

Advent Devotions

2014

Alpha & Omega THE BRIGHT MORNING STAR

Lion of
Judah

King of
Kings &
Lord of
Lords

JESU

The
Way,
the
Truth
& the
Life

Immanuel

Ame

Man of Sorrows

Hamilton Street Baptist Church

802 W Hamilton Street, Kirksville, MO 63501



FAMILY MINISTRY

Making the

faith intentional and relevant

“Jesus is the reason for the season”

We all know that – after all, we are in church. Most of us have nativities in our house, and we enjoy the Christmas music during this time of year. Sometimes we give such a focus on the story of his birth that we can forget to focus on Jesus Himself. The devotion for each day is based on a name of Jesus. These different names can give us a deeper understanding of who Jesus is!

The devotions were written by different members here at Hamilton Street; what talent and insight we have here in our church family! A special thanks to all those who contributed, as it would not have been as interesting or as easy to have this devotion without their help! If you particularly like a particular devotion, please let the writer know – they would be blessed to know that God spoke to you through them! People from both services and all ages have participated. So step back from the hustle and bustle and focus on Jesus for a few minutes each day. Read them by yourself or with your whole family. Think about what that name tells us about Jesus.

****For those with younger kids:** Many of these devotions will be over their heads. Here are some adaptations that you could make:

- Take the name of Jesus for each day and write it on a piece of paper – it doesn't have to be fancy, or it could be written on a cut out paper ornament. Hide it somewhere in the house and have your kids look for the name each day. Once found, ask them what the name means, and read the scripture that goes with it. At the same time you can bring up that those who seek Jesus will truly find Him. You can then hang the name of Jesus on the tree, the refrigerator, or some other location in the house as a reminder about who Jesus is.
- For kids who already know a lot of words, take the name of Jesus and make it into a hangman, where they have to guess letters and try and guess the name of Jesus. Read the scripture and discuss what the name means.

Our family has an Advent wreath, and we use the time to teach some Christmas carols. The carols of faith aren't taught in school, and if they aren't taught at home, they might never be heard. Our kids look forward to each evening. I play my recorder (like a flute), and they get out their pretend ones and play along too. Then we learn the words and continually repeat the song each night. A great way to keep the focus on Christ!

Whatever you do, have fun with it. There is no right or wrong way. What's most important is that you are spending time together and having fun while instilling the Christian faith! May you have a blessed time during Advent as you focus on the true meaning of Christmas!

DAVID COOK, Family Minister

Light of the World

Sunday, November 30, 2014

by Geraldine Rowland

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." – John 8:12

When the nation of Israel came out of Egypt, they were led by a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night which gave them light. While they encamped at the foot of Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses the design for the Tabernacle. Among the three pieces of furniture of the Holy Place was the golden lampstand or the candlestick. (Exodus 25:31-32). Today this is called the Menorah.

In John 8:12, Jesus was speaking to a crowd which had gathered during the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles when he said, "...I am the light of the world." Jesus is saying that He is that Light: the pillar of fire which led Israel and the golden candlestick which gave light to the Holy Place. He is not just a light among other lights. He is the light spoken of in 1 John 1:5, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all." Jesus is speaking of salvation. To walk in the light is to have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Coming to Jesus for salvation gives a person a different kind of walk because he/she walks in Christ, the Light of the World.

The words of the song written by Philip Bliss in the 1800's are still relevant today:

Come to the Light, 'tis shining for thee!
Sweetly the Light has dawned upon me;
Once I was blind, but now I see –
The Light of the world is Jesus.

Pray: Dear Jesus, help me to walk in your light that you may be glorified. Amen.

Savior

Monday, December 1, 2014

by Jonathan Walker

They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said: now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the savior of the world." – John 4:42

The woman at the well had spoken to Jesus starting in verse 7, chapter 4. She was a Samaritan and he was a Jew, who were not to speak to each other. He told the woman her life history. He revealed himself to her as "The Messiah". The lady runs into town to tell everyone she knows. Many Samaritans were saved because of what she said and others came to hear what he had to say and were saved. They told the woman they had heard and believed he was the Savior.

What does the name Savior mean? It is interesting the Samaritans did not call him King, but Savior instead. The Jews were looking for a King and missed their Savior, but the Samaritans did not. What does this tell us about Jesus? He is not a societal king where he makes the "laws" of our country. He doesn't have to! He was in on creating the Earth and he could destroy it as fast as he created it. He didn't come as a king, but as a Savior. "For God so loved the earth, he sent his only begotten son, so that whoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." He did not come to Earth to destroy it, but reconcile all of the peoples back to God.

This is awesome for us. No more sacrificing and worrying about being clean enough to eat and whether we'll be in heaven after we leave this world. Today we have his written word full of promises and as long as we trust him to be our savior, our names will be written in the Book of Life. How reassuring is that?

Think about the woman, who was an outcast because of her social history. She was far from the perfect person, having been married five times and living with another man. But God used her, he revealed himself to her and she used her voice to spread the Good News. Several people were saved because of her actions and lots more were saved because she told them who Jesus is. When was the last time someone was saved because of your voice or actions?

We should give our past transgressions up to the Lord and pray for him to use us, like he did the woman at the well. How cool would it be if one of us would be responsible for our entire town becoming Christian?

