

## **INTENTIONAL JOURNAL**

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In Jesus Christ, God's very presence came among us. Better yet, He has stayed in our midst.

The Season of the Nativity helps us break out of unawareness, indifference or uncertainty that **Jesus Is**.

Please use this daily journal to help you experience this most important of all realities. Move deeper into Jesus' eternal presence.



# Hope for us





A Word from Eugene Peterson

"I am ever and always a stranger to grace. I need this annual angel visitation to know the virgin conceives and God is with us."

Prayer/Action Focus – To realize how amazing grace is, the source of our hope at Advent and always.

Reflection:

#### Monday: December 4 Jesus is ... HOPE for us

#### A Midday Prayer during Advent - From the Book of Common Prayer

"Direct me, O Lord, in all my doings with your most gracious favor, and further me with your continual help, that in all my work – begun, continued and ended in you – I may glorify your holy name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ my Lord."

Prayer/Action Focus – To take seriously the idea of glorifying God's name, and imagine what that might look like in your life.

Reflection:

**Tuesday: December 5** Jesus is ... HOPE for us From Christmas in Dark Places, a poem by Glen Scrivener It's Christmas now... whatever the weather, Some soak in the sun, some huddle together. But fair days or foul, our plight He embraces. Real Christmas can shine in the darkest of places.

Prayer/Action Focus – To bring the light of authentic Christmas into someone's fear or confusion (maybe your own).



#### Wednesday: December 6 Jesus is ... HOPE for us From 10 Minutes to More Hope - Crossroads.net

"Biblical hope isn't hoping for better circumstances: it's waiting for God Himself to show upright in the middle of all that stuff. Biblical hope doesn't mean we gloss over what's wrongas a matter of fact, real hope insists we recognize that the odds say we probably shouldn't have much hope at all. But-God. When He shows up on the scene, there's no telling."

Prayer/Action Focus – To have the courage to show up, at God's urging.

Reflection:

#### Thursday: December 7 Jesus is ... HOPE for us

#### From Advent Credo by Allan Boesak

"It is not true that creation and the human family are doomed to destruction and loss— This is true: For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life...."

Prayer/Action Focus – To tune out despairing voices, and listen intentionally for sounds of goodness and peace-making.

Reflection:

#### Friday: December 8 Jesus is ... HOPE for us

From **Redeeming Darkness**, by Barbara Brown Taylor

"Darkness does not come from a different place than light; it is not presided over by a different God. The long nights of Advent and early mornings of Easter both point us toward the God for whom darkness and light are alike. Both are fertile seasons for those who walk by faith and not by sight."

Prayer/Action Focus – To know God as God is and repent trying to make Him fit human opinions or wishes.

#### Saturday: December 9 Jesus is ... HOPE for us From Hope: Don't Rush the Waiting by Rachel Twigg Boyle

"Advent is a season that is all about preparation and waiting. In the epistle of James," we read 'The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and late rains. You must also be patient. Strengthen your hearts for the coming of the Lord."

Prayer/Action Focus – To recognize a "patience deficit" and seek to fill it with trustful waiting.

Reflection:



# PEACE FOR US

#### WEEK 2 SEASON OF THE NATIVITY

#### Sunday: December 10 Jesus is ... PEACE for us

Adapted from **Peace: Trinity Advent Devotional Guide** – Trinity Church in Cos Cob, Connecticut

"We love to gaze at the peaceful manger scene. Yet that very scene was deeply disruptive to the order of the world. The gift of grace gives us peace with God, which we carry, guided by the Spirit, as ambassadors of reconciliation to a hurting world."

Prayer/Action Focus – To follow the Spirit's disruptive guidance toward peace and reconciliation.

Reflection:

#### Monday: December 11 Jesus is ... PEACE for us

A Word on Peace from Frederick Buechner

"Jesus told his disciples, 'I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.' Later he said to them, 'Peace I leave with you: my peace I give to you.' How can both be true? The contradiction is resolved when you realize that, for Jesus, peace seems to have meant not the absence of struggle, but the presence of love."



