THE Winter TIMES

TEN Wintry DEVOTIONALS

01
ACCEPTED

"I know the plans I have for you..."

No matter what happens to us as followers of Jesus, God accepts us and has a good plan for us. God only wants the very best for you and that's why it's good to say yes to God and to follow his plan for your life. Let's think about the nativity story and the shepherds who were out on the hills at night looking after sheep. People didn't think they were very important but God sent an angel worship band probably complete with a lighting show - just to them! The ones looked down on by others were accepted by God and were some of the few people to visit Jesus as a new born baby, which changed their life, turning them into evangelists and worshippers. Like Mary, if we have said yes to Jesus, we are accepted and highly favoured by God. When we know we are accepted and loved, we're able to be all God made us to be.

THINK: About how much God accepts you.

PRAY: "God, thank you that you accept me. I receive your love and want to be all you made me to be."



02

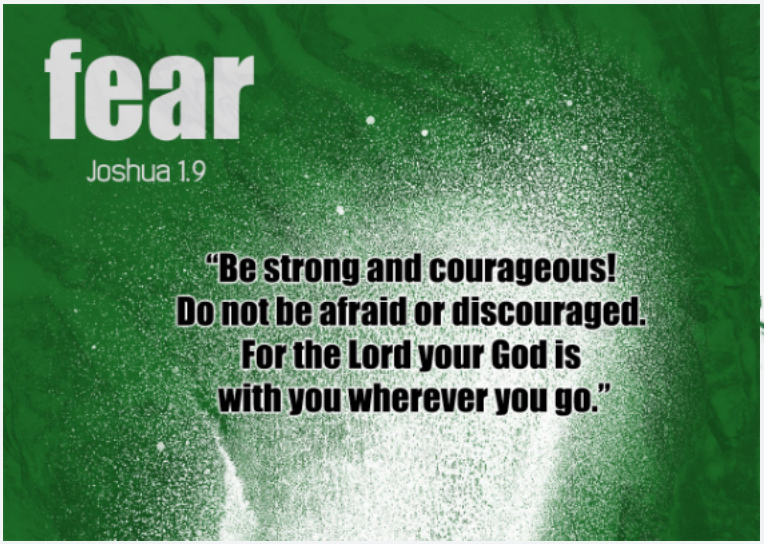
FEAR

“Don’t be afraid… for the Lord… is with you.”

Fear is part of life. It can protect us from harm by warning us that something is dangerous. But there are other kinds of fears that aren’t healthy. Instead they can rob and steal away fun, adventure, creativity and doing new things. When the angel appeared to Mary, he said, ‘don’t be afraid’. The angels said the same thing to the shepherds! Imagine if Mary had let fear stop her! The Bible says that God hasn’t given us a spirit of fear, so we know that unhealthy fear is not from God. It is something that the devil can use to stop us reaching our full potential. God wants you to live life to the full and be all he made you to be. Courage, like Mary showed, is when we are afraid but choose to do things we fear anyway. Live life boldly. God is with you wherever you go!

THINK: What fears hold you back and why?

PRAY: “God, you are greater than fear. You don’t give me a spirit of fear but give faith, courage and life.”



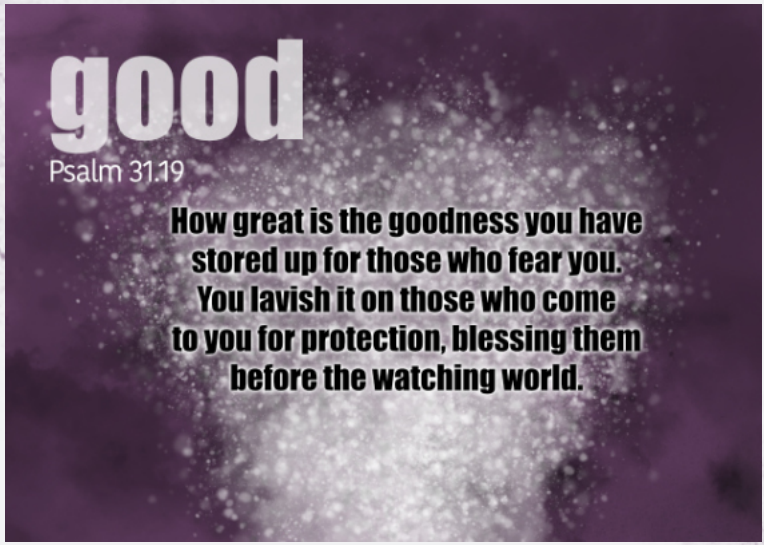
03
GOOD

"Today I bring you good news..."

