

Follow Along Advent Readings, Day 4



Welcome back to Day 4 of our discussion about the [Painted Advent](#) devotional from the Bible app. Today's painting is called Good News.

You never know when it will happen.

You're going about your daily work all things appearing normal when BAM! A chorus of angels lights up the night sky and scares you to death! At least that's what happened to the shepherds in the Christmas story. What had been an ordinary day for them turned into an extraordinary one in a moment's notice.

I wonder if the shepherds noticed anything different that evening.

I imagine all of heaven on the brink of a holy explosion—the angels barely containing their excitement. Was the night sky especially bright? Maybe a shooting star or two streaking across the sky in anticipation of what was about to happen? Or perhaps the air was charged with electricity, the impending fulfillment of ancient prophecy.

All we know is that one minute all was normal and the next it was not—the world forever changed.

The same can be true for us.

Within each day lies the potential for a Richter-scale change, for the glory of God to burst upon our everydayness with a power that takes our breath away.

What will that look like? It could be an angelic visitation (those things still happen today). But it could also be an invisible but just as mighty display of God's power as evidenced by a changed heart, salvation for a loved one, a healed relationship, a new job, a sick person made well, a prodigal come home.

[As Christ-followers, each day we get to live in the hope and shadows of miracles.](#)



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We go about our lives always praying for what God lays on our heart while watching for His displays of power. Today could be the day!

What do you think about living in holy expectancy? Share your

thoughts below.

Jane

Christmas To Do-ers List, Day 8: Go Tell About Him



Christmas To Do-ers List

Day 8: Go Tell About Him

“When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.” Luke 2:17-18

The night started out just like any other.

At dusk, the shepherds settled themselves and their sheep in for the night, on the alert to possible attacks.

[Extraordinary usurped ordinary when an angel and celestial choir burst upon the quiet night sky](#)



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Once the shepherds had gathered their wits about them and understood the angel's message, they ran to Bethlehem to find the Savior. And find Him they did.

The shepherds surely shared with Mary and Joseph about the angels' visit, and unable to contain themselves, they lost no time in sharing this hot-off-the-presses news about the baby King they found in a manger with anyone who would listen.

Jesus has that effect on people. He likes to stir things up. When the sacred intersects the ordinary, spectacular things happen. The lame walk. The blind see. Sinners are forgiven. Addictions are broken. And angels sing—and not just for Jesus' birth. Luke 15:10 tells us that whenever another soul is won to heaven, heaven celebrates.

What About Us?



Tell about Jesus this
Christmas

Perhaps your story isn't as flashy as a million-watt sky filled with angels. But the reality is, you're a different person than you were before Jesus, and that is a story that deserves to be told. In the way only you can tell it. Never underestimate the power of a changed life to reach others.

Like the shepherds, be alert to those God has primed for your story. **As a matter of fact, pray for God to send those who need a word from you.** Let's look at a few ways to share:

1. Practice your story. Write down a 1-minute version of your story. Your life before Jesus, your conversion and your life after Jesus. And share it when God opens the door for you to do so.
2. Give tangible help. Bring a meal to a family with a new baby or to a family going through a hard time. Pray that God opens a way for you to share with them, either now or in the future.
3. Volunteer to teach a class at your church or lead a neighborhood Bible study. Both children and adults need to hear that Jesus loves them enough to have died for them.
4. Write out your story longhand or on your computer so that future generations of your family will have a copy.

You never know when your story will be able to reach through time to influence others.

Mary and I appreciate you joining us over Advent for this series. Be looking for our New Year's podcast over the next week. Merry Christmas to your and your family!

Jane

Christmas To Do-ers List, Day 3: Watch for Him



Christmas To Do-ers List

Day 3: Watch for Him

“Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.” Luke 2:8

Day in. Day out.

Looking. **Watching**. Waiting. Shepherds in the fields faithfully caring for their sheep. Diligence is their watchword. Always searching for the finest pasture, the best shelter, and the freshest water. Looking, **watching**, and waiting, day in and day out. Night after night. Until one night. O Holy Night!

“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

Faithfulness in their daily work allowed the shepherds to see Jesus. Had they not been diligent in their mundane tasks, they would have missed the angel’s message, and they would have missed Jesus. Shepherds **watching** for the Good Shepherd.

