the passage that John was starting to gain a reputation...His ministry was growing in popularity, his name was becoming famous, people were coming from far and wide to be ministered to by him! John responded to his elevated position differently than we see in the world, he didn't allow it to manifest in arrogance, self-importance or pride, instead, he pointed to Christ! "I am not worthy to carry his sandals!". Here, the sandals are a symbol of true humility.

We are not being humble when we act from a place of worthlessness—that is insecurity. True humility comes from a place of having our identity rooted in Christ, knowing that we are Gods holy, chosen people, knowing we are his sons and daughters we choose to stoop down low in love. C.S Lewis once said; "humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is just thinking of yourself less." Once you have seen the splendour of the King, it is the natural reaction. John lived with an awareness of the holiness of Christ so he could find honour in even the lowliest task such as carrying sandals!

Humility is the opposite of entitlement. It is not cowardice, it requires courage. It is choosing to not let pride or position dictate what tasks we can or cannot do, what people we can or cannot be seen with. Christ shows us this kind of humility. Paul describes it beautifully in Philippians, (Jesus) being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God as something to use to his advantage, but humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!

As I reflect on those sandals, a question I must ask myself is where do I allow pride to restrict me from living and loving well?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for not allowing your position to stop You from coming down to earth and carrying that cross, help me to do the same.

## **SANDALS: DAY THREE**

### **The privilege of serving Him**

In the psalms we are instructed to serve the Lord with gladness! This is a challenge for me sometimes because I often find myself falling into the trap of allowing busyness and weariness to remove the joy from serving- I start to feel as if it is just one more thing on my list of things to get done, it begins to feel more like a burden than a blessing. This is why a reflection on the sandals is so helpful for me because they remind me of the absolute privilege it is to serve Jesus, serving the Lord and His church is not something I have to do, it is something I get to do!

Have a look at John's words one more time, "I am not worthy to be his slave and carry His sandals..." It's like he is saying, who am I that I would be blessed with the opportunity to do anything for Jesus?! What I love so much is that later Jesus asks John to baptize him! Scriptures say that John tries to talk Him out of it, "You should be the one baptizing me" he said!

We are not worthy to be His servants, but Christ deeply desires to work with us! He calls us to be His co-workers! He desires for us to be part of what He is doing! In Corinthians Paul calls us 'Christ's Ambassadors'. An ambassador is a minister of the highest rank sent to a foreign country with the task of representing the sovereign or country that they come from. Christ our King has called us to represent Him on this earth! As we prepare for 2021 may we remember the wonderful privilege we have of serving Him!

We get to be Christ's ambassadors! We get to honour Him with our lives, with our gifts, with our finances, with our time...we get to carry His sandals, and it is an absolute privilege

**Prayer:** Father, though we are not worthy to gather up the crumbs under Your table, You call us and choose us to work with You! Thank you for the wonderful honour.

## **SANDALS: DAY FOUR**

### **Service is love in action**

John did not just stop at a revelation of the honour of serving Him... He actually served Jesus! He acted!

The sandals remind me that Christianity is not just about the knowledge we gather or the verses we can memorise. It is about far more than knowing we are called to serve; it is about actually serving. Christianity requires action. As James puts it, "If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

Jesus provides us with a wonderful example of what it means to serve. We see it as He bends down low to touch the leper, as He never makes people feel like an inconvenience, often changing His plans to minister to those who were suffering. As He gave of Himself fiercely. We see it as He knelt with bended knee and towel before His disciples and took off their sandals and washed their feet. After the Lord of heavens armies and creator of the universe had taken on this position of the lowliest of slaves, He said to his disciples, "as I have done you must do"! He then follows this moment with a profound statement in John 13:35, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"

Love must look like something, and service is love in action! When we choose to offer our lives, our gifts and our time to the world, we are giving them a tangible expression of the love of Christ. When we look back on our history it is so incredible to see the wonderful ways God has used people who were moved to act on their beliefs. Mother Theresa is one such person and I offer you her words, "I am just a little pencil in the hands of a writing God, who is writing a love letter to the world."

