

5 Day Devotional

Day 1: From Waiting to Preparing

Devotional

As we enter a new year, our minds naturally turn to resolutions and fresh starts. But what if this year we shifted our focus from personal improvement to something far greater? Advent teaches us that we're not just waiting passively for Christ's return - we're called to actively prepare for it.

Think about the difference between waiting and preparing. When you wait for a bus, you might check your phone or daydream. But when you prepare for an important guest, you clean your house, plan a meal, and arrange everything with care and intention. That's the kind of active preparation God calls us to as we anticipate Jesus' return.

This preparation isn't about earning God's favor through our efforts. Instead, it's about positioning our hearts to receive His grace more fully. It's about repentance - turning away from what distracts us from God and turning toward Him with renewed focus. It's about prayer that moves beyond casual requests to deep, hope-filled longing for His presence.

As you begin this year, consider what active preparation looks like in your daily life. How can you move from simply waiting for good things to happen to intentionally preparing your heart for the greatest event in history - the return of our Savior in all His glory?

Bible Verse

'Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.' - Romans 1:7

Reflection Question

What does it look like for you to move from passive waiting to active preparation in your relationship with God this year?

Quote

Are we waiting? Are we just waiting? There's a definition of the word for Advent that says it's waiting, but really, I mean for the return of Jesus Christ, for his kingdom to come fully into the world, for every knee to bow, every tongue confess that he is Lord of Lords. We're waiting. I think maybe instead we should be preparing.

Prayer

Lord, help me shift from merely waiting to actively preparing my heart for Your return. Give me the grace to approach this year with intentional focus on You, preparing my life to receive Your presence more fully. Amen.

Day 2: Wholehearted, Not Perfect

Devotional

Have you ever felt discouraged by the gap between who you are and who you think God wants you to be? Today, let's find encouragement in understanding what it truly means to be 'blameless' in God's eyes.

When Scripture describes people like Zechariah, Elizabeth, Job, and Noah as 'blameless,' it doesn't mean they never made mistakes. These were real people with real flaws. Zechariah doubted God's promise, Noah got drunk, and David committed serious sins. Yet God called them blameless - not because they were perfect, but because they maintained a wholehearted orientation toward Him.

The word 'blameless' in Hebrew and Greek carries the idea of integrity and completeness - not sinless perfection, but a consistent direction of the heart toward God. It's like a compass that might wobble but always points north. These faithful people stumbled, but they always returned to God with repentant hearts.

This should encourage us tremendously. God isn't looking for flawless performance; He's looking for faithful hearts. When we mess up - and we will - we can return to Him knowing that our relationship isn't based on our perfection but on His grace. What matters is not that we never fall, but that we consistently orient our hearts toward Him.

Bible Verse

'In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly.' - Luke 1:5-6

Reflection Question

How does understanding that 'blameless' means wholehearted rather than perfect change the way you view your relationship with God?

Quote

The word blameless in either Hebrew or Greek is typically thought of as being closer to wholehearted or integrity filled, not sinless. Perfection.

Prayer

Father, thank You that You don't require perfection from me, but a heart that consistently turns toward You. Help me maintain wholehearted integrity even when I stumble, knowing that Your grace covers my failures. Amen.

Day 3: Only One Perfect Example

Devotional

Yesterday we learned that being blameless means wholehearted orientation toward God, not sinless perfection. But this raises an important question: if even the most faithful people in Scripture had flaws, where do we find our perfect example?

The answer is beautifully simple: Jesus Christ. While Zechariah, Elizabeth, Job, Noah, and David all demonstrated remarkable faithfulness, they also all faltered at times. Their lives show us what wholehearted devotion looks like, but they cannot provide the perfect righteousness we need.

Only Jesus lived a truly sinless life. When faced with the ultimate test - bearing the weight of humanity's sin on the cross - He remained perfectly obedient to the Father. No complaining, no lying, no avoidance of responsibility, no hidden agenda. Just pure obedience, pure love, pure grace, and pure mercy.

But here's the incredible truth: Jesus isn't just our perfect example - He's also our provider. He doesn't just show us what righteousness looks like; He gives us His righteousness. Because He is God and God loves us, Jesus provides what we could never achieve on our own.