In the Christmas story of the birth of Jesus, some angels appeared to some shepherds announcing the birth of Jesus. The angels told the shepherds that this was 'good news' - or more literally, 'too good to be true news'. The birth of Jesus was and still is good news. When God first created man and woman, he gave them freedom of choice. Like many of us, they made a bad choice and rejected God's goodness, believing the lies of the devil that God wasn't good. But God is good! And he showed his goodness by sending Jesus to make things right again between God and people. We just have to choose to say yes to God. It's not just a single decision but a lifestyle, a way of living that is radical and not just good for you but good for the people around you.

THINK: What good things can you thank God for?

PRAY: "Thank you God that you are good. It's who you are and it's what you do. Today I ask for…"



04

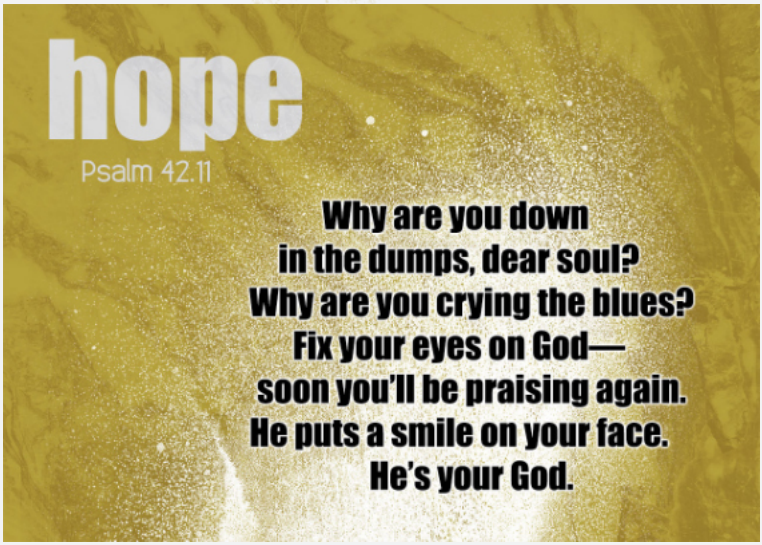
HOPE

"Fix your eyes on God… He's your God."

Hope is the positive and confident expectation of good. In the Christmas story, Mary and Joseph put their hope in God time after time. Hope is believing that God will do good and bring good in any and every situation in our lives. This happens as we trust in him, believe he is who he says he is and does what he says he will do. As a Christian there is no good reason to lose hope because God is good, works everything for good for those who believe in him. He's the God of miracles (like the birth of Jesus!) and does what seems impossible. God is always with us, always for us, always going ahead of us, guiding us, showing us the way to go and protecting us. God gives hope and God is hope. He's the inspiration, the way and the solution to whatever you need… in his way and time!

THINK: Which situations do you need hope for?

PRAY: "God, you are the God of hope. I hope in you and I believe that you are at work in everything…"



05
LOVE

"O taste and see that the Lord is good."

Have you heard the Bible verse 'for God so loved the world that he sent his only son…'? When people love others they do amazing things for them. Love is expressed in actions and you show how much you love by how much you give. One song about Jesus says 'love came down and rescued us.' God showed his love by giving everything - his son Jesus coming to earth, dying on the cross and rising from the dead to set us free from sin (wrong things) and to change us to live a life of love and get eternal life - if we say yes to God! God's kind of love sets us free to love other people. In a way, if we don't love others, we're not showing the love of God fully. This is a process that grows and is on-going through our lives, as we increase in God's love. If God's love is on the inside of us, God's love can't help come out of us!

THINK: Where do you and others need God's love?

PRAY: "Thank you God that you are love and that you've put your love in me. Help me to love like you."



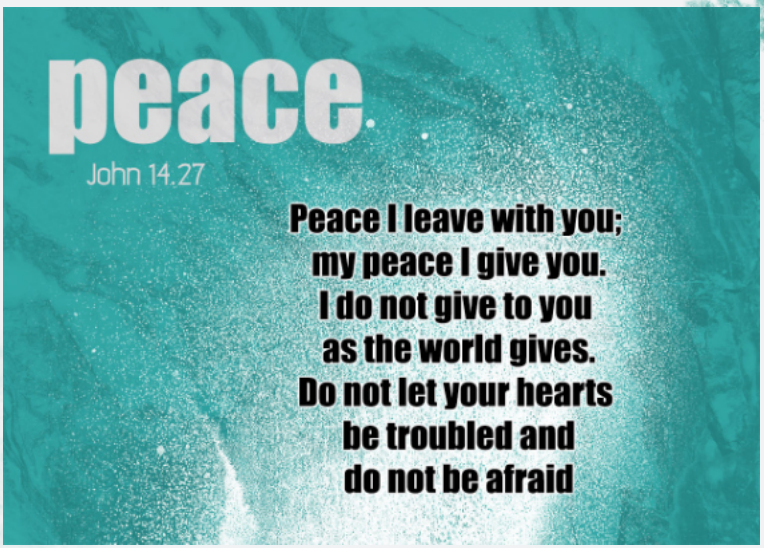
06
PEACE

"My peace I give to you..."

