

DEVOTIONAL: 25 DAYS PREPARING FOR THE COMING KING

SET THE TABLE



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INTRODUCTION: SET THE TABLE

One of the greatest joys of the Christmas season is sitting around the dinner table with family and friends. All the cleaning, cooking and preparations become a pleasure as you anticipate the coming meal together.

The goal of this Reading Plan is to treat the next 25 days as an opportunity to set the table for Jesus' arrival on Christmas Day. As believers, the best way to prepare to do this is to give Him control of every aspect of our life. This Christmas season, may we set the table for the Lord Jesus' coming by laying everything before Him and allowing Him to fill us with His joy.

Each day consists of four devotional elements:

- *A few verses from the bible*
- *A devotional thought based on the verses for the day*
- *A reflection question*
- *And a short prayer.*

DAY ONE: GIVE JESUS YOUR LIFE

MATTHEW 16:24–25

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.”

This may seem like an odd Christmas verse. However, due to the busyness of the season, Christmas often turns into a 25-day, self-focused pursuit resulting in exhaustion. But what if this Christmas was different? The only way you will truly have life is by giving your life to Jesus. As you lay everything at His feet, He promises to show you a life filled with Him.

Will you commit to surrendering your life to Jesus over the next 25 days?

Pray: Lord, I give You my life in the coming days so that I may truly have life in You.

DAY TWO: GIVE JESUS YOUR LOVE

JOHN 14:15

¹⁵If you love me, keep my commands.

A love for Jesus is a lifestyle. To keep the commands of Jesus is to follow His example: a rejection of sin and worldliness, and a love for God and others. This calling to loving obedience is not a burden (1 John 5:3), but a delight. As you seek to love Jesus, take an inventory of your life and ask - Do I love following His commands?

Do your actions display a love for Jesus or a love for this world?

Pray: Lord, teach me to follow Your word so that I may show my love for You.

DAY THREE: GIVE JESUS YOUR PAST

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14

¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Too often you can let your past failures discourage you in your present pursuit of following Jesus. But in doing so, you end up minimizing God's grace through Jesus. The beauty of coming to Jesus is giving Him your past. You are called to press on, but not by your own strength. Instead, you press on by setting every sin, misstep and failure before Him, asking Jesus to forgive you and redirect your life.

Do you give your past failures greater power than Jesus' present grace?

Pray: Lord, forgive me for my past and lead me to a future of following You.

DAY FOUR: GIVE JESUS YOUR ATTENTION

LUKE 8:21

²¹Jesus replied, “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.”

Jesus expresses the reality that those who are a part of His family are those who are constantly listening and obeying Him. How do you hear from Jesus? He will always speak to you through His Word. It’s easy to let the voice of the Lord be drowned out by the noises of the world. In a season of distractions, fight to keep your attention on Jesus.

Who do you listen to more: the World or the Word?

Pray: Lord, teach me to diligently listen to and obey Your Word.

DAY FIVE: GIVE JESUS YOUR WORRY

MATTHEW 6:33

³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Worry, anxiety and stress are the enemy's way to keep your mind focused on things that are outside of your control. Don't be fooled. Jesus is reminding you that just as He provides for the birds and the flowers, how much more will He provide for His children. Instead, use your time remembering and trusting in God to supply all of your needs.

What are some worries that you need to give to Jesus?

Pray: Lord, in the midst of my anxiety and worry, remind me that You hold everything in Your hands.

DAY SIX: GIVE JESUS YOUR WORDS

EPHESIANS 4:29

²⁹Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Jesus teaches that everything that comes from the mouth is an overflow of what is in your heart. If you desire to be filled by Jesus's joy this Christmas, check your words and ask - how do these reflect the state of my heart? Jesus is calling you to know Him and love Him, and it's only when that inside change occurs that your outside words will be wholesome, encouraging and beneficial.

What do your words say about the state of your heart?

Pray: Lord, take over my heart so that my words will bring life to others.

DAY SEVEN: GIVE JESUS YOUR PLANS

JAMES 4:13-17

¹³Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.”

¹⁴Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

Christmas is all about planning. Plan your meals. Plan your trips. Plan your presents. But in a season of planning, you will be tempted to forget about the importance of today. In both little and big moments, Jesus is calling you to remember that your top priority is to live a life that reflects Him now.

Do your plans get in the way of God’s plan for your life?

Pray: Lord, help me remember that in all of my planning, You have called me to follow Your way first.

DAY EIGHT: GIVE JESUS YOUR FRUSTRATIONS

1 PETER 5:6-7

⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.⁷Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Stressful seasons can be challenging seasons. Whether you are irritated with a person or a circumstance, you must remember that you are the only one who controls your emotions and responses. Amid frustrations, humble yourself. Realize that there are many things outside of your control, but Jesus has called you to give those to Him and obey His way.

What frustrations are controlling your life?

Pray: Lord, help me to rid myself of those things I can't control and instead, faithfully walk in obedience.