Look. **Watch**. Wait.

The same thing we do for Jesus.

Look for Jesus this Christmas season. **Watch** for glimpses of Him as you go through your ordinary days. Wait for Him to act. Chores, tasks, errands, and suddenly He’s there—teaching, comforting, directing, healing, and loving.

[Ordinary made extraordinary by the presence of Jesus.](#)



[Tweet This](#)

Watch for Him in your everyday chores and holiday tasks.
Look. **Watch**. Wait.



The same thing Jesus does for us.

Jesus constantly looks out for our best interests and watches over our every concern. He waits to draw us into closer relationship, greater trust, and deeper faith. Stolen moments in the crush of the day. Precious minutes at His feet in the rush of the season. Day after day, silent night after silent night.

He looks, **watches**, and waits for you.

Action Points:

1. Look for Jesus today. Notice the blessings He sends your way and then look for ways to be a blessing to others.
2. **Watch** for Jesus today. What is He trying to say to you? What is He telling you? What does He want you to do differently this Christmas season?

3. Wait for Him. Jesus is calling you to rest in heavenly peace with Him. Tarry with Him for a few moments. Get your Bible, turn to Luke 2 and listen to the beautiful music below. Wait for Him to restore your soul.

How will you **watch** for Jesus today? How will you make time to wait for Him? Please leave a comment in the Comment section below on how you plan to watch for Jesus, or how you saw Him today.

Did you miss a day? Don't fret, just click on a link below.

[Day 1: Believe Him](#)

[Day 2: Make Room](#)

Watch for Him.

Mary Kane

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5 Ways to Pray in December



December is filled with Christmas cheer, peace on earth, and good will to men. That's what our Christmas carols tell us, and that is what we can always hope for. Jesus came to earth to be those things, and when He returns, they will all be fully realized. Beyond hoping, let's put some **prayer** power to work in our world, as we see things in life that often seem contradictory to what we are singing about. Keep reading for five ways you can focus your prayers this month.

1. Advent. November 30 – December 24, 2014. Instead of being swept away by the tidal wave of decorating, shopping, baking, and wrapping beginning on December 1, let's take the time to first prepare our hearts for Christmas. That is the whole purpose of Advent. You may not realize it, but according to the Christian calendar, the Christmas season doesn't even begin until December 25, and it lasts through the Epiphany on January 6. The days in December prior to that are considered to be the season of Advent. While I enjoy all the Christmas activity, I've found that when I focus on the meaning behind the rush of what I'm doing, it makes this month a special, holy time.

[Jesus' birth is not just an event in history but it gives meaning and purpose to each of our lives today.](#)



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Jesus' birth is not just an event in history but it gives meaning and purpose to each of our lives today. The following resource may help you focus on Advent this year:

Resources:

[Advent Podcast](#)

In Reverence gorgeous music by David Tolk combined with stunning seasonal Christian art of J. Kirk Richards. This alone will put you in a worshipful frame of mind.

Verse: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14

Prayer: Lord, we ask that You quiet our hearts amidst the busyness of this month. May we hear Your call to each one of us to slow down and make room in our hearts for You. May we feel the longing and expectation of waiting for the answer to years of prayers from those who lived thousands of years before us. And may we echo their prayers, O Come, O Come Emmanuel. Amen.

2. World AIDS Day. December 1, 2014. The first case of Aids was reported in the United States in June 1981. According to the [CDC](#), today there are more than 1,000,000 people in the United States living with HIV infection. The devastation from AIDS is particularly felt in Africa. According to AVERT, in 2009, there were almost [15,000,000 orphans in sub-Saharan Africa due to AIDS](#) . This is where I would like to focus our prayers today. In Africa, children are raising children

because there are simply no adults left in families.

Resource:

[Samaritan's Purse Orphans' Care](#)

Verse: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." James 1:27

Prayer: Lord, our hearts ache for the children who have been left as orphans because of AIDS. We ask for protection and help for them. May the church rise up to care for these young ones who are struggling on their own to care for themselves and younger siblings. May they be comforted and loved and may all their needs be supplied. Amen.

