



*Once
upon a
Christmas*

ADVENT 2022



D E V O T I O N A L



THIS DEVOTIONAL BELONGS TO

START DATE



FOR UNTO 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

Leading into Christmas this year, we wanted to do something special to help us all keep our hearts and minds focused on the true reason for the season. This special advent experience features weekly devotionals and daily scripture reading that traces the theme of Isaiah 9:6 - outlining who this Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace truly is - preparing our hearts to encounter Christmas Day in a fresh way.

This devotional is also filled with thoughtful extras - family activities and conversation prompts to make this season extra memorable for the whole family. We want you to engage in this season leading up to Christmas with your spouse, children, and friends - all while gaining a deeper understanding of who Jesus is to YOU.

As we begin this advent journey together, we pray this devotional blesses you and reminds you of who our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace is - no matter what this season looks like for you and your loved ones!

Wishing you the merriest Christmas and happiest New Year!

XX Pastors Steve & Sharon Kelly

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CHRISTMAS SEASON MEMORY FROM YOUR CHILDHOOD?

“One year my mom faked me out with a gift of a storage container for video games I didn’t have... Then she surprised me with a follow up gift of the Legend of Zelda video game!”

-Keyno

“Our dad would read Jesus’ birth story in Luke 2:1-20. We would sit around the Christmas tree and fondly listen to the meaning of Christmas.”

-Jess

“If there was no snow where we spent Christmas, then after the Christmas Dinner we drove or flew to some destination where there was snow to spend one night or one week in a snow-covered place. Some years it was Pennsylvania, Ohio, Colorado, Utah, Snowshoe, Wintergreen or anywhere else! We did make an exception for Hawaii one year...”

-Seth

“My favorite memory from my childhood was going to get the Christmas tree. My mom was a single mom and trying to get the tree on top of the car and into the house was always fun and challenging. I incorporated the idea of picking out the Christmas tree with my nieces and nephews when they spent time with me over the holidays while they were younger.”

-Claudette

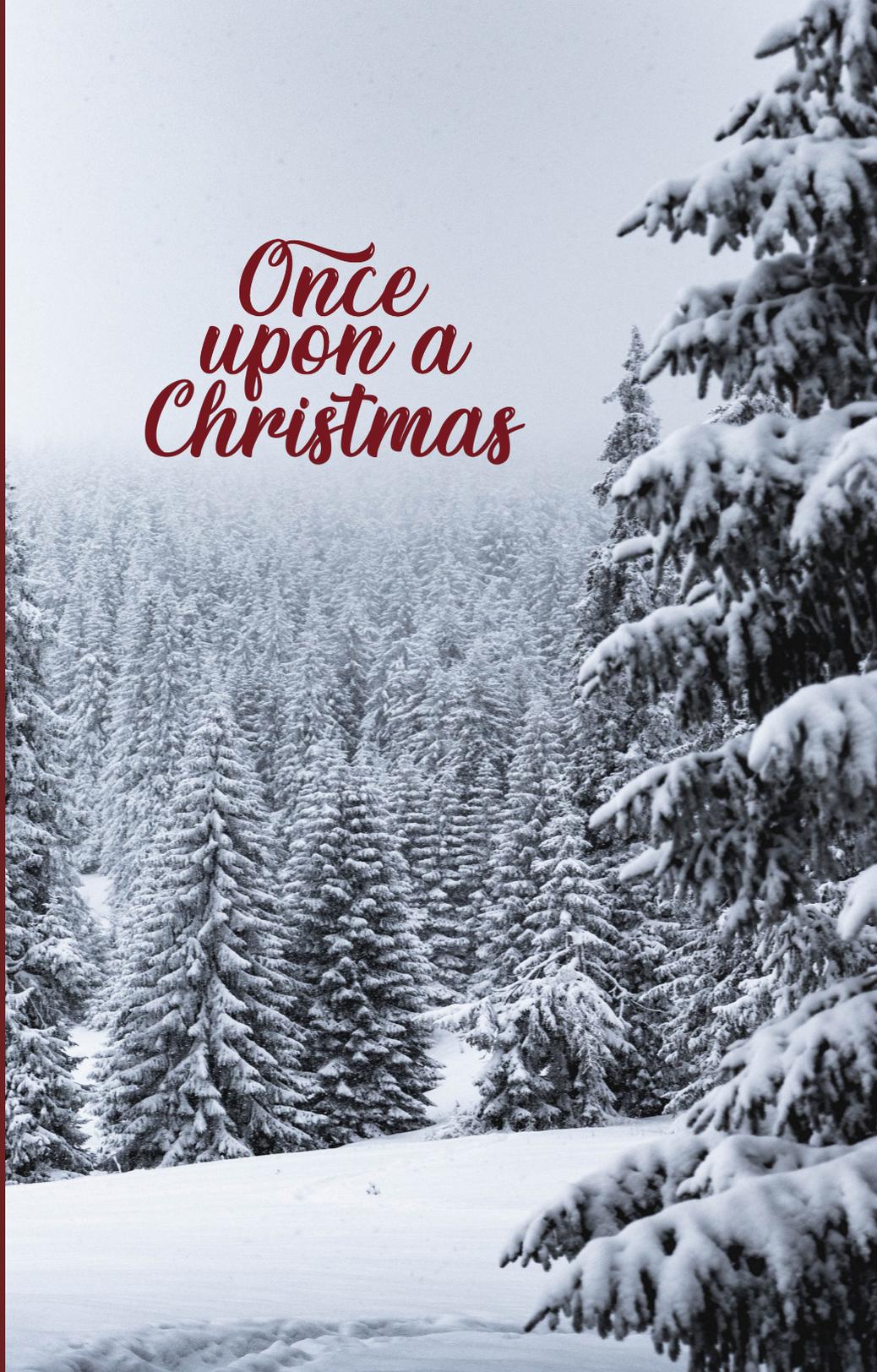
“I will never forget the year my parents got me the one gift my brother had asked for, a Gameboy Advance SP. I was confused and he was crying because he had one gift left and it was a box shaped the same as the other ones that only had socks or clothes in them... He threw the box down to see a Gameboy fly out of it and his whole attitude changed in the span of 2 seconds.”

-Caleb

“As a child I was raised Catholic and as a family we would go to midnight-Mass every Christmas Eve and I remember as we travelled home from church always looking up into the sky very intently to see if I could see Santa and his sleigh.”

-Rachel

*Once
upon a
Christmas*



HOW TO S . O . A . P

SCRIPTURE

Which verse stood out to you?

S Open your Bible to your reading for the day. Take time reading and allow God to speak to you. When you are done, look for a verse that particularly spoke to you that day, and write it in your journal.

OBSERVATION

What is God saying to you?

O What do you feel God is saying to you in this scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal Jesus to you.

APPLICATION

How can you apply it today?