Prayer/Action Focus - To realize that peace is inseparable from love.

Reflection:

#### Tuesday: December 12 Jesus is ... PEACE for us

From a devotional on Philippians 4:6-7 by James Bryan Smith "Paul wrote, 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God.' The reason Paul could tell the Philippians not to worry was because he knew that God was alive and present and caring for them."

Prayer/Action Focus – To pray with gratitude until any and all sense of lacking is gone.

Reflection:

### Wednesday: December 13 Jesus is ... PEACE for us Gift Ideas Inspired by Oren Arnold

"To your enemy, forgiveness; to your opponent, tolerance; to the stranger, kindness; to your customer, service; to a neighbor, helpfulness; to a loved one, appreciation; to all, charity; to every child, a good example; and to yourself, respect."

Prayer/Action Focus – To practice peace-giving at every chance.

Reflection:

#### Thursday: December 14 Jesus is ... PEACE for us

#### From Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis

"If you want to get warm you must stand near the fire: if you want to be wet, you must get into the water. If you want peace, joy, power, eternal life, you must get close to, or even into, the thing that has them. Once united to God, how could we not live forever?"

Prayer/Action Focus – To get close enough to God to feel big change happening.



Reflection:

#### Friday: December 15 Jesus is ... PEACE for us

Adapted from **Irrational Action**, a devotion by Jaylene Johnson "We all have 'lions and lambs' in our lives—conflicts that can only be reconciled with God's peace and guidance. It may mean our moving into unfamiliar, uncomfortable situations. Being children of God, where is He calling us to 'irrational action'? What is He saying? What hinders us from action?"

Prayer/Action Focus - To pay attention to, not retreat from, uncomfortable opportunities.

Reflection:

Saturday: December 16 Jesus is ...PEACE for us From Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem by Maya Angelou "We clap hands and welcome the Peace of Christmas. We, Baptist and Buddhist, Methodist and Muslim, say come. Peace. We implore you to stay a while with us. So we may learn by your shimmering light how to look beyond complexion and see community. It is Christmas, a halting of hate time."

Prayer/Action Focus - To believe in and work for Peace on Earth, Good Will to All.





#### Sunday: December 17 Jesus is ... JOY in us From Psalm 118

"This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it ... You are my God, and I will praise you. You are my God, and I will exalt you."

Prayer/Action Focus – To be thankful for gathering with friends in worship and grateful for those who lead prayer, praise, music and preaching.

Reflection:

#### Monday: December 18 Jesus is ... JOY in us

Ubi Caritas ... an ancient hymn of the church

"Where true charity is, God is there. Love of Christ has gathered us into one. At the same time and together, we see with the saints also, thy face in glory, Oh Christ our God, the joy that is immense and good. Unto the world without end."

Prayer/Action Focus – To celebrate being loved by Christ, in union with saints past, present and future.

Reflection:

#### Tuesday: December 19 Jesus is ... JOY in us

Lyric from The Goodness of God by Cece Winans

"I love you, Lord, oh your mercy never fails me; All my days, I've been held in your hands. From the moment that I wake up, until I lay my head, oh, I will sing of the goodness of God. And your goodness is running after, running after me."

Prayer/Action Focus – To live with awareness of God's goodness, active and constant.



### Wednesday: December 20 Jesus is ... JOY in us

Adapted from The Walk by Adam Hamilton

"When we are generous, we find joy. And just as we were made to practice generosity together, in community, God also means it to be part of the daily rhythm of our lives. Jesus taught, 'Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over....'"

Prayer/Action Focus – To become more generous in thinking, speaking and doing.

Reflection:

#### Thursday: December 21 Jesus is ... JOY in us

From a devotion by Andrew M. Davis

"For more than two and half centuries, science, industry and medicine have steadily reduced the physical miseries common to every preceding generation of humanity. Yet despite all of these advancements, we are more discontent than ever."

Prayer/Action Focus – To see clearly that joy transcends anything material or manmade.