This means we can stop striving to earn God's approval through our performance. Instead, we can rest in the righteousness that Jesus freely gives us, allowing His perfection to cover our imperfections.

Bible Verse

'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' - 1 Peter 2:22

Reflection Question

How does knowing that Jesus both shows you perfect righteousness and provides it for you change your approach to spiritual growth?

Quote

There's really only one Only one who can show us how to be truly righteous and blameless and to make us that way. That is the only one who is sinless and perfect. You already know the answer. That's Jesus Christ, sinless and divine.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for being both my perfect example and my provider of righteousness. Help me rest in Your perfection rather than striving to earn Your approval through my own efforts. Amen.

Day 4: Grace-Fueled Disciplines

Devotional

Now that we understand Jesus provides our righteousness, you might wonder: does this mean spiritual disciplines don't matter? Actually, it means they matter more than ever - but for entirely different reasons.

Spiritual practices like reading Scripture, prayer, fellowship, and communion aren't ways to earn God's favor. Instead, they're the natural result of the grace already given to us. Think of it like this: a healthy person exercises not to become healthy, but because they are healthy. Similarly, we engage in spiritual disciplines not to earn God's love, but because we've already received it.

God uses these means to help us persevere in faith: hearing and reading the Gospel reminds us of His promises, daily prayer and Scripture meditation keep our hearts aligned with His, fellowship with other believers provides encouragement and accountability, and communion tangibly reminds us of Christ's sacrifice.

When we approach spiritual disciplines from this grace-centered perspective, they become life-giving rather than burdensome. We're not checking boxes to impress God; we're positioning ourselves to receive more of His strength, faithfulness, and goodness. As we give ourselves over to God through these practices, He gives us the power to do His work and live righteously.

This is daily training in righteousness - not to earn salvation, but to be thoroughly equipped for every good work He has prepared for us.

Bible Verse

'See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.' - Hebrews 3:12-14

Reflection Question

How can you shift your spiritual disciplines from feeling like obligations to experiencing them as grace-fueled opportunities for growth?

Quote

We don't do these things to earn any grace. We don't do these things to earn God's favor. Daily weekly routines are the result of the grace given to us.

Prayer

Lord, help me approach spiritual disciplines not as ways to earn Your favor, but as means to receive more of Your grace. Transform my heart so that prayer, Scripture reading, and fellowship become joyful expressions of the love You've already given me. Amen.

Day 5: Living with Lifted Heads

Devotional

As we conclude this week of preparation, let's lift our eyes to the ultimate hope that motivates everything we've discussed. Christ is coming again, and when He does, our redemption will be complete.

Jesus told His followers, 'Stand up, lift up your heads. Your redemption is drawing near.' This isn't just about Christmas - it's about our entire lives as we wait for His glorious return. We're not just preparing for a holiday; we're preparing for the resurrection and glorification of our bodies, life in the new heavens and new earth, and the return of our Lord wrapped in power and glory.

This future hope transforms how we live today. Knowing that Christ will return gives us strength to persevere through difficulties, motivation to grow in righteousness, and joy even in challenging circumstances. We can live with anticipation and joy as we serve God's people, being patient and loving servants because we know our labor is not in vain.

Between Christmas and the second coming of Jesus, we have countless opportunities to open our hearts to Christ's ongoing arrival in our present circumstances. Every day offers fresh chances to experience His presence, receive His grace, and participate in His kingdom work.

So how should we live in this new year? Righteous and blameless - not through our own strength, but through the power of Jesus Christ, His mercy, grace, love, and presence. This is the good way to live, not just for 2026, but for all our days until He returns.

Bible Verse

'At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.' - Luke 21:27-28

Reflection Question

How does the hope of Christ's return motivate you to live differently today, and what specific area of your life needs this eternal perspective?

Quote

Stand up, lift up your heads. Your redemption is drawing near. Our final redemption, the resurrection and glorification of our bodies, our life in the new heavens and the new earth, the return of our Lord and Savior wrapped in power and glory.

Prayer

Father, thank You for the hope of Christ's return that gives meaning to every day. Help me live with lifted head and joyful anticipation, serving others with patience and love as I await our final redemption. May Your presence transform how I approach each moment. Amen.