A Personalize what you have read by asking yourself how it applies to your life right now. Perhaps it is instruction, encouragement, a new promise, or corrections for a particular area of your life. Write how this scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

Ask God to help you use what you've learned.

P This can be as simple as asking God to help you use this scripture, or even a prayer for a greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Remember, prayer is a two-way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say! Now, write it out.

HOW TO PRAY

ADORATION

Tell God how much you appreciate Him.

A This is a great way to begin your prayer time. Tell God how much you appreciate Him. Express your love for Him. Praise His power and majesty. You should never run out of praise.

CONFESSION

Tell God where you have fallen short.

C Tell God where you have fallen short. Be specific. Thank Him for the forgiveness you have in Christ and ask for help and strength to turn away from future temptations.

THANKSGIVING

Express gratitude for what He's doing.

T We have so much to be thankful for. Thank God for His love, His faithfulness, His patience. Express gratitude for what he is doing in your life.

SUPPLICATION

Share your desired with God.

S Share your desires with God, no matter how big or small they may seem. Nothing is too big or too small for God. He cares about every detail of your life. Pray for your own needs and for the needs of others. Be sure to listen to what God has to say! Now, write it out.



Thanks
BE TO
God
FOR HIS
indescribable
GIFT

2 CORINTHIANS 9:15

WEEK ONE

*Wonderful
Counselor*

DAY ONE

DECEMBER 1, 2022

In today's vocabulary, *wonderful* is often an overstated, underrated word: "This meal smells *wonderful*. A trip to a tropical paradise sounds *wonderful*. Joining you for coffee would be wonderful." All those things sound nice, maybe even really nice, but they just don't measure up to use of the awe and wonder card, do they?

The word *wonderful* in Isaiah 9:6 literally means "incomprehensible." Think "breathtaking, jaw-dropping, and mind-blowing" then multiply that level by infinity. That status belongs to Christ alone.

When God, through a love too deep and high and wide for us to understand (Eph. 3:18), masterminded His best gift for all humanity, He spared no expense, no lack of personalization, and no power to transcend time, logic, or comprehension.

Through Jesus, God divinely wrapped and deposited to us a gift that is All-Sufficient, Perfect, and more *Wonderful* than we could ever wrap our heads around.

And there's more!

God knew in this world we would sometimes feel disoriented, disappointed, and disheartened by its cares. He knew we would feel in over our heads more often than we care to admit. He knew it would be increasingly difficult to filter what is true, who is trustworthy, and where to place our hope. And so, in love and grace, He delivered to us an incomprehensible (*wonderful*) Counselor.

Imagine 24/7 access to someone who is fully in tune with exactly what you are going through. Someone who knows your most crushing heartaches, greatest needs, most burdensome worries, and deepest desires. Someone who is actively and intently listening to you. And, most importantly, someone with ultimate wisdom, knowledge, and power to direct, redeem, and restore you.

That person is our *Wonderful Counselor* – the first of the four-part promise Isaiah 9:6 describes, given to us in the person of Jesus. He is our assurance of guidance in the right direction, at the right time, and with the best answers. We will never seek His counsel in vain.

Scripture tells us that Jesus is positioned hip to hip with God so that He can continually plead for and assist us. When we give ourselves to Him by faith, He advocates for us with power, authority, and flawless insight (Romans 8:34). Where we would otherwise be doomed, our *Wonderful Counselor* fights for our hope and wholeness. His position as *Wonderful Counselor* means we can trust Him.

It's this same Counselor who invites us to cast

“the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully”

(1 Peter 5:7).

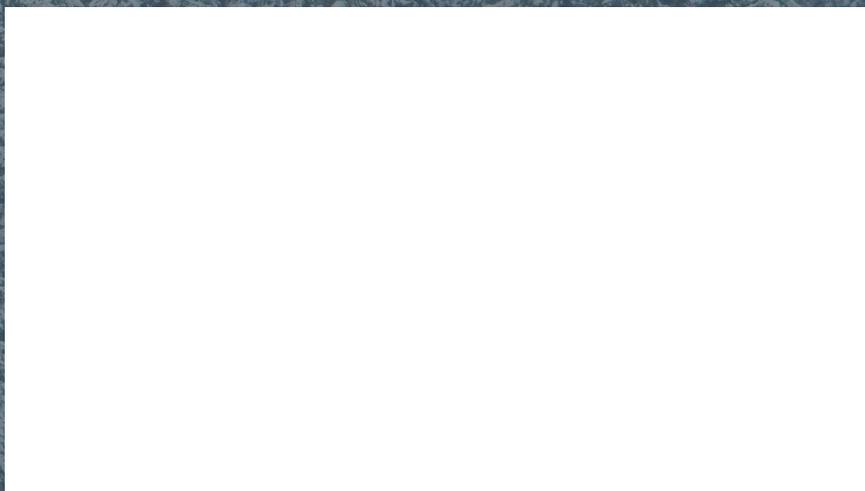
When we release the weight of our burden to Him (time and time again, as many times as it takes), He won't let us slip or fall or fail; He will sustain us (Psalm 55:22). It's more than just words or wishes; Jesus is our guarantee of a divinely fierce and faithful Advocate, Defender and Champion. He's even got our name engraved on the palm of His hand (Isaiah 49:16)!

Come to Him today with certainty and wonder. Let Him carry all that concerns you. His very name bears His promise to be your *Wonderful Counselor*.

*Who is the
"Wonderful Counselor" to you?*



*Write down a prayer to the
"Wonderful Counselor"*



For a Child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his *love* is.