DAY NINE: GIVE JESUS YOUR TRUST

GALATIANS 4:3-5

³So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. ⁴But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

Jesus came in God's perfect timing. In fact, God has worked since the beginning of time to save His people and make them a part of His family. What does it look like to trust in Jesus? It means that you are choosing to live fully convinced that God is able to do what He has promised (Romans 4:20-21). God has promised that life is only found in Him through Jesus. Even when you can't feel His promises, give your trust to the One Who has always been faithful.

Based on your concerns and actions, are you trusting Jesus?

Pray: Lord, remind me of Your promises and give me strength to live fully convinced that You are able to make good on those promises.

DAY TEN: GIVE JESUS YOUR PAIN

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9–10

⁹But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The Lord knows about your pain. But sometimes in the midst of it, there is a temptation to make your hurts bigger than your God. More than anything, the Lord desires your heart. In your pain, heartache and weakness, never forget that the Lord is calling you to depend on Him so that you too can proclaim, “when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Is your pain bigger than your God?

Pray: Lord, help me remember that every breath I have is a moment I am receiving Your grace. In my weakness Lord, give me strength to live for You.

DAY ELEVEN: GIVE JESUS YOUR DEVOTION

ROMANS 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

You worship those things that take the most of your time, attention and resources. This means that everyone is worshipping something. Sometimes Christians talk about worshipping God as if it is simply a weekly, one-time event. But worship is a lifestyle. The only way to live a worship-filled lifestyle is by dedicating your life to following Jesus. During this Christmas season, worship the coming King by giving Him the most of your time, attention and resources.

If someone evaluated your life, who would they say you worship?

Pray: Lord, thank you for Your constant grace and mercy. Teach me what it means to live a life of worshipping You.

DAY TWELVE: GIVE JESUS YOUR THOUGHTS

ROMANS 12:2

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Your mind is constantly being shaped by what it consumes.

Social media, TV, movies, magazines, etc. are all designed to mold your thinking in a variety of ways. But you won't be able to follow the Lord's plan for your life unless you allow Him to be your primary mind-shaper. The more you saturate your life with His Spirit, His Word and His people, the more you will be able to walk in a way that honors Him.

Who shapes your thinking most?

Pray: Lord, transform my thinking so that I may walk with You.

DAY THIRTEEN: GIVE JESUS YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

MATTHEW 22:39

And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.

You think about you a lot. This is the reason why loving others the way you love yourself is hard. In fact, this way of living is often the very opposite of how people typically want to spend their time. But bitterness, unforgiveness and quarreling have no place in living a God-honoring life. As you give Jesus control of your life, you must give Him control of how you interact with and love others.

Who is someone you need to love better?

Pray: Lord, show me how to love others the way You have loved me.

DAY FOURTEEN: GIVE JESUS YOUR GRIEF

JOHN 16:33

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

People tend to bottle up their grief. To worship Jesus but hold on to your heartache is allowing Jesus into some of your life, but not all of it. Jesus offers you peace as He proclaims His presence and power amid all of life's storms. To follow Jesus is to walk in such a way that regardless of situations and circumstances, you have a contentment that is rooted in the One Who holds all things in His hands.

Do you believe following Jesus results in inner peace?

Pray: Lord, guard me with a peace that surpasses all understanding.

DAY FIFTEEN: GIVE JESUS YOUR FOCUS

HEBREWS 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart

'Tis the season for distractions. Difficult relationships, money problems, apathy, work stress, etc. all work to keep your attention and focus from what is truly important. Like Peter walking on water, the problem is that you begin to sink when you take your eyes off Jesus (Matthew 14:22–33). If you want to live in obedience, experience His joy, and not grow weary in a distracting world, you must intentionally keep your focus fixed on Jesus.

Where is your focus?

Pray: Lord, forgive me for getting distracted. Remind me throughout today to keep my eyes fixed on You.

DAY SIXTEEN: GIVE JESUS YOUR STRUGGLES

ROMANS 8:35

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

What is the hope of the Christmas season? There is nothing that can separate you from the love of Christ! When you believe that Jesus is Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit seals us until the day of redemption and guarantees our inheritance of eternal life (Ephesians 1:13–14). Though your struggles may be overwhelming and discouraging, every struggle can be used to highlight God’s continual grace in your life. As the Lord holds on to you, walk in faith and obedience as He never stops loving you and continues working with you for His glory and your good (Romans 8:28).

What struggles do you need to give to Jesus?

Pray: Lord, though this life can be discouraging, teach me to continue to walk in the truth that You love me and are working for Your glory and my good.

DAY SEVENTEEN: GIVE JESUS YOUR WEARINESS

GALATIANS 6:9

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Working for the Lord is hard work. Like swimming upstream, when you serve the Lord, you are constantly up against the currents of a broken world. There is a temptation to fight this good fight in your own strength. But this always results in burnout. Instead, prioritize prayer, saturate yourself in His Word and gather with other believers so that you can keep doing the work of the Lord. In doing so, you can anticipate a God-glorifying harvest.

Are you trying to serve the Lord in your own strength?

Pray: : Lord, I am too weak to do Your work on my own. Teach me to humble myself and depend on Your strength so that I may continue to serve You.