Reflection:

#### Friday: December 22 Jesus is ... JOY in us

The Reason We Celebrate from Donald McCullough

"Grace means that in the middle of our struggle, the referee blows the whistle and announces the end of the game. We are declared winners. God is on our side, and we are victors regardless of how well we have played."

Prayer/Action Focus – To hear, through grace, the voice of our best fan and cheerleader.



#### Saturday: December 23 Jesus is ... JOY in us From a devotion in The Preparation Season

"Like forgotten Christmas toys, so many of our strong desires, once realized, prove unsatisfying. Each of us is created to have only one complete and enduring source of fulfillment. In the words of St. Augustine, 'You made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.'"

Prayer/Action Focus – To be joyful at existing for such a noble purpose.

Reflection:



# LOVE THROUGH US

#### WEEK 4 SEASON OF THE NATIVITY

### Sunday: December 24 Christmas Eve Jesus is ... LOVE through us

From Why Are We Here? by James Bryan Smith

"We did not make ourselves. Our existence is not due to anything we have done. God has created us out of love, and through his ongoing presence and desire to be among us, he intends that each one of us would stand as a witness to that love."

Prayer/Action Focus – To anticipate, once again, that Love Came Down at Christmas.

Reflection:

#### Monday: December 25 Christmas Day Jesus is ... LOVE through us

A Word from Ruth Bell Graham

"This is Christmas, the real meaning of it: God loving, searching, giving Himself to us; and us needing, receiving, giving ourselves to God. This is the meaning of Christmas, the wonder and glory of it."

Prayer/Action Focus – To be alert for big and small signs of God's all-givingness.

Reflection:

Ponder this verse after Christmas Day through the rest of this week:

"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish." John 1:14 (The Message)

**Tuesday: December 26** Jesus is ... LOVE through us *"The Word became flesh and blood ..."* 

Prayer/Action Focus – To know that love caused Jesus to empty himself of the form of God, to take human form and come among us, purely for our sake. (Philippians 2)

Reflection:

Wednesday: December 27 Jesus is ... LOVE through us

"... and moved into the neighborhood."

Prayer/Action Focus –To remember that Jesus' nearness can upset as well as comfort, as in Matthew 8:34 ... *"Then the whole town came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighborhood."* 

Reflection:

#### Thursday: December 28 Jesus is ... LOVE through us

"We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory ..."

Prayer/Action Focus – To participate in the unique power of God's love working through the church, as in Acts 12:16 "... many God-signs were set up among the people, many wonderful things done ...."



Reflection:	
Friday: December 20 Josus is JOVE through us	
<b>Friday: December 29</b> Jesus is LOVE through us " generous inside and out"	

Prayer/Action Focus – To experience the blessing of sharing – wealth, time, energy, encouragement, notice, compassion. From Mark 4:24 – "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given to you."

Reflection:

#### Saturday: December 30 Jesus is ... LOVE through us

"... true from start to finish."

Prayer/Action Focus – To hear, believe and live the Gospel. From 1 Peter 1:25 – *"The word of the Lord goes on forever. That word is the good news already announced to you."* 

Reflection:

Sunday, December 31 First Sunday After Christmas

A Word on The Good Life from Jason R. E. Campbell

"Jesus was concerned with what we would call 'the good life.' Every aspect of his life and work revolved around opening up the way for people to live the truly good life – life with God and with others, beginning now in the midst of whatever life we already are living."

Prayer/Action Focus – To re-imagine the Good Life through the mind of Christ.



### **EMMANUEL**,

**GOD WITH US STILL** 

SEASON OF THE NATIVITY

Beyond Christmas week is the season of Epiphany, which takes its name from a Greek word sometimes translated as "striking appearance."

In Christian tradition, the day of Epiphany falls on January 6 and is associated with the successful conclusion of the Wise Men's search for the Holy Child.

For us, Epiphany is not an end, but an ongoing of God's striking appearance, with all that has changed – and all that can change – because of it.

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