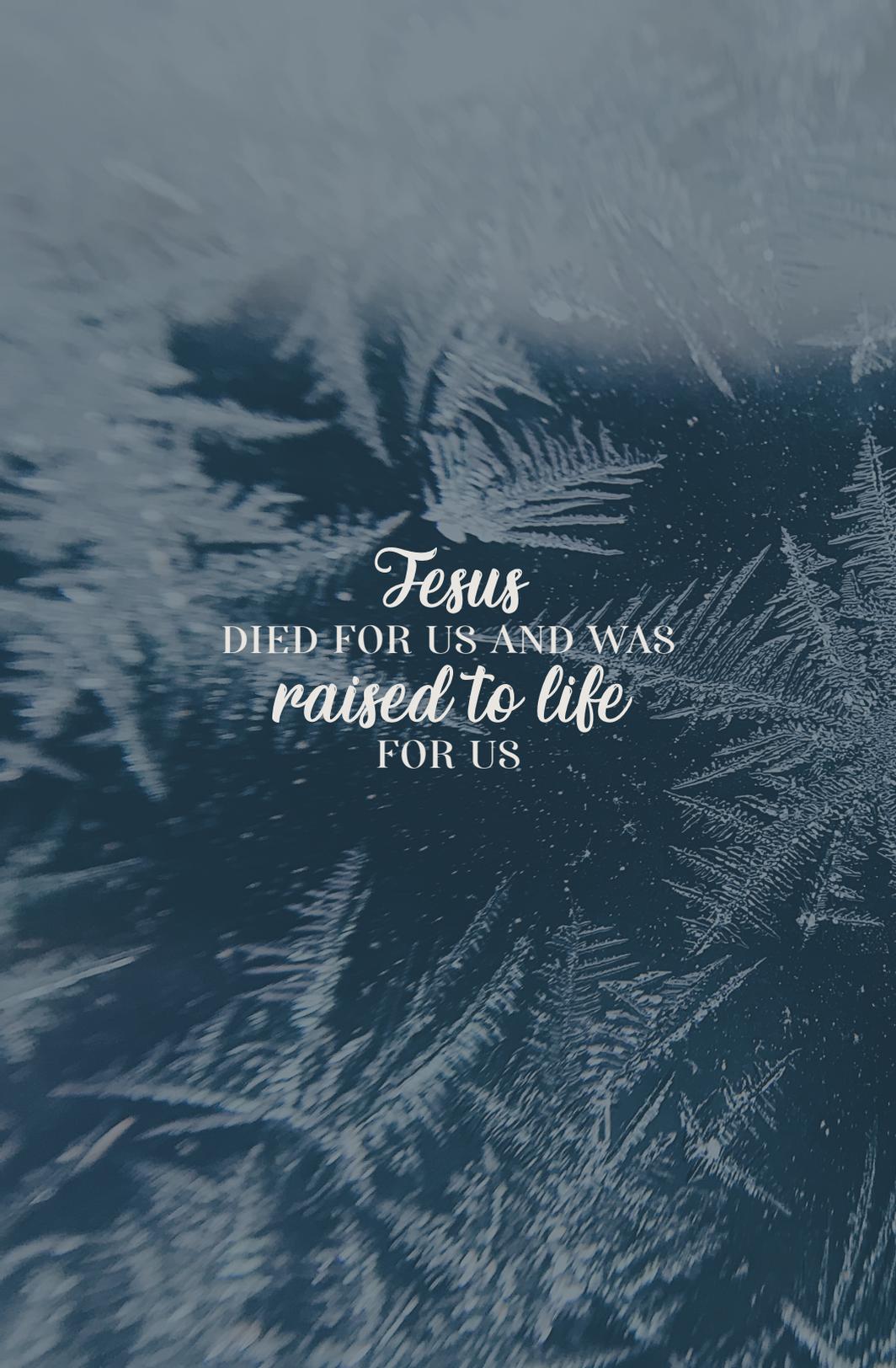
Ephesians 3:18

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*



Jesus
DIED FOR US AND WAS
raised to life
FOR US

Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and He is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

Romans 8:34

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for *He cares for you affectionately* and cares about you watchfully.

1 Peter 5:7

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

Cast your cares on the Lord and *He will sustain you*; He will never let the righteous be shaken.

Psalm 55:22

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

See, I have written *your name* on the palms of
my hands.

Isaiah 49:16

S - *scripture*

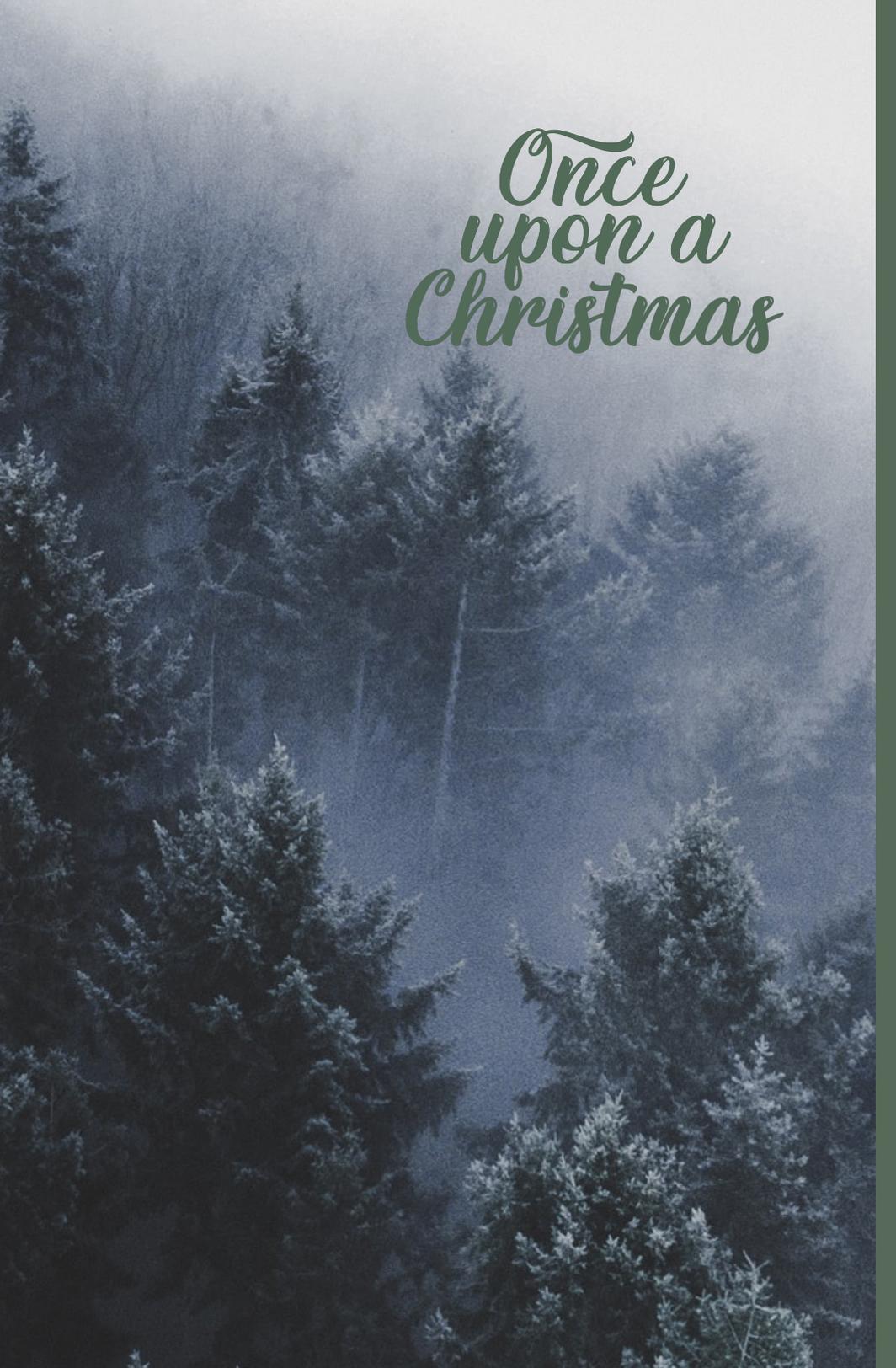
O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*



*He will
sustain
you*

A misty forest of evergreen trees, likely a Christmas tree farm, with the text "Once upon a Christmas" overlaid in a cursive font. The scene is atmospheric and serene, with soft light filtering through the fog.