DAY EIGHTEEN: GIVE JESUS YOUR ACTIONS

EPHESIANS 2:10

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Good works are those actions that bring honor and glory to God. From the way you love your friends and family to the way you work at your job, you were created to worship the Lord. No matter the task, you are His handiwork! Like a watch is designed to tell time, you are designed to live your life displaying the Lord's goodness through your words and actions.

Do your actions point people to you or Him?

Pray: Lord, teach me to live in a way that displays Your miraculous work in me.

DAY NINETEEN: GIVE JESUS YOUR TIME

EPHESIANS 5:15-16

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

It doesn't matter who you are, everyone has twenty-four hours in a day. Billionaire investor Warren Buffett famously said, "I can buy anything I want but I can't buy time." With only six days until Christmas, you may even be thinking of just how quickly time has passed in this season. But among all the tasks and to-do lists, remember that your time is limited. Jesus is calling you to make the most of every opportunity by prioritizing those things that make an eternal impact.

Is your time being spent on what the Lord says is most important?

Pray: Lord, forgive me for the opportunities I have wasted. Show me how to prioritize Your ways and invest my time in the things that honor You.

DAY TWENTY: GIVE JESUS YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

MATTHEW 11:28-30

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

The world is constantly stuck in a restless cycle. People remain enslaved to their tasks and schedules as they continue running in their proverbial hamster wheels. Why? Because the fall of humanity shattered God's perfect created order - a perfect order defined by all things resting in Him as King. Yet Jesus promises to restore this rest for all those who come to Him. If you are tired and weary in this Christmas season, go to Jesus and He promises to take your burdens, pick you up and give you the strength you need to keep going.

Where do you go to find rest for your soul?

Pray: Lord, I cannot find rest without You. I need You to take my restlessness, refocus my eyes, and give me strength to live a godly life

DAY TWENTY-ONE: GIVE JESUS YOUR FEAR

JOHN 14:1

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.

You fear what you can't control. Yet one of the most frequent commands in the Bible is the Lord telling His people, "Do not be afraid!" Why? Because the Lord is calling you to fear Him instead. Part of what it means to fear the Lord is to walk in faith, believing that even though you can't control certain parts of your life, He can. Don't allow your fear of what you can't control overtake your fear of the One Who controls all things.

Have you let your fears grow bigger than your God?

Pray: Lord, though there are many things in this world that I cannot control, I believe that You hold everything in Your hands. Teach me to fear You.

DAY TWENTY-TWO: GIVE JESUS YOUR SUFFERING

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Living as a light in a dark world can be hard. Sometimes you will feel lonely. Sometimes you will feel hopeless. Sometimes you will feel like an outcast. But take heart! Every act of obedience is not worthless. Rather, these hardships pale in comparison to your glorious future with Jesus. In a world that makes Christmas about every thing except Jesus, stand firm on His Word and continue to point people to the true meaning of Christmas.

Do you believe that your momentary troubles will be far outweighed by a glorious future?

Pray: Lord, in the midst of suffering, teach me to set my mind on the things to come, not on earthly things. Lord, in the midst of suffering, teach me to set my mind on the things to come, not on earthly things.

DAY TWENTY-THREE: GIVE JESUS YOUR GRATITUDE

1 CORINTHIANS 15:57–58

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Thankfulness to God is recognizing that the Lord in His perfect faithfulness has given you everything you need for a life in Him. Further, it is a life posture of dependence on Him. Everything you are and everything you have comes from God. Therefore, failing to be thankful is a serious sin. Christmas is two days away. Don't miss all the opportunities you have to give thanks back to God during this season. The more you remember His ways and give thanks, the more your life will be devoted to Him.

How has the Lord been good in your life?

Pray: Lord, forgive me for my ungrateful heart. Everything I have comes from You. I thank You and I praise You for You are good and worthy to be praised.

DAY TWENTY-FOUR: GIVE JESUS YOUR HOPE

ROMANS 12:12

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Christmas is a season of hope. Though you are surrounded by brokenness, sin and suffering, Jesus came into this world so that everyone who believes in Him would not die but have everlasting life. If you find yourself discouraged and hopeless, run to His Word, fall to your knees in prayer and surround yourself with other believers who can encourage you to remember what is to come. In a world that will chew you up and spit you out, keep your eyes fixed on the joyful hope you have in Jesus.

Is your hope in Jesus?

Pray: : Lord, help me to keep my eyes fixed on You so that I may walk in faith as I hope in Your unfailing Word.

DAY TWENTY-FIVE: GIVE JESUS YOUR JOY

LUKE 2:10-14

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Over the past 25 days, you have set the table for this moment by giving Jesus various aspects of your life. Why? Because when you give Jesus your life, He promises to fill you with His joy. Christmas is a season that brings good news that should cause great joy: Jesus was born! There is no more marvelous point in human history than when God humbled Himself, took on flesh and carried out His salvation plan. May today be filled with His praises as He overwhelms you with His joy!

Is your hope in Jesus?

Pray: : Lord, help me to keep my eyes fixed on You so that I may walk in faith as I hope in Your unfailing Word.