

DECEMBER 6TH, 2014



SCRIPTURE: *Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the Lord, to serve Him..."*
Joshua 24:22a

THOUGHT: Saturday! Chances are most of us will be shopping today. Just for fun, let's imagine what the next few hours might look like if we could make everyone around us do exactly as we pleased. For starters, the car in front of us would get out of the way and the car behind us would get off our bumper! All sales clerks would be helpful and our delicious lunch would be served in a timely manner. Our phones wouldn't blow up with family problems and no one would cut in line. Cool, huh? Well, consider this incredible thought: God could pull our strings like so many robots but He gives us the choice to know Him and experience Him by yielding our lives to Him.

ACTION: Every time someone frustrates us today, let's use it as a prompt to voluntarily yield the moment to God, expressing our gratitude to Him for giving us that choice.

TWEETABLE: I'm awed that a God big enough to compel us to do anything He wishes would restrain Himself from overriding our free will. #HeartWideOpen

DECEMBER 7TH, 2014



SCRIPTURE: *...Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now going to be made complete by the flesh? Galatians 3:2b-3*

THOUGHT: Pssst...please don't do it. Please don't let this invitation to experience advent hand-in-hand with Jesus become one more thing your enemy uses to keep you from your Beloved. Oh, yes, it could happen. I speak from experience. I know full well how easy it would be to feel good about the days we check off our devotional and crummy about the days we don't. Regardless of what grade we give ourselves, evaluating ourselves keeps our eyes off Jesus and keeps us from the blessed goal of living with Immanuel, God with us.

ACTION: Draw a cross on a sheet of paper. Write your name at the foot of it and a print a huge A+ at the top of the page and give God grateful praise that you are fully accepted and highly favored through Christ Jesus!

TWEETABLE: Our enemy tempts us to give up (disobedience) or try harder (legalism). Both are doomed. Strength's only found at the Cross. #HeartWideOpen



DECEMBER 8TH, 2014

THOUGHT: Monday's here with all of its noisy demands. Was it just yesterday when God seemed so much more real? It's okay to admit it. Maybe for you it happens at Saturday night mass. I'm talking about those moments when we're joined with other believers singing crazy loud praise music, thrilling to the words of an old hymn, or lost in quiet worship songs and it's so much easier to believe that God is actively involved in our lives. We don't have to deny Monday's feelings. We just need to make them bow to Truth. Jesus was born, not to bring joy to our church services but to bring joy to our world, our workaday full to the brim.

ACTION: Let's make actual physical room for Jesus at our tables, and in our cars, and everywhere we go today, as a way to remind ourselves that He is Immanuel, God with Us.

TWEETABLE: Jesus asks us to take our faith in "God out there" and find peace in knowing the "God right here."

#HeartWideOpen

SCRIPTURE: *Believe in God,
believe also in Me. John 14:1b*



DECEMBER 9TH, 2014

THOUGHT: Are you thinking today is just another busy Tuesday in December? It's not. We're looking at so much more than just another day. If we look, we'll see Jesus today. If we listen, we'll hear Him. As presumptuous as this may sound, I think I might know what you're thinking. Perhaps you believe you don't really "hear" God, that you've never heard Him. I'm thrilled to say that is absolutely not true. None of us initiates relationship with God. He loves first, every time and always. That tug you felt to cherish Him this advent by participating in this invitation, it wasn't born in your human heart. God called you then and He's calling you on now.

SCRIPTURE: *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).*

Eph. 2:4-5

ACTION: Jot down a few sentences about what you were thinking and feeling the day you decided to do this devotional. Thank the Lord for calling you to walk closer to Him.

TWEETABLE: If you've ever felt a desire to know God, you've felt Him move. If you're hungry to know God, you've heard Him call. #HeartWideOpen



DECEMBER 10TH, 2014

THOUGHT: By now, I feel sure you've detected a pattern in these short devotionals but just in case I'm less transparent than I think I am, I'll spell it out. Our daily focus revolves around the Bible. Why? Because we won't keep our eyes on Jesus during the material madness that Christmas has become without keeping His words purposefully clutched to our chests. "But," you might say, "the passage is so brief." This is true, but remember, it's not about how much of the Word we get through, it's about how much of the Word gets through to us. Our goal is to take a nourishing bite each morning and chew on it all day.

ACTION: Today, let's allow every over-hyped commercial and inflated advertisement remind us to thank God for the very real life and health that comes to those who hold onto His Word.

TWEETABLE: Every choice we make to take hold of Scripture provides another opportunity for Scripture to take hold of us.

#HeartWideOpen

SCRIPTURE: *My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; keep them in the midst of your heart for they are life to those who find them and health to all their body. Proverbs 4:22-23*