*Once
upon a
Christmas*

WHAT IS A CHRISTMAS SEASON TRADITION THAT YOU LOVE?

"I love our Christmas Eve service. My whole family attends and then we go back to my parents' and eat and do puzzles together."

-Melanie

"My favorite Christmas tradition is that on Christmas Eve we all get new (and typically matching) pajamas that we all wear that night. Now that I have kids of my own, it is becoming one of their favorite things to match with all of their cousins on Christmas Eve and stay up late!"

-Alyssa

"I love to get up on Christmas Day and help my wife with the huge dinner she is making."

-Robert

"When I was little my mom always made a "special" Christmas breakfast for us that we loved. We would take a break from opening presents and get to enjoy it with my grandparents that had arrived from out of town. Now, I continue the tradition and make it for our family and friends to enjoy wherever we find ourselves on Christmas day."

-Stef

"One of my favorite Christmas traditions is simply sleeping under the Christmas tree. We turn the lights on, lay out some sleeping bags and snacks; then stare up into the glowing branches until we fall asleep. It is fun to pretend little Christmas elves make their homes up in the bough of the tree. Our imaginations conjure up fun adventures they may be going on over the holidays."

-Chris

"The Christmas tradition that stands out to me is the Christmas Eve feast of the 5 Fishes. Every Christmas Eve my mom would cook a seafood feast with every kind of seafood, cooked many different ways. All of the relatives would come over and fill up on all of the seafood and every kind of side dish known to man! The adults would then play cards all night long while all of the cousins would play and get excited for opening their presents the next day."

-Ellie

WEEK TWO

*Mighty
God*



DAY EIGHT

DECEMBER 8, 2022

Have you ever thought about how ridiculous God's plan looks through the standards of the world?

God: "I'll bring a baby into the world; put him in a working-class, uncelebrated family; people will grow to love him and then despise him; he'll die on cross; and then a fair amount of my disciples and others will testify to his resurrection but ... not everyone will buy it, and people will debate his deity throughout all of history. Done. THAT will declare the omnipotence of *Almighty* God!"

How could a baby who would one day die on a cross possibly be mighty?

As we continue to reflect on the birth of Jesus and the four-part promise in Isaiah 9:6, we find the second name for Jesus is *Mighty God*.

Complete dominion resting on the shoulders of an innocent baby. No one saw a king, but here He was; our *Mighty God* - "the God of battle" or "Champion-God." He came as a helpless baby, pure and holy, but already victorious.

Our God has already won.

For those of us who appreciate words and their meanings, might is defined as: Great or imposing in size or extent (extraordinary, powerful); the power, energy, or intensity of which one is capable. This is the God we not only get to serve, but the One we can also have a personal and intimate relationship with!

You might know this passage from the C.S. Lewis classic, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. It's the introduction of Aslan, the mighty lion who represents the person of Jesus to young Lucy:

"Is he—quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion."
"That you will, dearie, and no mistake," said Mrs Beaver. "If there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly."

"Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.

"Safe?" said Mr Beaver; "don't you hear what Mrs Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

That is our **Mighty God!** Fierce and commanding of our complete honor and reverence, but faithful to secure our hope and future with Him.

Growing up in Sunday school, we used to sing a song that went, "My God is so great, so strong and so mighty. There's nothing my God cannot do."

When we realize these aren't just words to a cute little song, but a truth and a promise, it should change how we live our day-to-day lives. Ephesians 1:19-23 tells us about the incredible greatness of God's power and reminds us this power is for us. This is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead - and it lives in us (Romans 8:11). Once you've had a personal revelation of the power and authority we have because of our relationship with a **Mighty God**, it changes everything. He is on our side fighting for us, and within that we can pursue our enemy and he must fall (Psalm 18:37-40).

If God is for us, nothing can stand against us

(Romans 8:31).

We can rest in the knowledge that we are on the winning side.

The best part is that we don't have to have it all together to be on the receiving end of His might and power. He tells us that His power is made perfect in our weakness and His grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9). How often do we tire ourselves out trying to keep up the fight instead of handing Him the reins? It can be all too easy (especially in this holiday season) to think we know best and get caught up in all the doing and going that we forget He knows best and He can care for us best.

No matter what this season looks like for you - family situations, work stress, health challenges, a lack of peace, etc. - be reminded today that our unconventional, All-Sufficient, Mighty God is on your side. The God of battle, our great Champion and Defender is close to YOU. Let's hold fast to the reminder that we are not alone and our **Mighty God** holds us in His mighty hands. "There's nothing my God cannot do."