In Isaiah 9 verse 6, we read a prophecy (a God-given true prediction about the future) about Jesus being the 'Prince of Peace'. Yet we see that Jesus was killed on a Cross and our world has been full of war and violence. Jesus even said he came to divide people against each other! So what is this peace?! Isaiah doesn't mean peace in the way we think about it. The peace it means is the peace that comes when people are restored to the connection with God that we were always made for. Without it, there is a hole in our hearts and a search for meaning that will never be really satisfied. God gives you the opportunity to be reconnected to him and find the way, the truth and life. Out of this connection comes God's kind of deep peace in our hearts, that we can share with others.

THINK: Do you (and others) need God's peace?

PRAY: "God,I pray that I would be restored back to you, find peace and help others find it too."



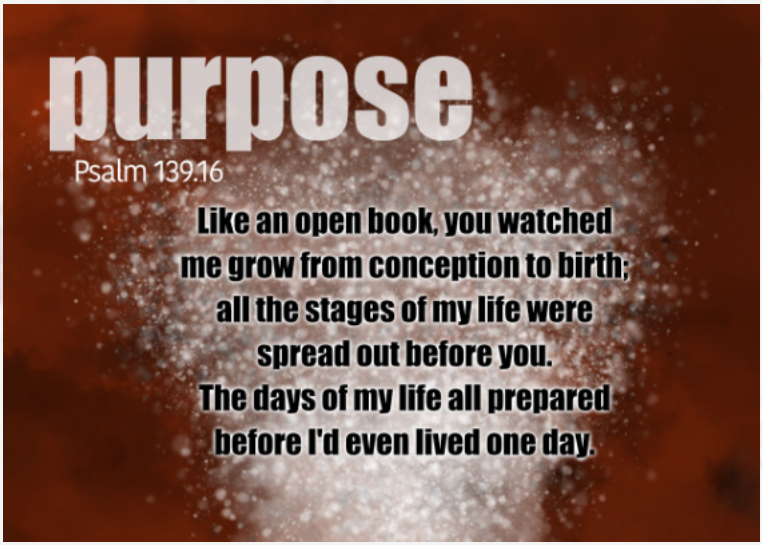
07
PURPOSE

"The days of my life all prepared..."

You have a purpose. God has made you unique, which means you are a one-off, an original. You aren't like others because God made you, you! He wants you to be the 'you' that he made you to be. Jesus said that his purpose was to do the will of God. And that's our purpose too. God wants to use your skills, gifts, interests and passion in special ways. Mary had a purpose that God handpicked her for - the angel told her that God was with her and that she had found favour with God. Joseph had a purpose - to be the 'father' to Jesus and the protective loving husband to Mary. God doesn't control your life but he sees what your life can be if you line up your thinking with God's thinking. When you do that, God's power in you (Holy Spirit) will do beyond what you think or imagine!

THINK: How can I live out God's purposes for my life?

PRAY: "God, show me my purpose and my destiny. I want to follow you and live out that purpose in full."



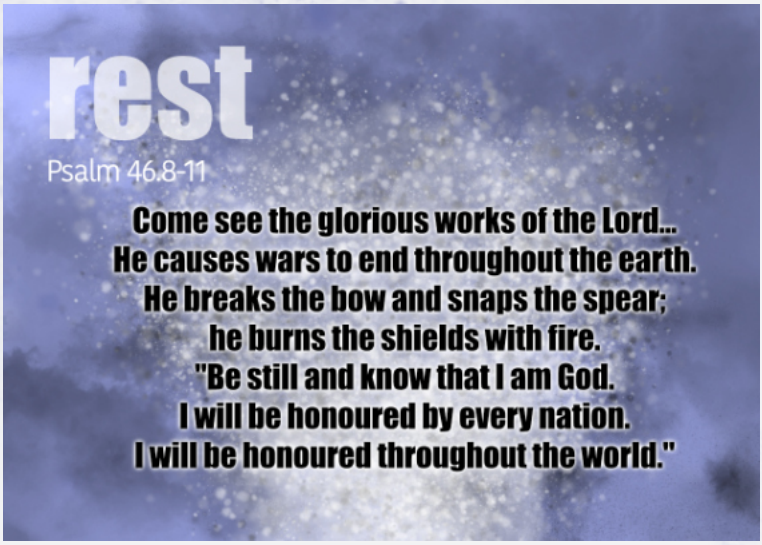
08
REST

"Be still and know I'm God."