The Branch

Tuesday, December 2, 2014

by Joe Schesvold

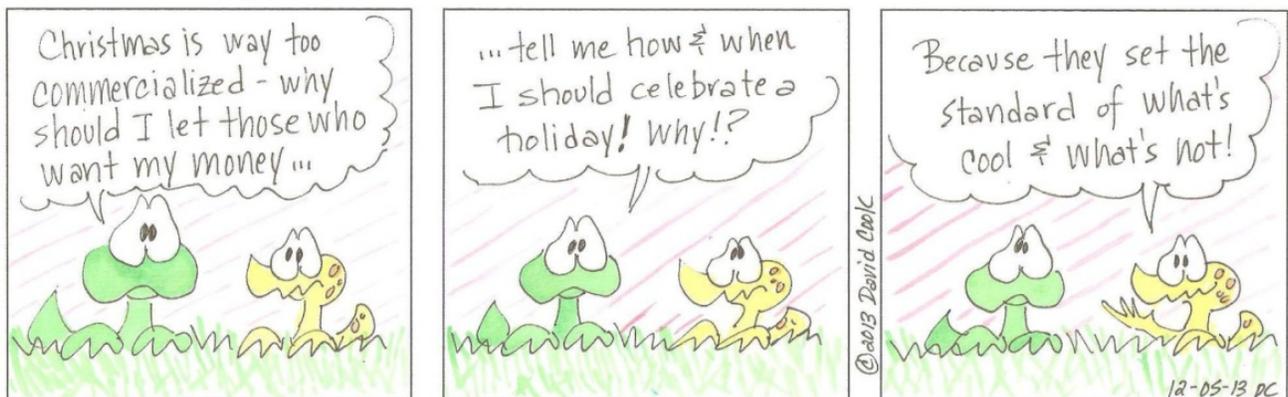
"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit." – Isaiah 11:1

This prophecy was originally written to the Jews. They expected the Branch to be a reigning king like David over the nation of Israel. He would be a shoot from the stump of Jesse, but would come first as a suffering servant and give 'his life as a ransom for many' (Matthew 20:29). Later he will return to earth and rule over the whole earth (Psalm 2).

The name "Branch" makes one think of Jesus' teaching in John 15 of the vine and the branches and bearing fruit. We are able to bear fruit only because we abide in him and receive life from him. He is now physically absent from the earth. He has left us on the earth so that we will be his fruit bearers.

As you pray, ask God to help you to bear much fruit by drawing strength through the Holy Spirit who dwells in you.

Nort & Friends by David Cook



The Originator and Perfecter of Our Faith

Wednesday, December 3, 2014

by Seth Austic

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders us and the sin that so easily entangles us, fixing our eyes on Jesus the originator and perfecter of our faith.” – Hebrews 12:1-2a

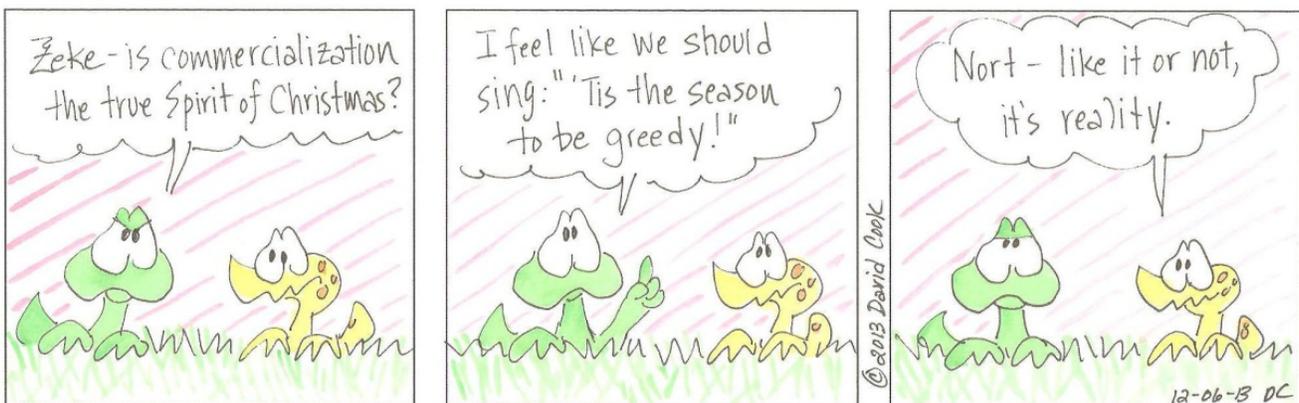
What do you think of when you see the word “originator”? That is where something comes from, right? So this means that our faith comes from God, but the Greek word takes it a step further to say that He is the prime author of our faith. That is to say he wrote or built on my faith.

Now, what does the second part mean, when you see the word “perfecter”? Well, the Greek word used means someone we can't be complete without. When I think about that name, I think “Wow! What power!” He is saying that He is the foundation, He is the builder and He is the “keystone of the arch” of our faith.

What are we without our foundation, builder or keystone of faith? Being my age, I could probably tell you a lot of stuff you probably didn't know about my generation. For example, it is either weird or crazy not to have dated someone before the age of 12. It is also that way with not kissing anyone before the age of 16, and not having sex before the age of 18. Do you see what I am getting at? The culture is drifting. We are learning to sin at a young age. We need to return to the foundation, builder and keystone, and He will make things right. This starts at home, and then it can change the country.