*Who is the
"Mighty God" to you?*



*Write down a prayer to the
"Mighty God"*



I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 1:19-20

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

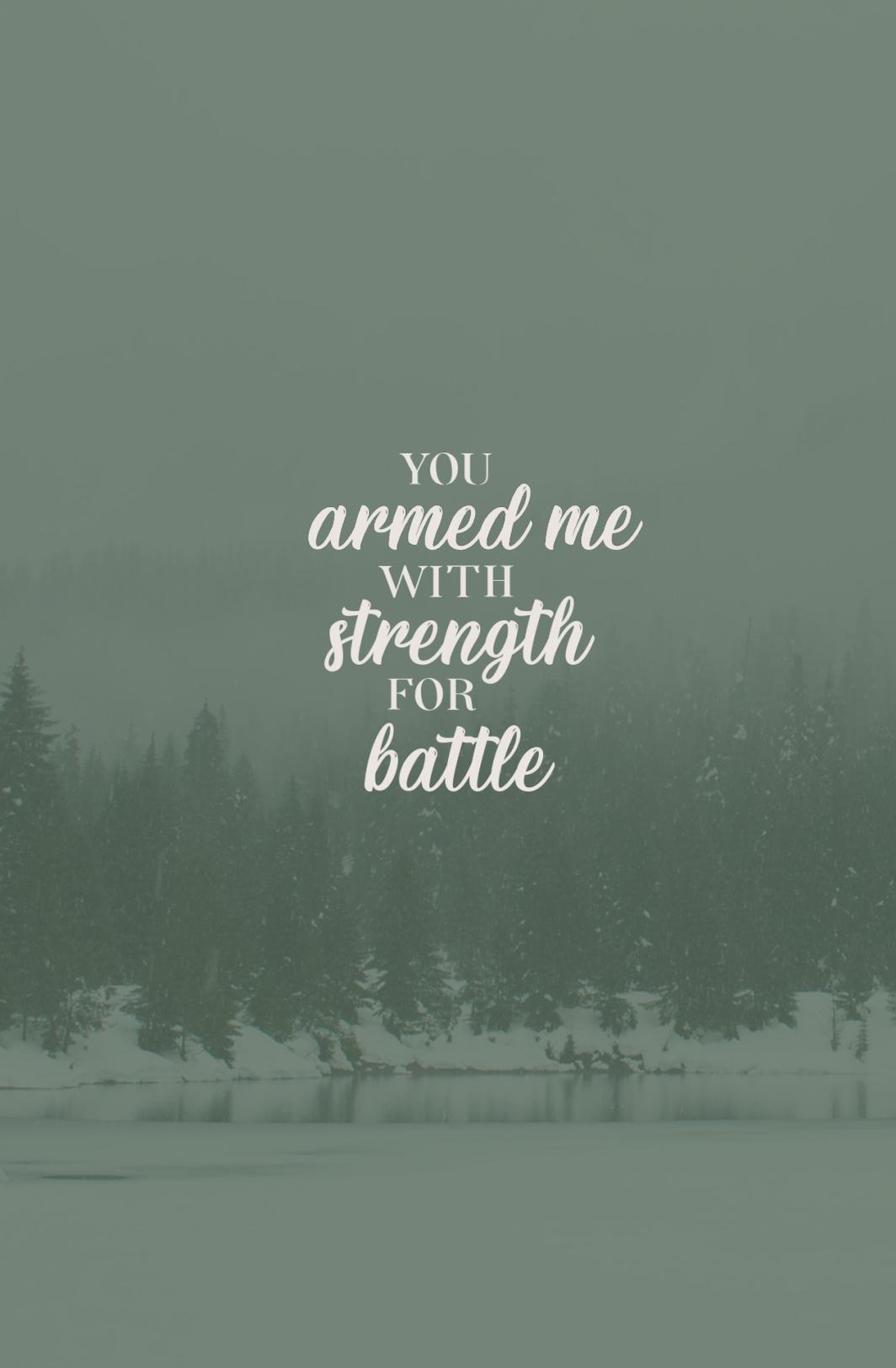
Romans 8:11

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

A serene winter landscape featuring a snow-covered forest of evergreen trees along the edge of a calm, reflective lake. The scene is captured in a soft, muted color palette, with the text overlaid in the center.

YOU
armed me
WITH
strength
FOR
battle

☞ I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not turn back till they were destroyed. I crushed them so that they could not rise; they fell beneath my feet. You armed me with strength for battle; you humbled my adversaries before me. You made my enemies turn their backs in flight, and I destroyed my foes.

Psalm 18:37-40

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

What shall we say about such wonderful things as these?
If God is for us, who can ever be against us?

Romans 8:31

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

But 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.

2 Corinthians 12:9

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

Be strong in the Lord and in his *mighty power*. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.

Ephesians 6:10-11

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*



MY
Grace
is sufficient
FOR YOU

A vertical photograph of a winter mountain landscape. The scene is dominated by snow-covered evergreen trees in the foreground and middle ground. In the background, misty, snow-dusted mountains rise against a pale sky. A solid red vertical bar runs along the right edge of the image. The text "Once upon a Christmas" is written in a red, cursive font, centered in the upper half of the image.

*Once
upon a
Christmas*

WHAT IS A GIFT YOU'VE GIVEN OR RECEIVED THAT HAS A FUN OR SENTIMENTAL STORY WITH IT?

"One of my favorite memories was when my sister and I got a Nintendo Wii for Christmas when they were super popular. My mom fought tooth and nail to get us one and we were able to get one and open it Christmas morning."

-D'vonte

"One of my favorite gifts was the year my dad made me a rail for skateboarding. We opened all the gifts and there was no skateboard rail and my parents knew how badly I want it, so naturally I was a little sad. UNTIL! I opened my stocking and there were instructions to a scavenger hunt that led me to the rail my dad built for me in his shed in the backyard."

-Davey

"I bought my wife her first cell phone, but put it in a large box and told her I had bought her a leather coat (which she didn't want). She was happily surprised."

-Robert

"One year for Christmas I received a kitchen aid mixer from my husband's parents for our future house - they knew how much I love baking and how much we look forward to baking in our own house. They were believing with and for us to buy our own house and 2 months later we received incredible God-given favor in buying a house!"

-Amber

"One year my wife gave me a book that was called, "Things I Love About You," and there were handwritten notes in it with the things she loved and appreciated about me. It made me cry, and still does when I read through it. I'm very sentimental and a big words person. I'll never lose this book."

-Caleb

"We gave a coffee mug to my dad, but before we did we had all his heroes sign it they not only did that, but left an encouraging antidote. He cried when he opened it and it was his favorite gift he's ever received."

-Jess

WEEK THREE

*Everlasting
Father*



DAY FIFTEEN

DECEMBER 15, 2022

Just walk down the tantalizing toaster pastry or ice cream aisle of your local grocer and you'll quickly confirm for yourself that we live in an age of limitless options -- and an often unhealthy taste for the latest and greatest of everything. If we're not careful, this First World problem can lure us into a carelessly temporary waste away, throw away default mode.

Think about it: The average length we keep our smartphones is 24.2 months; the average time we stay in the same job is four years; and the average number of years we keep the same gaming system is about two years -- sometimes three; and the average length of a marriage is seven to eight years.

It's no wonder that words like "eternal" and "forever" are most often used as great endings to the fairytales, fables, and other fiction we read, but they kind of turn us off or scare us in real life. Nothing lasts forever, right?

Yet, the third set of words used by Isaiah to describe Jesus is "*Everlasting Father*." Take a minute, pause, and consider that:

Everlasting. Father.

Did you know that we are wired with a deep-down longing for less of the latest and more the greatest? It's not a question of whether "change" is good or bad or "new" is right or wrong. Change is often good, and we can think of plenty of instances where "new" is something to be celebrated! The idea is that, at our core, we yearn for consistency and trustworthiness that bring an abiding sense of stability, peace, security, and hope.

We even have eternity set in our hearts
(Ecclesiastes 3:11).

That's where Jesus comes in. If we let Him.

The Hebrews used the term "father" to represent a literal father, a grandfather, an ancestor, a ruler, or an instructor. Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would come to us as the perfect, **PERFECT** depiction of a loving, strong, wise, protective Father and King, One we were given access to enjoy and lean into forever. Unlike earthly kings who, however excellent they were, were destined to leave their people destitute after a generally short reign, our Eternal Father was foretold to guide, guard, and bless His people WITHOUT END.

Jesus is incorruptible. The same yesterday, today, and forever. Remember that. He will never leave you. He abides forever and continually acts as a father to His people.

He knew you before you were born

(Psalm 139:16)

and saw all your wonder and potentiality. He promises that if you call on Him, He will answer (Jeremiah 33:3). And He assures every one of us that all the days of our life -- to the end of this age and into the next -- He is with us (Matthew 28:20). In fact, His very name, Emmanuel, means "God is with us."