'Resting' means letting go of stuff and letting God do things in his way and his time. This means letting God sort out everything in your life and the world around. You aren't God and he always has the best solution at just the right time. Talk to God and say 'God would you help and sort out…' (then list every situation where you want God's help) then rest. The answer may not be the way that you think but it will be exactly right and at the right time. The birth of Jesus was the answer to the many promises of God, the prayers of Israel and the words spoken by prophets. It took time and it came in an unusual way. People were expecting a warrior, but Jesus came as a baby and to serve, not to conquer. For Mary, the promise of God took time (9 months!) before the birth of Jesus. She did the 'natural', God did the 'super'. Together it was supernatural. So rest, trust and let God work!

THINK: What does God's rest look like for you?

PRAY: "Father God, I trust in you and want to rest in every situation that concerns me. These include…"



09
TRUST

"Trust God from the bottom of your heart."

One of the greatest miracles of Christmas is not just that God came to earth in human form as Jesus but that God trusted Mary (who was very likely a teenager) to be the mother of Jesus! Mary trusted God step by step. She faithfully gave birth to Jesus away from her home town, protected him from Herod's murderous threats by leaving her country and was with him right up until his death on the Cross (and no doubt after he rose from the dead). So what does this have to do with you? God has made you unique and has a good plan for your life. God has put his trust in you to do something special for him. Life isn't about doing what we want and asking God to be with us but asking God for his good and perfect plan. Like Mary, choose to put your trust in Jesus, no matter what and know that he will use you!

THINK: What does trusting God look like for me?

PRAY: "God, I want to trust you in everything from the bottom of my heart. Help me to walk in step with you."



10

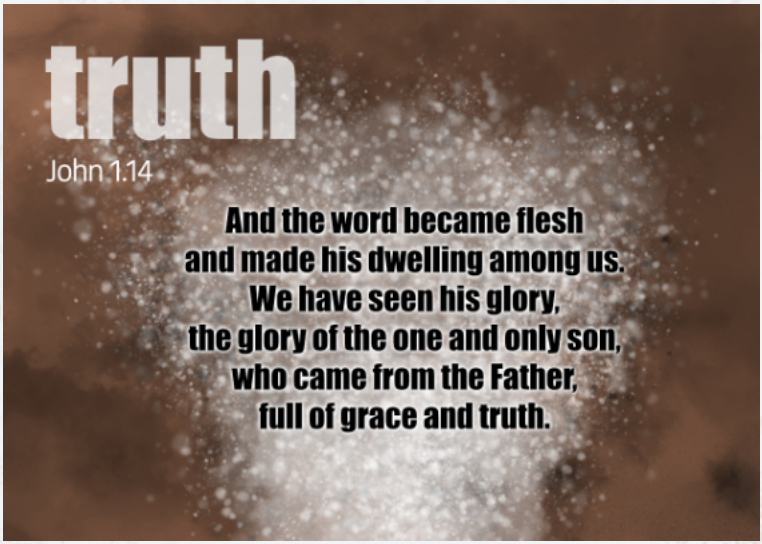
TRUTH

"I am the way, the truth and the life…"

Are you looking for truth? For life? For the way ahead and what to do? Christmas is about truth coming to us as a person - Jesus. If you're lost, you want someone to tell you the right way to go - you don't want all kinds of different directions! Jesus doesn't just do true things or speak true things, he is truth. Truth is a person - Jesus. So whenever we need to know what the truth is, we can ask the Holy Spirit (God living in us) or read the Bible (God's truth written down) and find the truth. The Bible isn't just an irrelevant old book, it is relevant and true in everything for everyone, for all of time! What we may think, believe, feel, touch or see isn't always a reliable way of finding truth, but Jesus is in every area of life every time. The world around us believes there are different truths. But this is impossible. The only truth is that Jesus is truth!

THINK: How can you bring God's truth to others in love?

PRAY: "God, you are the way, the truth and the life. Help me to live truth in my life and help others find truth."



When I think about Christmas do I think about Jesus?
Or do I live my own life and just do whatever pleases?
Is it about Christmas stuff or is there something deeper?
Is it about an earthly peace or about the one peace-keeper?
The real meaning of Christmas is about the one who's true
The baby who became a man who died for me and you
Who lived a perfect life and was sacrificed for sin
So you and I could say yes to God and be made new through him
So when I think about Christmas, yes I think about Jesus
I think about living life for him, the only one who frees us
From sin and shame and fear and pain, from evil and from death
Jesus heals and reveals and gives meaning to each breath
Take out Christ from Christmas and all you've got is mass
That's just a religious festival or matter from a physics class
So yes I think about Jesus and that's what makes it Christmas
Forgiveness was his business, now my business is his witness.
So take it from me, it's time to ask Jesus into your heart
Say yes to follow him, you'll be changed and set apart
So now, the summary of this word and rhyming Biblical thesis
Is the truth that Jesus is Christmas and yes, Christmas is Jesus

King's Church Eden
MYFISHBITES.COM
Counter-Culture Youth Work Resources