

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

# life GROUPS

SCOTT LAKE BAPTIST STUDENT MINISTRY

# advent



**DEVOTIONS FOR DECEMBER 3-7**

**GETTING STARTED:** Your end goal isn't to trust in Jesus, it's to learn how to follow Him daily. Satan has set up the system of this world to lead you towards sin and busyness. Like a toddler in a tantrum, the activities of daily life will demand your time. You will have to continually tell yourself—I AM A FOLLOWER OF JESUS FIRST. Before you are a student, or athlete, or employee, or musician, or in a relationship, or whatever, YOU ARE A FOLLOWER OF JESUS FIRST. Many of our daily demands are good, but they can never take priority over what is best—your relationship with God.

**Mark out a time, place, and set a daily reminder to help you develop the habit of daily spending time with God.**

# WEEKLY PRAYER CALENDAR

|   | OTHER PRAYER REQUESTS: | ANSWERED PRAYERS: |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>MONDAY</b><br>- My family  |                        |                   |
| <b>TUESDAY</b><br>- My friends  |                        |                   |
| <b>WEDNESDAY</b><br>- My school, teachers, and administration                         |                        |                   |
| <b>THURSDAY</b><br>- Our nation and leaders   |                        |                   |
| <b>FRIDAY</b><br>- My goals and my future   |                        |                   |
| <b>SATURDAY</b><br>- Unsaved people and the spread of the Gospel                      |                        |                   |
| <b>SUNDAY</b><br>- My church, youth group, pastors, and missionaries around the world |                        |                   |

**MONDAY**

## **THE PERFECT PLAN**

### **READ ISAIAH 9:6-7**

*Read Isaiah 9:6-7. This passage in Isaiah is probably pretty familiar, right? It's one of those passages we hear a lot at Christmas. And, as we mentioned on page 2, because of this, we can easily kind of pass over its importance. But don't let it slip past you this time.*

*Isaiah 9:6-7 was written by, you guessed it, Isaiah. Now, Isaiah was one of God's chosen messengers. We call these guys prophets. Isaiah was passing along God's words at a time when God's chosen people, the Israelites, had completely turned their backs on God. God's people had stopped counting on God and His promises. God had given them tons of warning, but they hadn't listened. So, Isaiah's message was one of coming judgment. (Which probably didn't make him very popular at parties.)*

*However, because God is who He is, even His message of judgment carried hope. Isaiah 9:6-7 is all about hope. It's about a hopeful future, one in which God once and for all provides a way out from under the weight of our sins. Fast forward something like 700-800 years and you see this message of hope coming to life in the Christmas story. The little baby God was forming in Mary's stomach? He was the same promised savior Isaiah was writing about in Isaiah 9:6-7.*

*Take a second, slow down, and let this awesome truth sink in. Long before God sent Jesus to this earth, He knew the plan. In fact, God's sending His own Son to live and breathe and walk this earth was always the plan. God has always known that Jesus would be the answer to a perfect relationship between God and His children. Which is great news for you and me. But to see this plan come to life, Jesus had to come to earth. And that's what Christmas is all about.*

- God has had a plan to redeem you from the consequences of your sins for all eternity. How does that help you trust Him with your worries, concerns, and future?  

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- Take a moment to pray to God, thanking Him for being a God of action who works in the world, the lives of His followers, and your own life!

**TUESDAY**

## **PROOF**

### **READ MATTHEW 1:1-17**

Take a moment and read Matthew 1:1-17. Yes, read every single name. All the easy ones. And all the weird ones. Finished? OK, do a couple of things for me. First, look back through those names and write down any names that represent Bible stories you are familiar with. (For example, if you remember any of the story of Abraham and how God chose him to be a father of a great nation, the Israelites, write down his name.) Use the space below.

So, how many did you recognize? Hopefully, you recognized at least a few. Contrary to what you might think, this list is actually pretty important. It's not just a strange cultural thing that would have been popular 2,000 years ago. This list proves a few things.

First, it proves that Jesus is the promised Messiah. According to the Old Testament, the Messiah was to be God's ruler, who would one day be sent to restore the Israelites. (Of course, we know that Jesus did more than just save the Israelites; through His death and resurrection, Jesus provided a way for all who will believe in Him to be saved from their sins.) Old Testament prophecy said that the Messiah would come from the line of David. Look back at verse 7. Whose name do you see?

This list actually contains a lot of really cool stuff, more than we have time to go into in this devotion. (For instance, there is a reformed prostitute in the list, Rahab, proving that God can redeem anyone from his or her sins.) But the important thing about this list is that, for Matthew's original audience, it provided some validity, or authenticity for Jesus' claim that He was indeed the Messiah. Jesus was who He said He was. His life attested to it. His death and resurrection confirmed it. And it all started with His birth.

- Where do you see examples of the world around you doubting Jesus as the Son of God?  
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- How does reading the Bible and praying to God help you trust that He is real, and that He loves you?  
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- In what ways does your life function to the world around you as a testimony of the "realness" of God?  
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**WEDNESDAY**

## **WAITING & WAITING**

### **LUKE 1:5-7**

Read Luke 1:5-7. This is your introduction to Zechariah and Elizabeth. Over the next couple of days, you'll learn why they are so important to the Christmas story, and in some ways, Jesus' overall ministry. But for today, let's focus on what we know about them from these verses.

