

Let Every Heart Prepare

Week 1: Nov. 30–Dec. 6, 2025

Debbie Goodwin c2025

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SUNDAY-GIVE THANKS

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving
...and with praise; Psalm 100:4*

We all come to December out of focus. We add activities without subtracting any. But what if we made each Sunday gathering a time to practice seeing what God wants us to see?

Before we can understand what God wants, offer thanks. We begin this Advent season on the heels of Thanksgiving Day. Continue the thanks-giving you started on Thursday. Keep adding to the list. A thankful heart grows more sensitive to the character and activity of God.



Start a **Thank You List** for the best Gift-giver in the universe.

MONDAY-STRAIGHT THROUGH

*Make a straight highway through the
wasteland for our God. Isaiah 40:3, NLT*

Isaiah told his people to cut a straight path for God. It served as a warning against distractions and a reminder of what was important.

We litter our way through Christmas with too many activities. We need to protect a "straight" path to the manger. The straight-through path isn't as much about minimalism as it is about mindfulness.

Where do you need a straight path? Now is the time to make critical decisions about what takes you straight to Jesus this Christmas.



Let family share 3 activities they want at Christmas. Make them priorities.

TUESDAY-IN THE WILDERNESS

*In the desert, prepare the
way of the Lord. Isaiah 40:3*

Prickly cacti and gritty sand don't make me want to sing "Silent Night. And yet Isaiah tells us to "prepare the way of the Lord" even in unexpected places.

Remember that Jesus was born in a stable, with straw, animal breath, and no can of Lysol to sanitize it. He filled that space with more than baby cries. He filled it with beauty only the heart saw.

If Jesus can change a dirty stable with his presence, what do you think he could do with your heart?



Let Jesus prepare your heart **before** you prepare your house.

WEDNESDAY-THE DESERT VOICE

*The word of God came to John,
son of Zechariah in the desert. Luke 3:2*

In the middle of the wilderness, another voice repeated Isaiah's message. We know him as John, the hoped-for son of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

John also faced the same political and religious turmoil we face. However, he didn't let his chaotic world distract him from hearing from God. That's the gift of a desert place.

Find a place where no other voices clamor for attention. Make space to review what fills your heart. Unplug and disconnect. Then, listen. God has a whisper you need to hear.



Set a timer for 1 minute. Just listen.
What does God want to whisper?

THURSDAY-LAUNDRY DAY

*For he will be like a . . . launderer's soap.
Malachi 3:2b*

We need a laundry day to clean our focus, self-talk, and accumulated insecurities. God will bring the soap if we bring our lists, expectations, and false beliefs about ourselves.

God has one focus at Christmas: to get Jesus to us and to get us to Jesus. We're the ones who make it an obstacle course.

Today, our goal is to let God launder our hearts and clear the clutter. We need this spiritual "bath" so that we can receive all the love God sent to us through Jesus.



Consider starting the day with a laundry"prayer for your heart.

FRIDAY-A WORD FROM GOD

*The word of God came to John . . . "Prepare
the way for the Lord." Luke 3:2,4b*

God spoke *through* John after speaking to him. That's an important order. It means we must stop talking so much and listen more.

How much time do you give to *listening* to God? When a need threatens, when self-inflicted fatigue empties us, when unexpected change threatens our peace or joy: we need a word from God!

Take a God-break today. Don't talk to God; just listen. Give God space to speak, and He will.



Isaiah 40:1-3 describes how God speaks. Is this how He speaks to you?

SATURDAY- PATH-MAKERS

*The crooked roads shall become straight
and the rough ways smooth. Luke 3:5b*

Jesus came into our world on a prepared path. Path-makers like the prophets called out crooked thinking and wrong priorities. Some heard it; some did not.

Not much has changed. God still calls us to make paths that help our families and neighbor recognize Jesus. What paths to Jesus can you make to send a clear message: Jesus is the Reason for the Season!



How do your attitudes and schedule create a straight path to Jesus?

PRAYING THIS WEEK . . .

God,
I need a word from you
that calms and strengthens,
cuts through my excuses,
forgives, heals, and empowers.
If I am to share
any good words with others,
I need Your Word for me, first.
I'm listening . . .



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Week 2: Nov. 7-Dec. 13, 2025

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SUNDAY-LIKE A WEDDING

The Kingdom of heaven will be like ...[meeting] the bridegroom. Matthew 25:1

On this Advent Sunday, we are like wedding guests who wait. Which waiting attendant are we like: the ones with lighted lamps or the ones whose lamps no longer burn?

Today, let the Advent sermon and music remind us of what is most important: for the second Advent, that God sent Jesus to prepare us. Worshipping with our faith family is simply a rehearsal for what is to come. Let's make today a good rehearsal!

♡ How will you prepare to worship today?

MONDAY EXPECTING JESUS

The people were waiting expectantly. Luke 3:15

Waiting is not our favorite activity. Sometimes we fill our waiting times with activities that skew our vision.

What helps you wait? Knowing that waiting will bring the expected encounter? The good news is that Jesus always show up when invited. Our waiting is never wasted.

Is the reverse true? When Jesus waits for us, do we show up? Be intentional this Christmas. Show up for Jesus and you'll find he's been expecting you!

♡ Find an ornament or Christmas card to remind you to expect Jesus.