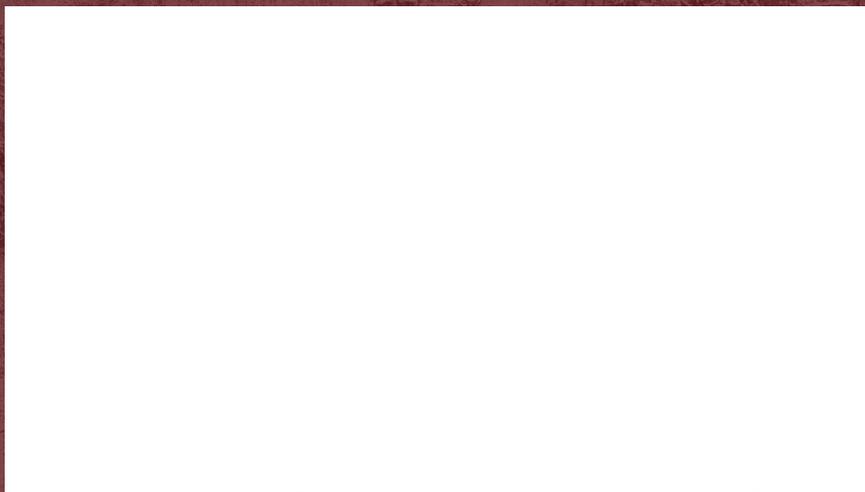
So, no matter what your past experience has been with people or things that didn't pan out or sink in -- maybe you didn't even want them to last -- lay that down today. Shame off. Fear off. Doubt and disappointment swept away.

No matter how conditioned you are to keep reaching for the next big thing, take time now to be still. Set your heart and mind on the goodness and greatness of your **Everlasting Father**. And find your confidence and hope in the promise that God is with us. Period.

*Who is the
"Everlasting Father" to you?*



*Write down a prayer to the
"Everlasting Father"*



Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

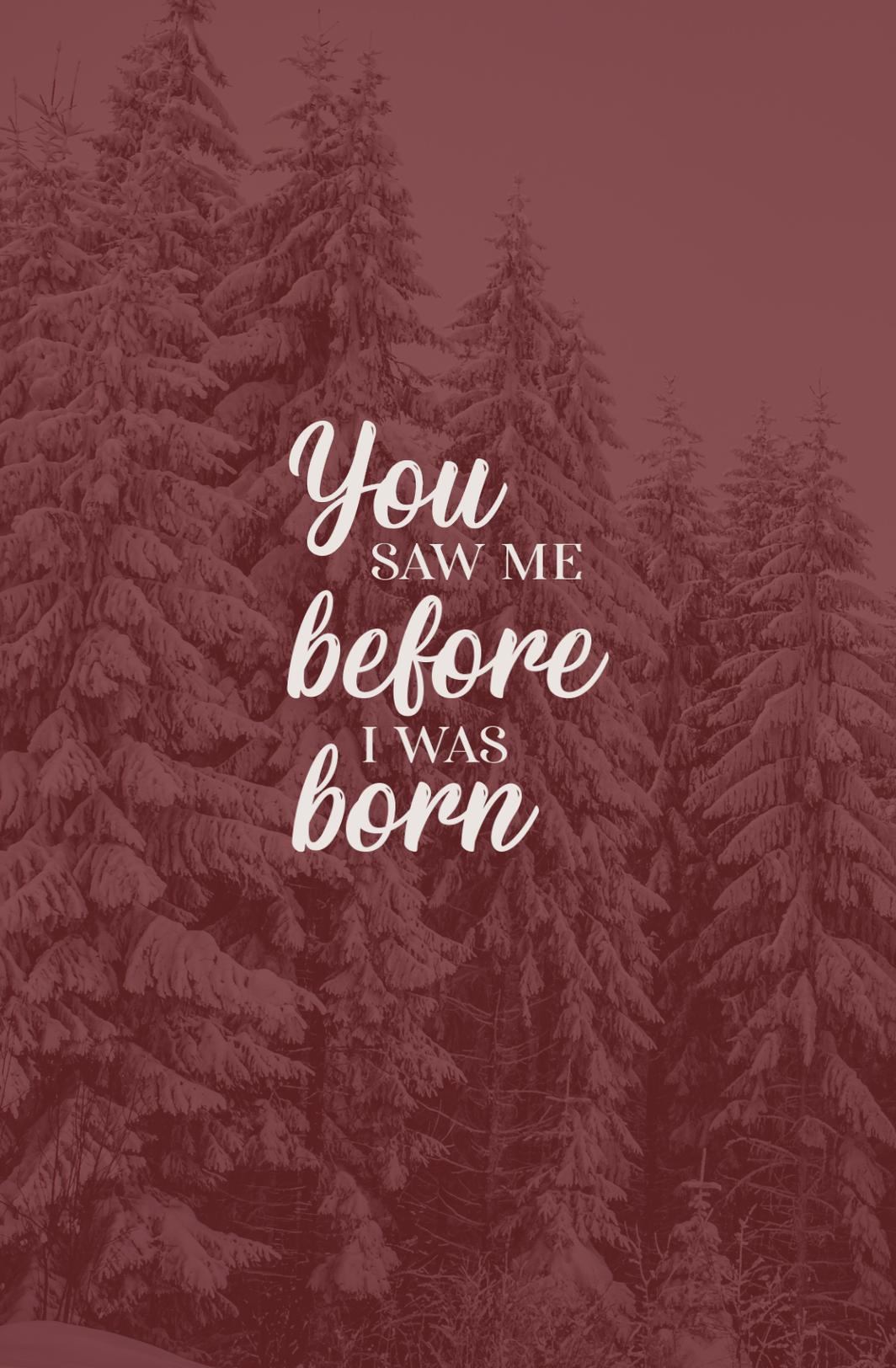
Psalm 139:16

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*



You
SAW ME
before
I WAS
born

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

Jeremiah 33:3

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:20

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us').

Isaiah 7:14

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.

James 1:17

S - *scripture*

Grid of 20 columns and 15 rows of dots for notes.