What do we know about Zechariah? In verse 5 we discover that he was a priest. This means that he would have represented his people before God in the Temple. He would have led them in worship and in making sacrifices and offerings. We know he was married to Elizabeth, who was from the lineage of priests (that's the whole "from the daughter's of Aaron" line). In verse 6, we see that Elizabeth and Zechariah were godly people. They were meticulous in following God and His ways. But in verse 7, we find an interesting contradiction.

In verse 7 we see that they had no child. When Luke's original audience read this verse after reading verses 5-6, it would have been like driving a car into a brick wall. It would have stopped them in their tracks. See, in that culture, children were considered a blessing from God. And if you weren't able to have children, it was thought that God was judging you because of some sin in your life. Can you imagine how hard this must have been for them

We tend to think that just because we're Christ-followers, things will go well for us. We ought to be happy. We ought to be free from struggle or strife. But that is rarely the case. God often allows us to experience hard times to grow our faith and our reliance on Him. It doesn't mean that He doesn't love us. In fact, it often means that He's preparing us for a blessing that will mean more because we waited on it.

- What is something you wanted really badly that God didn't (or hasn't) choose to provide for you?  
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- Has enough time passed for you to look back and see why He chose not to give it to you? What lesson did you learn about God or about yourself as a result?  
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- Zechariah and Elizabeth stayed faithful even though God had not yet granted their desires. What can you learn from their example?  
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**THURSDAY**

## **PRAYERS ANSWERED**

### **READ LUKE 1:8-17**

Read Luke 1:8-17. Think about a time in your life where you wanted something really badly for a long time. What was it? Was it an experience, like a concert or a trip? Was it an object like a car or an electronic device? Or was it something a little more meaningful? Did you want a relative to get well, or a friendship to be repaired?

Do you remember what it felt like when you got the thing that you wanted so badly? You were super pumped! You probably texted your closest friends, ran to tell your mom or dad, or posted your good news on Instagram. When we receive the thing we wanted so badly, it comes with a lot of rejoicing.

In the passage you just read, Zechariah found out he would be receiving the thing he and his wife had most longed for. In their old age, the couple would be having a son. Zechariah had to be pumped! But look back at verses 14-17. This was not an ordinary baby! This child, who would one day come to be known as John the Baptist, would play a MAJOR role in God's rescue plan to save people from their sins. So not only did Zechariah and Elizabeth have their prayers answered, they were answered in the most amazing and miraculous of ways.

The Christmas story is full of these types of incredible God-moments. God was shaking up the world in preparation for the sending of His Son, Jesus. Zechariah and Elizabeth had a small role to play. But what an awesome story! As you think about their story, don't miss the application to your story. God is able and willing to work mightily through you to shake up the world for His glory. Pray to God and ask Him to use you in awesome ways, just like He used Zechariah, Elizabeth, and eventually, their son John. But be careful what you ask! God just might take you up on it. And your life may never be the same.

- Would you say that you expect God to do amazing things in your life? Why or why not?

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- Do you think your attitude keeps God from working in and through you?

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- I dare you to begin to pray bold prayers. I dare you to ask God to begin to do powerful things through your life, and actually BELIEVE that He will. Watch and see what happens. :)

**FRIDAY**

# **NO SHAME ZONE**

## **READ LUKE 1:18-25**

Read Luke 1:18-25. Pay special attention to 24-25. The world you live in is pretty quick to point out a fault in someone. You see this with some of your friends, in your school, and maybe even our own families. Maybe you've experienced this. If so, you know that it hurts.

You know the cycle: a guy makes a mistake in something he says or does. It could be a small thing or a big thing. Either way, it's Game On! The offending person is made to feel small or stupid. He becomes the butt of the joke. He is, in essence, shamed. In an effort to make ourselves look bigger, we make someone else look smaller.

The beautiful thing is that God is in the "shame removing" business. He did it for Elizabeth. In Elizabeth's culture, infertility was seen as a sign of God's punishment for sin. So, Elizabeth would have carried around this shame her entire life, even though she had done nothing to deserve her infertility. But God miraculously removed her shame. And He did it for countless people in the New Testament. God is all about taking away the shame from our lives.

Wrapped up in the Christmas story is the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Two ordinary folks dealing with their own issues. But God acted miraculously in their lives to both weave the big-picture story of His plan to send His Son to rescue the world, and to personally remove their pain and shame. This is what God does, time and time again. He does this for us. If you are dealing with the shame of sin, take heart: Jesus is uniquely capable of taking away this shame.

- What causes you to feel shame?  
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- Is shame keeping you from feeling as close to God as you want to?  
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- Make it a point to spend some time in prayer, asking God to help you feel free of the shame of your brokenness. Ask Him to remind you of His great love for you, and His desire to forgive our sins.



# SERMON NOTES

DATE: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

(use this sheet to help you think through the sermon)

PREACHER: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN SCRIPTURE: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the main idea of the sermon?

What is the main idea of the verses?

What were the main points of the sermon? What did you learn?

What does God want you to do or believe after hearing this sermon?

Was there anything in the sermon you didn't understand?

Wednesdays 6:30-7:45pm (doors open at 6pm)

# MERGE

games, food, and a message just for youth