



ADVENT DEVOTIONALS WEEK FOUR

Giving and Receiving

Sunday, December 23

Video of Bert Speidel (<https://vimeo.com/295913791/77244cbd7a>)

Video of Graham Kern (<https://vimeo.com/295913334/f6e1001403>)

When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:10–11 NLT)

Christmas is a holiday of giving, especially of gifts. Unlike a birthday where only one person typically receives gifts, Christmas includes everyone. This tradition likely stems, in part, from the gifts given to the Christ child from the wise men, or magi, who traveled from an unnamed nation to the east of Israel to present gifts to a newly born king.

These travelers were not simply fulfilling a duty assigned to them by a superior; couriers they were not. Whatever their stature in their country of origin, they arrived willingly and eagerly of their own accord. No courier would have expressed such joy upon arriving at the home where Jesus and Mary were. The magi presented Jesus and His family with gifts of considerable value because they sought His well-being, and they did not relinquish that desire once the gifts were given; they took heed of the warning given to them in a dream to leave by another route to prevent Herod from learning through them where the so-called King of the Jews resided. They continually sought the welfare of Jesus and His family throughout their journey.

This week's video concerns a group of individuals who have chosen to seek the welfare of high school students through a mentorship program. Watch the videos above to hear two stories of how this act of giving resulted in so much more for both the mentors and students. Then, invite the Holy Spirit to reveal if you set constraints on the ways in which you seek the welfare of others or if you are open the movement of the Spirit like the magi were when they changed their travel plans.

Monday, December 24

A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said." (Luke 1:39–45 NLT)

After Mary found out that the Holy Spirit would conceive within her the Son of the Most High, one of the first things she did was to leave Nazareth, the village she called home, and travel south to the hill country of Judea to the home of Elizabeth and Zechariah. It's likely that her intent was to serve as a kind of midwife during the final months of her cousin's pregnancy, blessing Elizabeth during her most strenuous and difficult child-bearing months.

It was in this gift to Elizabeth and Zechariah—wherein she was to share in and be present for their miracle—that she would in turn be preparing for her own miracle that would deliver the Prince of Peace to us all. How is God calling you to be present today with His people so that together you might help to usher in Immanuel, the true deliverer of eternal shalom?

Tuesday, December 25

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:11–13 ESV)

God has come to live among us, and His name is Jesus, son of David. His story is one rooted in the history of the sons and daughters of Abraham, yet spans all of eternity; His story is also our story because He has given us the gift of joining Him as children of God because we believe.

As you gather with relatives, friends, and your church family today, celebrate the arrival of the Son of God. Join in the song that rings out throughout the generations: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased” (Luke 2:14)!