Pray: I see that I am incomplete without Jesus. Help me focus on what He desires and not what the culture at large desires.

Nort & Friends by David Cook



The Everlasting Father

Thursday, December 4, 2014

by Bertha Crump

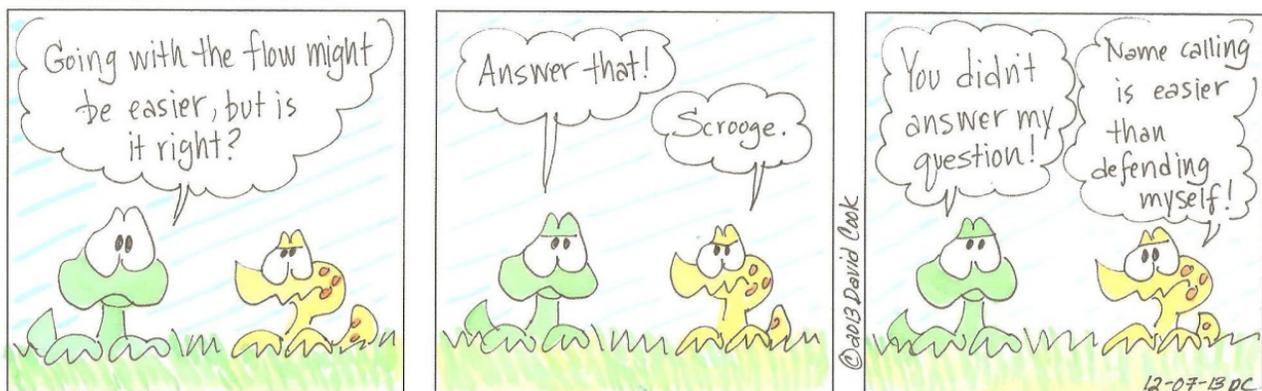
“For unto us a child is born, unto to us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” – Isaiah 9:6

How often do we think of God as our everlasting Father and the awesome gift He has given us? When Jesus was given to us, all the problems of the world were placed on His shoulders. He was aware from the beginning what problems He would encounter with the unruly people He would be shepherding. Jesus was given a name like no other, with wonderful meanings. He would be a king or mighty counselor, He is everlasting, the Father of Eternity bringing peace on earth through the establishment of His Kingdom.

How many times have you heard someone say “Oh God” or “Oh Jesus” in a derogatory manner? Almost every day! Watch a game show when someone wins and see what they say. Why don’t they say “Oh John” or “Oh Mary”? Do they really know the person they are speaking about? Have you ever thought about why Jesus was given His name besides the fact an angel told Mary what to name Him? Years ago, people gave their children Biblical names because of their significance. Jesus’ name was no different and the meanings of His name should be important to everyday of our lives. Every time we hear the name Jesus, it can and should give us a wonderful sense of peace and joy. Think about the seasons of your life and how Jesus has played a part in each one; whether you were a child in school, raising a family, pursuing a career or retired. In each of these phases of life Jesus has played an important part. Whether we admit it or not, Jesus is with us from the cradle to the grave and gives us the peace each of us seek. He is from everlasting to everlasting.

Pray: My sincere prayer is that we all know the good Shepherd who is our Savior and loves us.

Nort & Friends by David Cook



The Amen

Friday, December 5, 2014

by Kevin Martin

Write to the angel of the church in Laodicea: "The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Originator of God's creation says..." – Revelation 3:14 (HCSB)

Many in the church have grown up believing *amen* to simply be the word used to tell others that we're now done praying, so everyone knows when they can safely look up again. In this passage, Christ uses it to describe Himself. He calls Himself *the Amen*. Can we read that and think Jesus meant: "The One who is now done praying so you are free to start eating, the faithful and true Witness, says..."? Jesus is using it here as a word of power, of declaration, and one that should pass our lips with purpose and not by mere habit.

As Jesus is eternal and unchanging, similarly his chosen name here, *Amen*, hasn't changed in over four thousand years. It is essentially the identical word in modern English as it is in the Greek and Hebrew. *Amen* is often still spoken the same - with the long "aw" sound to start, like in "all" - and means the same as it did in the days of Moses and the Apostles. When we close with *amen* it means: *so be it*. Those who have loved our Lord have always used it this way (see Psalm 72:19 and Romans 1:25). It is declaration of belief in the truth of what was just said, coupled with intent to act out that truth as well (Deut 27:14-26). It is also a prayer in itself that God would indeed make or keep true what had just been said or will be said (Jeremiah 28:6). In the Hebrew it came from the word *aman*, which in simplest terms means: believe. To say, "Amen," is to say, "I believe it! And I will act accordingly." We do not often use *amen* to start speaking, or in the middle of a thought. It was once commonly used that way though. When written in the Bible like that it means: *surely, verily, or truly* (as in John 1:51, where depending on translation the "Truly, truly..." is literally, "Amen, amen...", and Isaiah 65:16, where twice the translation "God of Truth" is written in the Hebrew as "amen God"). In that understanding, for Christ to use it to describe Himself in John's vision is for Christ to declare: "I am Truth. I am Assurance. I am worth the church's Belief. Do not doubt my words to you."

To those statements, is your soul stirred to cry *amen*? Read them again, as if Jesus is speaking them directly to you, and take stock of your response. "In the Name of Jesus, AMEN!" is to declare that in all that Jesus says He is, WE BELIEVE! We are assured of who He is, and what He will do for His church, His body, His bride for which He laid down his own life. Truly we know that what the Lord says will come to pass.