**Prayer:** Lord God, help me to be unsatisfied with words, but move me to action so that I can love well.

## **SANDALS: DAY FIVE**

### **Preparing the way for Christ in 2021**

John's purpose according to Isaiah was to "prepare the way of the Lord's coming! To clear the way for him". John gives us a picture of what preparing the way looks like when he proclaims that he has come to "baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God." He makes this statement moments before he speaks about the sandals- It is impossible to think about the sandals without thinking about repentance.

As we look toward the new year we are reminded of the joy of new beginnings and fresh starts, clean pages and limitless opportunity. Jesus provides us with this opportunity every time we come to him and in vulnerability confess that we have sinned.

To repent is to make room in our heart for God, and as we return to Him, we find a gift waiting for us! In Acts, Luke tells us that times of renewal and refreshing are a consequence of repentance!

When we offer ourselves, our sinful, broken and imperfect selves, again to God, we will receive restoration! We will be made white as snow! We will be liberated from the bondage of shame and walk in the joyful freedom Christ fought for us to attain on the cross!

As we anticipate 2021, may we choose to take a moment to clear a way for Christ in our heart by confessing our sin. May we remember that the God we are returning to is good, loving and kind! Just as with the prodigal son, He will meet our return with rejoice and not rebuke, He will clothe us again as Sons and daughters. Luke 15:22; "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet

**Prayer:** Jesus, we come before you today to confess our sins. For the things we have done and the things we have failed to do- forgive us we pray.

## **SANDALS: DAY SIX**

### **The presence of God**

The sandals ultimately remind me of the wonderful privilege we have in as believers in the 21st century. We are living in the time in history that the prophets of the old testament foretold with great excitement and joy! We are living in a time in History where we have access to the spirit of God! This means that the Jesus who was once somewhere, for some people, at some point in time, is now everywhere, always, for all! John was proclaiming this truth in the statement we have been studying this week... "But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

When God appeared to both Moses and Joshua, He gave the same instruction: Take of your sandals because the ground you are standing on is Holy! Perhaps the sandals have always been a symbol of God's nearness, His very presence! This is good news because in His presence we find perfect peace, joy, hope and healing. His Holy Spirit is given many names in Scripture; He is the Councillor; in His presence we find comfort! He is our Helper; in times of trial the Spirit of God is there to guide us! He is the Breath of God, waiting to breathe life into our weary souls. Sadly, just as it is possible to die of starvation with a million rand in your bank account if you never make a withdrawal, it is possible to have access to all these wonderful things and not truly benefit from them.

Scripture tells us multiple times that if we would like to be filled with his Spirit there is one very specific thing we need to do- We need to ask! Luke 11:13 "... how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him"! In 2021. May we remember that the ground we are standing on is holy! He is near and He desires to fill us with His presence.

<p><b>Prayer:</b> Come Holy Spirit, Come</p>
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## **Symbols of Christmas**

### **The sandals**

**Welcome:** Share an embarrassing moment where you were humbled in front of someone

**Worship:** Who you say I am  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcC1Bp13n\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcC1Bp13n_4)

**Word:** Read Matthew 3:1-15 , and John 13

### **Questions:**

- As a follower of Christ, what is the importance of humility?
- Why do you think we sometimes lose the joy of serving Him?
- Why do you think love requires action?
- How can you prepare a way for Christ in 2021

**Work:** Find one way to serve someone each day this week

# church@home

Join us on Facebook or YouTube:

*(search for Northfield Methodist Church)*

- Sundays 8am - Worship and Sermon  
*Sermon audio - [www.northfield.co.za](http://www.northfield.co.za)*
- Wednesday Worship 12pm - Worship
- Thursdays 12pm - Pray Wherever You Are





## HOW TO KEEP IN TOUCH

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-  #Northfield Methodist Church
-  @NorthfieldVoice
-  Service Times

Chapel: 7am & 5:30pm

Sanctuary: 8am, 10am & 6pm

Wesley Hall: 6pm (Youth)

Children's Church: 8am, 10am & 6pm



A group of people gathers regularly to take turns answering a single question.

In 18th century English, Wesley asked, "How does your soul prosper?"

or "How is it with your soul?" Today we might say,

"How's your spiritual life?"

Take the message from the Sunday sermon into deeper learning by joining

or forming a small group. If you do not belong to a group yet,

you are welcome to sign up by contacting

Nick (082 808 1452) or Ria (063 020 4639).