3. Ferguson, Missouri. News stories abound about Ferguson, Missouri, and the Michael Brown case. This occurrence has only served to prove how racially divided America still is. There are many ways to pray for this concern. We can pray for comfort and healing for Michael Brown's family. We can pray for Darren Wilson and his family. We can pray that the protestors will stop destroying property. We can pray for the business owners whose livelihood has been threatened because of the destruction and looting. We can pray for the truth to be told and accepted. We can pray for healing between different races. We can pray for any racism to be exposed and eradicated. We can pray for the protection of police officers who put their lives on the line every day. We can pray for good relationships between officers and the communities they serve.

Resource:

Here is one way to help:
<http://www.gofundme.com/queensroyaltouch>

And here is a wonderful feel-good story from Ferguson:
<http://www.gofundme.com/nataliescakesmore>

Verse: “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” Amos 5: 24

Prayer: Lord, the needs and hurts run deep here. We pray for the Holy Spirit to hover above Ferguson and cover the city with your peace and protection. We pray for justice to be served. We ask for your healing balm upon Michael’s family. We pray for Officer Wilson and his family. We pray that looting, violence, and destruction will stop and that lasting change will begin. We pray for understanding and grace between different races and that You will heal the ugly wound of racism in our land. Amen.

4. Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. Sunday, December 7, 2014. On this day we remember those who were injured or lost their lives on the attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii during World War II. I’d like to use this opportunity to reflect upon the sacrifice that so many soldiers gave so that we could continue to live in freedom. It’s not often enough that we think about the men and women who were never able to pursue their future plans. And it’s not often enough that we think about those families who were forever changed because of the loss of their loved one(s). Let’s pray for healing of all kinds.

Resources:

<http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/pearl-harbor>

[WWII Enemies Find Forgiveness, Friendship](#)

Verse: “And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.” Colossians 2:20-22

Prayer: Lord, today we stop to remember those who gave the ultimate sacrifice of their lives so that others could live in freedom. May we never take this for granted. We pray for the families of these men and women that have been inalterably changed because of their loss. Where there is lingering animosity, we pray for peace and reconciliation. We ask that those who are existing in bitterness would be set free. In Jesus' name. Amen.

5. Christmas. Christmas Day will be here sooner than we realize and hopefully our hearts will be ready with our Advent preparation. May we recapture the miracle of what our Savior's birth actually means. Help us to see it, hear it, smell it, and feel it the way the shepherds and wise men did at their first look at the baby Jesus.

Resource:

Silent night video done by Mary's son and his band:

[Christmas and Advent Roundup](#)

Scripture: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11

Prayer: We thank you and praise you, God, for the magnificent gift of your Son, our Savior Jesus. He is the one gift who is never the wrong size. He won't break, wear out, or fall out of style. Our hearts our full today with His gift. Help us to remember that He is one gift who is meant to be shared. Amen.

Thank you for praying with us through the month of December. Please leave any of your prayers, thoughts, or comments below.

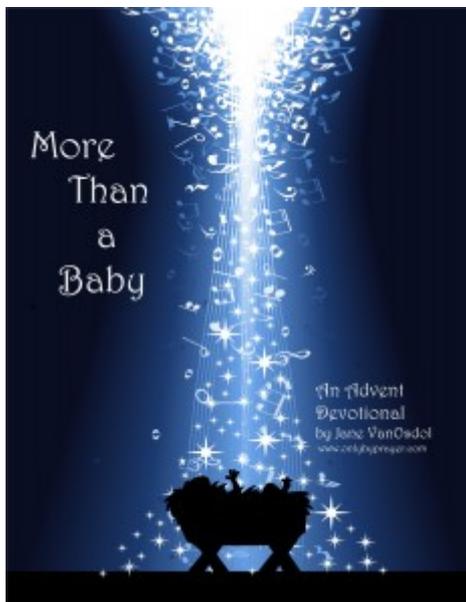
Pray on!

Jane

Merry Christmas!

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Advent Devotional Monday, December 23, 2013



In today's **Advent Devotional**, we look at the story of the shepherds and how God revealed the good news to them first. What can we learn from them in the **Christmas** story?

If you'd like a bit of background about **Advent**, please read [Day One's](#) entry. Tomorrow is the last day of Advent. I pray you have been drawing closer to God during this time.

To read today's entry, simply click on the link below.

[**Advent Devotional Monday, December 23, 2013**](#)