Pray: Amen Abba, my Father of Truth, author and proof of my faith, the one who hears my prayers and longs to answer in love to draw me closer to you, help me pray with conviction. Remove any doubt that your Son is less than He declared himself to be. Help me fully trust in the One by whose Name all things were created, and under whose power all creation is now in submission - even me. Amen. So be it. Amen. So let it be. Because of who you are, I believe you will keep your every promise, and you will answer my prayer for more trust in you. In the Name of Jesus, the assurance of my hope, amen.

Carpenter

Saturday, December 6, 2014

by Laura Brown

Then they scoffed, "He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us." They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him. - Mark 6:3

In Bible times boys generally followed their fathers into the same occupation. Joseph (Jesus' earthly father) was a carpenter so it would be expected that Jesus would also become a carpenter. Being a carpenter could have meant several things in those days – a stonemason, a person who actually constructed the building, an architect, or someone who fixed broken things. It could be as we think of it today – mainly working with wood. Jesus did reference things associated with carpentry such as being the chief cornerstone and the parable of the wise and foolish man. These could indicate a background in that area.

We don't know for sure that Jesus was a carpenter. I think the main thing here is that those who grew up with him had a hard time accepting him as something more than a common man. When I put myself into their shoes I can understand how that might be hard. People who knew me growing up probably have a hard time seeing me as a teacher. They probably can't imagine me speaking to a class full of students since I was very quiet as a young girl. I'm sure those around Jesus knew he was different from them as he grew up. After all, he was perfect. At times they probably viewed him as a goody two shoes and resented him for it. In order to accept him as God's son they had to believe he **was** better than them.

As you think about your life and how you relate to others, pray that God will help you be an encourager, not a discourager to them. Ask that you would see others as God sees them, not with preconceived ideas or prejudices. Be sure to seek God's will for your life and don't allow other people's attitudes to distract you from His plans.

The Way, the Truth and the Life

Sunday, December 7, 2014

by Andrew Keene

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." – John 14:6

This is a profound statement. In this one verse, Jesus firmly sets himself up as the only option for salvation. As humans we tend to focus on ourselves and our accomplishments. We like to think our works make us better than others in God's point of view. The truth is, as Jesus puts it, He is the way. He is the only way to the Father. No matter how good you are you cannot come into God's grace and mercy without the sacrifice of His son. Jesus is truth, and in truth we find life.

Our lives are full of distractions. We tend to be easily swayed by these, but if Jesus is the only way that leads to truth, shouldn't he be our main focus? We can go to church and do everything possible to make ourselves look good in front of others, but in the end the only thing that matters is a meaningful relationship with Christ.

In prayer, ask Jesus to be the truth that guides your way.



By Skyler Cook, age 6

The Servant

Monday, December 8, 2014

by Joyce Sayre

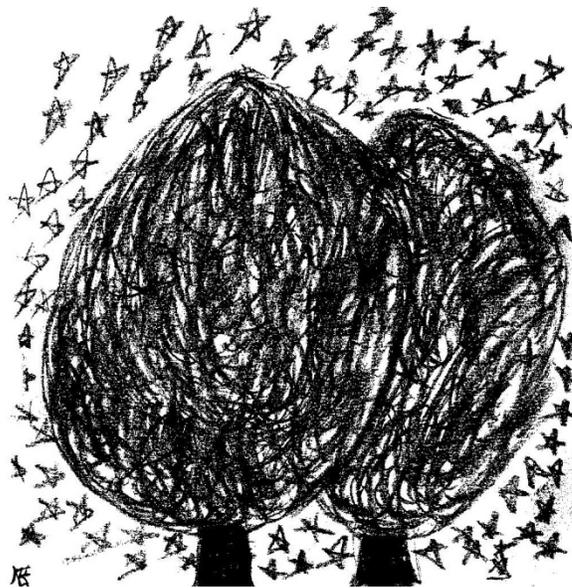
“Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.” – Matthew 12:18

Jesus went through towns teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among the people. Jesus said “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first, must be your slave”. Matthew 20:26-27.

“The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” - Matthew 23: 11-12

“Jesus said ‘Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.’ “ – Matthew 20:28

Pray: Lord, please help me to serve you and have the desire to serve others in what ever way is needed.



By Anna Keene

The Cornerstone

Tuesday, December 9, 2014

by Amber Lupton

“So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” – Ephesian 2:19-22

How does the metaphors “corner stone” and “foundation” relate to the gospel?

What foundations of the Gospel did the prophets and apostles teach in the Old Testament and the New Testament?

- Job 38:4-6 – God is the one who set the foundation
- Psalm 118:22 – the stone rejected has become the cornerstone
- Zechariah 10:4 – the cornerstone will come from Judah
- Matthew 21:42 – Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22
- Mark 12:10 – Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22 and refers it to Himself
- Luke 20:17 – Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22 as a parable against the teachers of the law
- Acts 4:11-12 – Peter quotes it to refer salvation is found in no other than Jesus
- 1 Peter 2: 4-10 *“As you come to him, the living Stone— rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’ Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”*

Consider your place in relation to the foundation and your personal relationship to the Cornerstone. Where do you fit? How can you reject the Cornerstone in daily life?

While praying ask God to help you remember to keep you steadfast in remembering our beloved Cornerstone.