O - *observation*

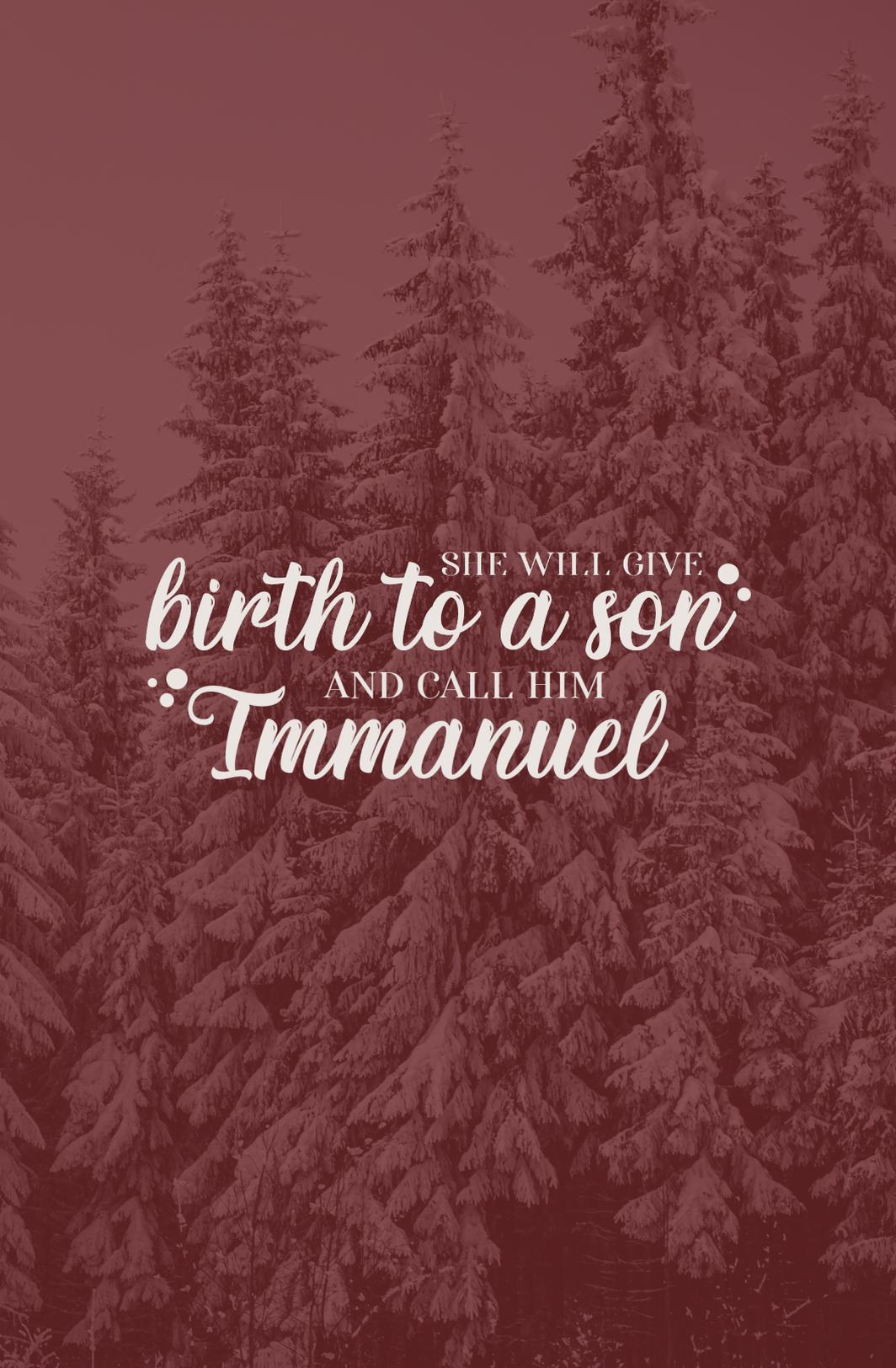
Grid of 20 columns and 15 rows of dots for notes.

A - *application*

Grid of 20 columns and 15 rows of dots for notes.

P - *prayer*

Grid of 20 columns and 15 rows of dots for notes.



SHE WILL GIVE
birth to a son
AND CALL HIM
Immanuel



*Once
upon a
Christmas*

◌ A Christmas Story

I went to a grocery store for some last-minute Christmas dinner items and everything was crazy. The parking lot was wild with cars cutting off other cars and people leaving carts everywhere. Even the grocery store's cheery holiday music wasn't enough to overcome the chaos that was unfolding within.

As I grabbed a shopping basket, I could feel my stress levels rising the further I made it into the store. I was impatient with the woman in front of me, frustrated that the item I was looking for was sold out, and don't even get me started on the deli.

There was a crowd of at least 3 people deep waiting their turn for the deli counter. I didn't have time for it, and I was not in the mood to deal, but I couldn't return home without the goods - so there I stood.

It was in that moment that I found myself reminded of the reason for Christmas and the spirit behind the holiday. My perception of the crowd was almost instantly changed to see the building chaos and stress for the irony that it was.

The pinch of the shopping basket on my arm lessened. The overwhelming sounds of the crowd started to ease. I could even hear the Christmas music more clearly.

Things I hadn't noticed before started to stand out. There was a little girl dressed in her holiday best enjoying a candy cane. There was a young couple having a silly moment as they waited for their order. Right next to me there was a woman pleasantly waiting for her turn wearing the most beautiful scarf. Just as the woman's number was called, I couldn't help but compliment her on it.

Once I finished up at the deli counter, I grabbed one last item and made my way to the checkout line with a new pep in my step. Just as I reached to grab the first item out of my basket, I couldn't believe what was there. Folded neatly on top of my grocery items was the woman's beautiful scarf.

I looked all around but couldn't see the woman anywhere. All I was left with was this beautiful reminder of the joy, goodness, and blessing of Christmas.



WEEK FOUR

Prince
OF
Peace

DAY TWENTY-TWO DECEMBER 22, 2022

Here we are, less than **ONE WEEK** away from Christmas. There are gifts to buy, presents to wrap, parties to attend, plans to make, houses to clean, families to visit, groceries to be bought, and many other preparations. There's barely time to breathe, let alone rest...

Did you know the final set of words in Isaiah 9:6 to describe our coming Savior is the **Prince of Peace**? How fitting this week (and every week). There's no better time to reflect on this part of who Jesus is. Our peace - comfort and solace - in the middle of everything else going on. So take a deep breath (or a few) and let's remind ourselves of this peace we have full access to.

Many of us know that the Hebrew word for peace is shalom. In Hebrew, this word for peace goes even further - completeness, wholeness, paid for.

The reason we can have wholeness and peace is because we have been fully paid for by the Prince of Peace.

This is the time of year when we sing songs about silent nights, holy nights, sleeping in heavenly peace, the stars in the sky, and more... If we're not careful to guard our peace there are a whole host of things just waiting on the sidelines to steal it away.

On the outside, life goes on and things don't change much. Your kids running around you won't dramatically turn to a slow motion scene like they do in the movies. There won't be a cut to a Hallmark montage with fireplaces, coffee and a well-placed puppy. BUT, we are promised a deeply rooted, internal **PEACE THAT SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING** (Philippians 4:7).

We can have peace no matter the circumstance because our Prince of Peace has overcome the world (John 16:33). We don't have to be anxious or afraid because He gives us a rest and a calm the world can't offer (John 14:27).

All we have to do is keep our thoughts fixed on Him and He promises to keep us in *perfect peace* (Isaiah 26:3).

Maybe you're in high school and you're trying to figure out how to be yourself and still fit in with friends. Maybe you're navigating job changes or a move to a new place. Maybe you're learning how to parent or grandparent. Maybe you're dealing with loss and brokenness. No matter where you find yourself, you can rest in knowing that Jesus came and paid it ALL.