Bread of Life

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

by Debbie Athon

"Then Jesus declared, 'I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.'" – John 6:35

The Jewish people remembered when God provided for them in the wilderness. God sent manna from heaven to provide for their physical bodies, but it had no value beyond this life. Jesus reveals himself to be God, the Bread of Life, that would give life to all the world.

Jesus came to die and provide salvation for all who would believe in him. He wants to give us abundant life, filling us with His Spirit and satisfying our deepest spiritual need. The Bread of Life Jesus gives is a personal relationship with Him for eternity.

As you pray, be thankful that Jesus sustains us everyday and give us the strength to live our lives for Him.



By Cedric Cook, age 6

Prince of Peace

Thursday, December 11, 2014

by Lana Brown

"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." - Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

A verse the Jews could hang on to - a hope bringer - a Messiah was coming that would bring peace! Indeed, He would even be identified as the Prince of Peace.

"**Prince**": a ruler, a son of the Most High King.

"**Peace**": no more war, calm throughout the land; the enemy defeated.

That was the Jewish thought. No enemy attacks. How great would that be!!

But, as He often does, Jesus focused on the internal before the external. (See Matthew 5-7.) He knew the deepest need of mankind was to have an internal peace, a well-being, a settled stillness, a true shalom. An internal well-being, even in the midst of war, is more important than a country at peace and a warring heart that never rests. So when Jesus came to earth so long ago, He focused on the most important peace first-bringing peace to the hearts of the people.

Indeed He brought Himself in bodily form - He, who is peace (Eph. 2:14), arrived on earth to take care of all wars of the heart. He brings peace . . . extending to each of us an unbelievable, internal peace and calm that we can't even describe or understand (Phil. 4:7).

Isaiah 9:6: A verse we can hang on to - a hope bringer. Peace inside of us - even in the midst of chaos.

O Lord, cause me to so center on you that I experience the Prince of Peace ruling in my heart even though the world around me is in chaos. When I become troubled and overwhelmed by the events of the day, speak . . . that I may hear your calm, sure voice and center on the most important thing first.

Morning Star

Friday, December 12, 2014

by Abi Kerby

"To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations – that one 'will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery' – just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give that one the morning star." –Revelation 2:26-28

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright and Morning Star." – Revelation 22:16

In verse 26, Revelation clearly states that if we hold on to our faith and stick to our values, God will give authority. You may be thinking "Oh no, it's okay. I'm not a leader." But God isn't saying you have to be governor or even head of the mission board – He is saying that you will be responsible for changes. Love is at the center of all the Lord's commands, and isn't love also the most powerful, inspirational emotion? Your love for others gives you the authority to change lives and eventually nations. Love is powerful.

Then the scripture goes on to say "we rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery, just as I have received authority from my Father." That sounds scary, doesn't it? We have to recognize God's almighty power and perfect justice. But to me this can also be interpreted another way – we must be willing to be "broken to pieces". Nobody wants to think of themselves being destroyed, yet as Christians, even if we are broken, failures, even facing death - our outcome is always the same: a new start.

And after we receive our Father, even if it means going through our darkest nights it is promised "and I will give that one the morning star." Christ our Lord will provide hope, a new day, a fresh start. Revelation 22:26 says "I am...the bright morning star." We have been given the most powerful and precious gift through our Lord, our eternal, never failing, all powerful morning star.

Have you ever been up in the morning and see the bright morning star in the sky? It's a hope that soon dawn will come, and a new day will begin. As you pray, thank God for that hope, and look to see Him in a fresh new way today.

The True Vine

Saturday, December 13, 2014

by Lillie Mack

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener." – John 15:1

The evening before He was to be arrested, Jesus said to His disciples, "I am the true vine..." indicating He is the Source of life and that all of life and fruitfulness flow from Him. He goes on to explain that as He is the True Vine, Christians are the branches.

I am a branch. Jesus tells me that if I stay right where I am, connected to and abiding in Him, I will bear much fruit bringing glory to God. I want to do that and most of you reading this probably do also. So how are we to remain in Him and He in each of us so that we bear much fruit and bring glory to God?

Jesus says that apart from Him as the true authentic Source, we can do nothing and will not bring glory to God. I have tried to hang artificial fruit on my branch apart from Jesus and still do unfortunately at times. Frustration, regret, guilt, sometimes fatigue, and despair are the results. No fruit of the Spirit is produced and God is not glorified in my life.

Abiding in Him as my Source moment by moment, day by day, week by week, year by year through prayer, reading His Word and applying His truths in my daily life, obeying those prompts from the Holy Spirit quickly, participating in worship and fellowship with other believers, confessing my sins as soon as God brings them to my attention, thanking Him for His bountiful blessings frequently, and praising Him help me to remain in Him and Him to remain in me. I fail or should I more accurately say "sin" much, much, much too often. I thank God for His grace and forgiveness.

Abiding in Him brings immeasurable joy to my life and a greater love for others. "Lord Jesus, as my True Vine, live out your life in me I pray." I have learned that it really is all about Him and not about me.

The Good Shepherd

Sunday, December 14, 2014

by Elsie Rudd

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep." – John 10:11

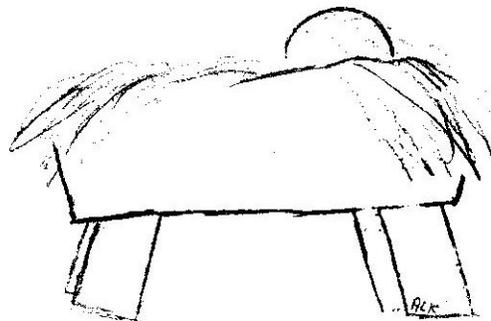
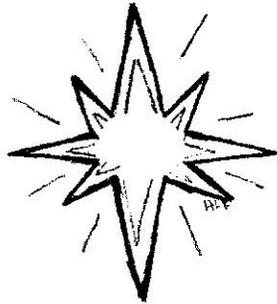
Jeremiah 23:3 talks about God gathering his sheep (his people). So the people listening to Jesus recognized that he was talking about more than taking care of animals. At the same time, everyone in the audience knew what sheep are like. They tend to not pay attention to what's going on around them and wander off and often don't recognize danger.

The good shepherd would lead sheep to food and water, watch out for them, and risk his own life to protect the sheep from bears and lions.

We believers are Jesus' sheep. Jesus leads us to the places he wants us to be and to the things we should be doing. He watches over us, even when we wander away from the good path he has planned for us. He protects us from evil. Jesus loves us so much that he died so that we could be saved and live with him forever.

Do you recognize when Jesus is leading you to do what is right? Do you ask Jesus to show you how to deal with difficult situations and people? Do you pay attention to Jesus and what he wants, or are you more likely to wander away from him and think about other things? Do you recognize when he is protecting you?

As you pray, thank God for watching over you, leading you, and protecting you. Ask that you can follow him better.



By Alyson Keene

The Gate

Monday, December 15, 2014

by Tabitha Cleaver

"Jesus said, 'I am the gate. Those who come in by me will be saved; they will come in and go out and find pasture.'" -John 10:9

Jesus is describing how salvation is achieved through him and him alone. He is referring to himself as the gatekeeper who opens the gate, only by him. That all who enter in some other way, by climbing over or sneaking in is a thief and a robber. The man who goes in through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. When the gatekeeper leads the sheep out, he goes ahead and they follow him. They will only follow him because they know his voice.

Whose voice are we listening for today, and everyday? Are we recognizing His voice? Or, are we letting thieves and robbers grab our attention and causing us to stray from our one true shepherd? The gate is open for us, but that is by following our shepherd, who will keep us safe, protect and guide us. We cannot get to Jesus and salvation by jumping the gate. What is the best way to follow our Lord?

As you pray, ask God to give you an ear for His voice, to lead you and guide you through the gate and into the pasture.

Immanuel

Tuesday, December 16, 2014

by Charles Jackson

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God with us'." – Matthew 1:23

What Does Your Name Mean?

Note to parents. You may need to do some research before this devotion, especially if you have younger children. You will want to find out the meaning of your children's name. If you have older children, you may want to let them search the internet for their name's meaning. <http://www.behindthename.com> provides good information.

Do you know what your name means? Almost every person's name has special meaning. When your parents chose your name, they may have searched through hundreds of names for just that special name. Take a minute and talk about how your names were chosen and what they mean.

Before Jesus was born, He was given several special names. One of those is found in Matthew 1:23. Read this verse from your Bible. The Bible says that He would be called "Immanuel." What did the Bible say that word means? It said that it meant "God with us." The birth of Jesus reminds us that God is always with us and cares for us. Jesus' name also meant something even more important. Jesus is God. Jesus was also fully human. When Jesus was born and placed in a manger, He was a real little baby, just like you once were. But Jesus was also fully God at the same time. The Bible says that this little baby was also the creator of everything. God loved us so very much that He came to earth as a baby. When you face problems, Jesus knows what that's like. Jesus can say to you, "I was a little baby once. I was a little boy once. I was a teenager. I was a grownup. I know what you are going through." How special it is to know at Christmas time that not only was a special baby born, but God came to be with us. Why? Because He loves us that much.

Prayer: Thank God that Jesus was Immanuel, God with us. God loves us enough to come to earth and live with us and show us God's love.

****Activity:** You can use a computer or colored paper to make "what my name means" posters. Older children can also do the same for the many names of Jesus or of God.

Savior

Wednesday, December 17, 2014

by Katie Bollman

“And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” - John 4:41-42

Jesus surprised his disciples when he spent time talking with the Samaritan woman, but through his interaction with the woman she came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. When the woman told others about Jesus, many came to believe in him. They asked Jesus to stay among them and he stayed for two days. As the people heard Jesus speak, they came to know for themselves that Jesus was not just a teacher, but truly was the Messiah and Savior of the world!

Today, about 2000 years after Jesus came to the earth, His role as Savior of the world continues. Every day His followers benefit from the love and sacrifice that Jesus gave us when He died for our sins, and we get the opportunity each day to learn from His teachings and spend time in prayer with him. We also have the opportunity to introduce others to the Savior of the world—just like the Samaritan woman did. When she realized that she was speaking with the Savior of the world she didn't keep it a secret. And when she told others about Jesus, they believed her and went to hear for themselves who Jesus was. When they heard Him speak they believed for themselves—just like our friends and neighbors can experience if they decide to spend time with God. Today spend some time reflecting on the ways that Jesus has been the Savior of **your** world and pray for other people in your life who have yet to experience this salvation. The Christmas season is a great time to share your faith with others. Is there an opportunity for you to share with someone else the exciting news of who Jesus is?