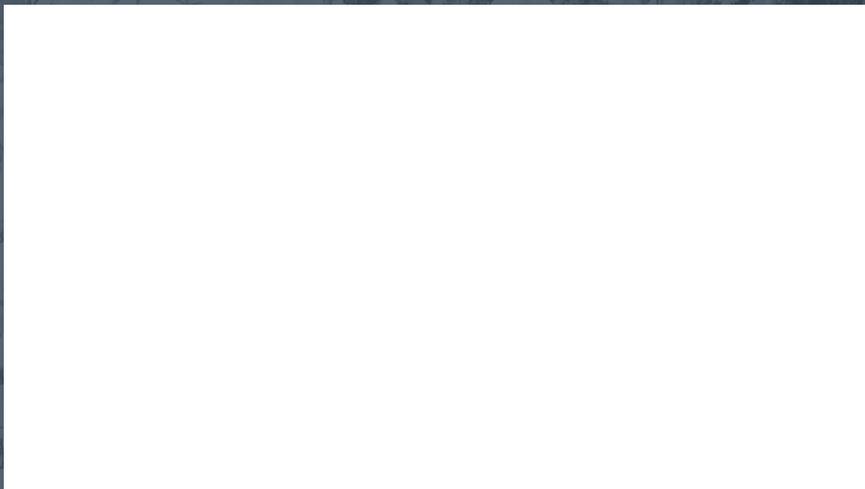
Our peace is found in Him alone because He fully paid for our freedom.

He is our *Wonderful Counselor* who leads and guides us in the right direction to what is true. Our *Mighty God* who is on our side fighting for us. Our *Everlasting Father* who is with us and hears when we call.

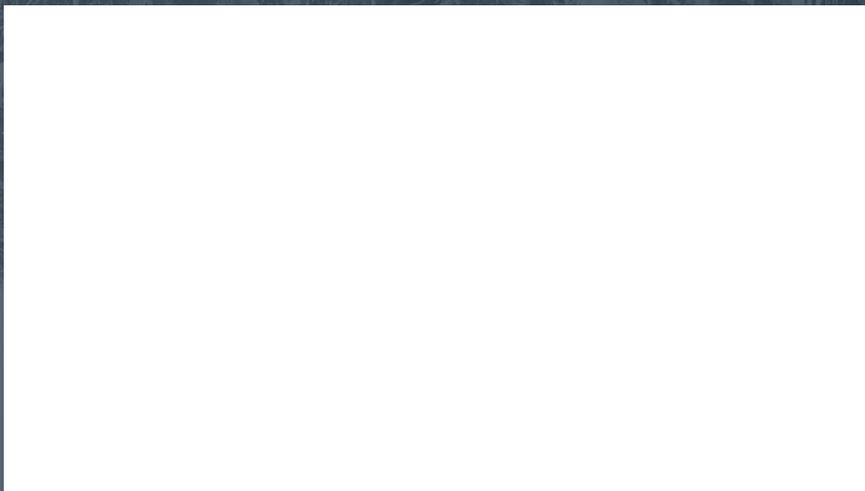
Lastly, He is our *Prince of Peace*, making us complete and whole when we're restless, anxious, or feel like we're losing control. Peace from the inside out. Influencing our interactions and conversations. Comforting us when our thoughts wage war. Reminding us that He is on the throne and in control.

This week, in all the excitement and bustle, let's take time to be still and remember the *peace* we have because we've been fully paid for.

*Who is the
"Prince of Peace" to you?*



*Write down a prayer to the
"Prince of Peace"*



Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

You will keep in *perfect peace* all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!

Isaiah 26:3

S - *scripture*

Grid of dots for writing under 'S - scripture'

O - *observation*

Grid of dots for writing under 'O - observation'

A - *application*

Grid of dots for writing under 'A - application'

P - *prayer*

Grid of dots for writing under 'P - prayer'

• Unto us
A CHILD
is born •



For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

S - *scripture*

O - *observation*

A - *application*

P - *prayer*

IN 2022...

How did I see God at work over the past year?

Something God taught me about His character:

Something God taught me about myself:

An unexpected joy:

An unexpected sorrow:

I'm most proud of:

The highlight of my year:



*Kids
Activities*

Choose 1-3 relatives or family friends and record a short video Christmas greeting for them as a family.

Create a playlist of everyone's favorite Christmas songs. Play it while on a trip around the city checking out the amazing Christmas Lights - and make sure to sing along!

Break out the glow sticks and have a bedtime Christmas Dance Party.

Have a picnic by the Christmas tree and play a few rounds of "I spy" with your ornaments.

Taking care of a new baby is a big challenge. Take a meal to a family you know with a new baby, or pick up diapers to donate to a local shelter.

Bake a batch of Christmas cookies (no shame if you grab a tube from the grocery store)! Share a snack together and take some to a neighbor.

Use a Nativity set or stuffed animals to act out the Christmas story as a family member reads it from Luke 2.

Roast marshmallows for s'mores while looking up at the stars - the same ones the shepherds saw!

Make some Christmas cards for anyone in your life who might need a little joy today, from the mail person to a teacher.

Choose or make a special ornament that represents something good God has done for your family this year.

Grab a gingerbread man or other Christmas cookie for each member of the family. Place one on everyone's foreheads and race to see who can shimmy the cookie down and bite it before it drops. No hands!

Share your favorite Christmas movies with each other. Then pick one (or two!), make some popcorn, and settle down in your Christmas PJs for some snuggles and a Christmas movie marathon.

Take a tour of your Christmas tree ornaments. Share the stories of special ones. Point out your favorites.

Participate in this year's Christmas Angel Tree as a family. You can purchase gifts, volunteer for setup, or assist on the day of the event.

Make edible Christmas trees using upside-down ice cream cones, green frosting, and sprinkles.

Write a letter to Jesus thanking Him for the gifts you've received all year long.

Have a snowman making competition. Get creative and use items you find around the house.

Have a video call with out of town family or friends and play a Christmas themed game of charades.

Conversation Prompts

- Share your favorite Christmas tradition that you don't want to miss doing together this year. Add them to your family calendar!
- Is there anything you're feeling stressed about? Share it with each other. Then pray that God will give you His peace this season.
- God had a special plan for Christmas that surprised everyone. If you could plan something special this Christmas, what would it be?
- Parents, what's a particularly special or unique Christmas you experienced as a child?
- Tell your child about how you shared the good news of their birth (or arrival in your family) with others.
- What would YOU do if a brilliant angel from God appeared in your home?
- What's the biggest thing you want to thank God for right now (in addition to Jesus)? Share with each other and give God a GIANT round of applause for His goodness.
- Jesus' name means "the Lord is salvation!" Share with each other what your name means. (Google is your friend for this.) Then share the story behind your name if you know it.
- Have everyone take a turn pointing to a map and then look up to see special ways people celebrate Christmas there.



wavechurch®