As you pray, take some time to thank God for the gift of Jesus Christ—Savior of the world, and thank Him for salvation in your life. Also pray for the opportunity to share your faith this week.

King of Kings

Thursday, December 18, 2014

by Kathy Adkins

"On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords." – Revelation 19:16

King of kings" (βασιλευς των βασιλευοντων) is one of the titles of Jesus, based on 1 Timothy 6:15 and Revelation 17:14 & 19:16. The name was given to Jesus as people associated it with something, and it helped people understand something about Jesus. Our King of Kings lives in unapproachable light, which no one has seen or can see.

To him be honor and might forever, Amen!

Jesus says Matthew 28:18 that all authority on earth has been given to him. In John 18:36 he says that his realm is not of *this earth*. Thus, it is commonly accepted that the title "King of Kings" is awarded to Jesus as the ruler over a temporal, spiritual or "higher" kingdom. It is important to note that a common Christian belief that their Lord, Jesus Christ is/was the living embodiment of God Almighty, affording him title of "Supreme and Ultimate Ruler of the Universe".

A King is royalty; Jesus is our king that we owe everything to. He expects our undivided attention, and everything we have is his from his grace and blessings. We should pray and give thanks to our King of Kings for all he has provided us, and for being such for such a forgiving God.



By Alyson Keene

The Almighty

Friday, December 19, 2014

by Michael Hartman

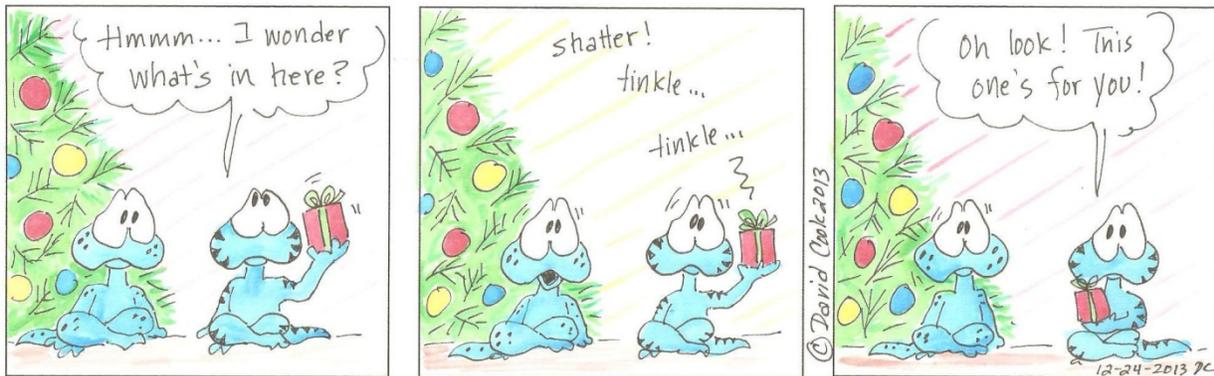
*"I am the Alpha and Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."
– Revelations 1:8*

What a beautiful picture of the Power that God has displayed in the word Almighty. The term "Almighty God" or "the Almighty" occurs in Revelations 8 times and draws attention to the fact that God's power is supreme over all. He exercises sovereign control over every person, object and event. Not one molecule in the universe is outside Hi dominion.

When we hear the word "Almighty" it conjures images of someone with unimaginable strength, someone with the ability to do anything, someone that can be depended upon when times are rough. This is how Jesus is in our lives. Hallelujah! We can depend on Him and His Almighty power, like blood vessels upon the heart; or as each and everything in the universe upon the sun. In a word, "from Him we live and move and have our being."

As you pray, ask God to show his Almighty power in your life so that others may glorify Him.

Nort & Friends by David Cook



Teacher

Saturday, December 20, 2014

by Brenda Jones

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." – John 13:14

TEACHER is only one of the many names we know our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, by. He came to this earth not only to pay for our sins by dying on the cross for us, but to show us how to live with each other while we are here. By the washing of one another's feet, we are also taught how to share and spread his gospel.

He taught others and thru God's word, the Holy Bible, we now have Pastors, Sunday School Teachers, Bible Study leaders, Song Leaders and many others who teach and share His word.

God's word is living and active and as Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

As you pray, thank God that Jesus came to teach us and that He is a patient teacher with us. Let's pray for one another and have the same patience with them as our Great Teacher has with us.

Nort & Friends *by David Cook*



Man of Sorrows

Sunday, December 21, 2014

by Dana Marshall

“He was despised and rejected – a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.” – Isaiah 53:3

Jesus is given many names, but this one is not alluding to holiness or glory. “Man of Sorrows” doesn’t bring up images of Christmas joy or happiness.

I recently took a trip to the Philippines, and witnessed a situation where children were living in a camp of prostitutes. They were children of the sex trade. People would normally despise them and treat them poorly, but on this occasion I saw the love of Christ. A local pastor had started a feeding program and was sharing the gospel. As they learned about Jesus they could relate to His pain. When I arrived the children were learning about the hope of heaven and several had already come to Jesus. Their singing of praises were even sweeter considering their circumstances. They had come from pain to joy, from being despised to being loved. Their earthly address hasn’t changed but their eternal one has.

Jesus, a man of sorrows, it took His pain, death and resurrection to bring humanity hope.

Please be praying for women and children involved in the sex-trade and the Christians that are helping them.

Wonderful Counselor

Monday, December 22, 2014

by Sarah Mack

“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.” – Isaiah 9:6

Where do you go when you're in a hard situation and not sure what to do, which way to go, or who to trust? We all face times of uncertainty when the path ahead of us is unclear and we search for something or someone to help us make decisions and take the next step into our future. It's too hard for me to count the number of times that I have poured out my heart and my troubles to a friend asking for advice and godly perspective, wishing for answers to life's problems. And at times that's just what we need, isn't it? Friends and family who will stand by us in the hard times and offer us wisdom and counsel.

Yes, these people are such blessings in our life, but at times my soul gets so thirsty for the Wonderful Counselor. I'm sorry to say that there are days when I just feel so busy, so stressed, so preoccupied with all that's going on in my life that I don't stop and ask Jesus what He thinks. Instead of communicating with Him through prayer and reading His words, I turn to my family, a friend, Facebook, Google, to see what everyone else thinks. There is rarely a minute that passes that I can't read or ask someone's opinion on any subject I can think of. I have often heard that still, small voice saying, “Come to me”, “Sit with me”, “Listen to me”, “Talk to me”. And on the days I heed that voice, the Holy Spirit in me speaks to me. And as I really seek Him and spend time with Him, He answers. He guides my path. He counsels me and gives me peace about the choices I make with Him.

The Bible says that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). He really is the only one we can turn to for our true answers. We all have limited knowledge at best when it comes to giving advice, offering our opinions, or providing answers. The next time you face a problem in your life, try going to the Wonderful Counselor first, before consulting anyone else. When I make this my choice, the peace that comes with it is indescribable!

As you pray, take time to listen to the Wonderful Counselor , who already knows what we need before we even need to speak it!

Alpha & Omega

Tuesday, December 23, 2014

by Chad Tatro

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." – Revelation 22:13

In this statement, Jesus reminds us that He is more than a Man who walked the earth, but that He is the True, Everlasting Son of God. He Is, He Was, and He Is to Come. Sometimes we forget that He was there at the creation of the world in addition to the promise of His return and eternal rule. At Christmas, we sometimes focus on just the Babe in the manger and lose sight of His eternal story. As we celebrate Christ's birth this season, we should be reminded of His sacrificial death and the completing act of His resurrection and His return to the Father. In addition we have hope in His promised return to establish His eternal kingdom. It is this eternal story that is the true story of Christmas. It's such a blessing and privilege that God has created us in His own likeness—we are to be eternal with our eyes on eternal things.

As you celebrate this season, are you focused on eternal things or are you caught up in the hustle and bustle of the holiday season? Do you think about the food that you'll serve at the Christmas dinner or are you focusing daily on the bread that is the Word of God? Do you stress about what gift you're going to get that extended family member or do you pray about how to share with them the greatest gift of all? Living with eternity in mind changes our priorities and our daily focus. It allows us to be more in-sync with the true "Alpha and Omega" in carrying out His plan for us on this earth as we prepare for the eternity to come.

As you pray, ask God to help you focus not only on the true meaning of Christmas, but also the eternal significance of the season and the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Nort & Friends by David Cook



Lion of Judah

Wednesday, December 24, 2014

by Mike Brummit

"Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.'" – Revelation 5:5

Jesus was the only one able to open the scrolls because of his sin free life, death on the cross and later rising from the dead. Jesus is bold and mighty among men like a lion in a pride. When you hear the name Jesus it brings to mind a lion. A lion is the mightiest among beast. It can be feared and respected. The pride is very territorial, affectionate and has good fellowship, like we Christians.

Only Christ Jesus conquers sin, death, hell and Satan himself, so only he can be trusted with the worlds and our future.

As you pray on this day before Christmas, thank God that He sent His Son to save us from our sins.

Nort & Friends by David Cook



The Bridegroom

Thursday, December 25, 2014

by David Cook

Jesus said, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast." – Matthew 9:15

The religious leaders came to Jesus and were complaining that his disciples were having too much fun – had they been serious they would have been fasting and letting everyone know how religious they were. Jesus referred to himself as the bridegroom in His answer. Think about a wedding – weddings are usually a time of joy and happiness! The Apostle Paul also refers to Jesus as the bridegroom who will come to take the Church back to heaven. Jesus says we should be joyful in His presence.

Let's take it one step further. Think about a bridegroom in front of the altar waiting for his bride to come. He is looking forward to them being together. He is also expecting intimacy, purity and faithfulness. Picture yourself as the bride. Are you looking forward to being with Christ? Or do you have a divided heart? Are you being faithful, pure and intimate with Him? Or will He be disappointed? As we approach this time of Christmas, commit yourself to a deeper relationship with Christ.

Advent has come to a close, and we are now celebrating the birth of Christ! Just as we had been anticipating His birth the past month, we are also anticipating the coming of the Bridegroom to take His bride (the Church) to Heaven. Just as we prepared for Christmas and waited in anticipation for the holiday, are we also preparing ourselves for His second coming and living in anticipation of that day? Take some time during the festivities to think about His second coming, and live in anticipation of that great and glorious day! Do you think a wedding is special? Do you think Christmas is great? How much more so will that day be when Christ comes for us all!

As you pray, ask God to give you an undivided heart to love Him and serve Him, and live in expectation of His great coming!

**Merry
Christmas!**