TUESDAY-SOMETHING BETTER

God had planned something better. Hebrews 11:40

Christmas is the story of our rescue. Left to our self-rule, we ignore our need for a savior and substitute our ingenuity in its place.

But God planned something *better*. He cleared the path to get to us. He sent Jesus to expose legalism, hypocrisy, and self-centeredness.

We need God's *better* at Christmas. God grieves when Christmas turns into our celebration instead His *better gift*. Open His gift early. Let His *better* infuse this season that sometimes has too little of Him in it.

♡ How can you make God's *better* show up in your celebration this year?

WEDNESDAY-NO TIME FOR NEUTRAL

I know...that you are neither cold nor hot. Revelation 3:15

Neutral sounds safe, but it isn't. God can't direct, protect, or empower neutral people who have not made God and His commands their foundation.

Jesus made it clear that following him is an all-in invitation. The disciples left their jobs and families to follow Jesus. Nothing neutral there!

Christmas is God's non-neutral vote for us. All He wants in return is our hearts,, mind, and wills without a hint of neutrality. Let's give him what he wants this Christmas.

♡ Write "all in" on a sticky note to remind you of your no-neutrality vote to follow Jesus.

THURSDAY-HEART RECOGNITION

He was in the world, and ...the world did not recognize him. John 1:10

The saddest part of the first Christmas is how many didn't recognize the gift God sent. Unfortunately, it is just as sad today.

Perhaps we bear some of the blame. Do we plunge into Christmas activity without preparing our hearts?

God starts in the heart, and we should, too. Welcome His cleaning and priorities. What takes first place in our hearts will show up in our homes and relationships. It's the best way to share the Christmas spirit.

♡ Take some Jesus breaks today. Ask Jesus if this is how he wants you to celebrate.

FRIDAY-GETTING UP AGAIN

I...put a new spirit in them...get them up and on their feet again. Isaiah 57:15b, Message

My nativity scene includes a beggar at the stable. He is everything the other visitors are not: sad and desperate.

If we follow Jesus through the Gospels, who does he look for? The ones who can't walk, see, or find something lost. The ones who can't "get up" on their own.

Are you or someone you know struggling to enjoy life? Jesus came to help people "get on their feet again."

♡ Who needs your encouraging word? Or how can you let Jesus encourage you about some loss or struggle?

SATURDAY- THE LORD IS WITH YOU

The angel...said "The Lord is with you." Luke 1:28b

The first thing the angel did was to reassure Mary that the Lord was with her. We need this same message at Christmas. Too often we ask Jesus to bless our misguided plans and over-crowded days.

Instead, we need to sit with this message until we know its Truth. that the Lord is with us.

Jesus won't bless our stress, but he will help us prioritize. Let Mary's message be yours. Let it wrap a ribbon around your heart and keep you tied to Jesus.

♡ Start your day saying, "The Lord is with me." Let Jesus' presence fuel your Christmas spirit!

PRAYING THIS WEEK . . .

If Jesus came
In an unexpected place
To unprepared people
At an inconvenient time.
Jesus will find a way
to come to your stable.

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Week 3: Dec. 14-Dec. 20, 2025

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SUNDAY-TRUE LIGHT

In your light we see light. Psalm 36:9b

Darkness is a fear all its own. It devours what light would reveal. The moral unraveling in our world often makes it a dark place.

As Christians who have made Bethlehem journeys before, we know where the Light is. We live drawn to the Light God sent.

As we worship today, may our hearts quiver with joy, ready to celebrate this heart-healing Truth: Jesus is all the light we need. Celebrate his Light today and use it to shine into someone’s darkness.




How can you share Jesus’ light with someone who is experiencing darkness this season?

THURSDAY-FAVORED

Now is the time of God’s favor. 2 Corinthians 6:2

The marketplace wants us to practice excess at Christmas. Don’t let them. The simple truth is that God favors us with all the excess we need! His love message to us through Jesus was an act of personal, intentional, unfailing love.

Don’t bury this truth under the injustices of this broken world. Be stunned again at the extravagance of His favor delivered to us in Jesus. Then, return His favor through worship and obedience.




Find a picture of yourself. Write “God’s Favorite” on it. Do it with family and talk about what it means.

MONDAY- HEART-LIFTERS

Those who mourn are lifted to safety. Job 5:11

Grief is not a welcome visitor during Christmas. Even the first Christmas left mothers crying for their murdered baby boys (Mat. 2:18) No one writes Christmas carols about grief.

Instead, God calls us to “lift” heavy hearts. How can you be a heart-lifter this week? Who needs a hug or a simple act of kindness? Share the good news: .God sees their grief and is close by. Be the messenger who helps hurting people believe this truth.




Send a compassion card to someone who is hurting. Invite them to coffee or for a walk. Be a heart-lifter today.

FRIDAY-WHEN JOSEPH WOKE UP

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel...commanded. Matthew 1:24

Joseph usually stands at the back of our nativity scenes. Yet, his acceptance was as bold and courageous as Mary’s. An angel dream turned him around. He woke up just as “chosen” as Mary.

We need some God-dreams today that will wake us up. We need God to turn our lives around in ways we can’t. We need dreams that will take us on journeys to find all God knows we can be. We need to wake up ready for everything new Jesus brought.



What obedience have you ignored? What routine does God want to fill? Wake up to what God will show you.


TUESDAY- ROOM FOR WONDER

How powerful his wonders! Daniel 4:3 NLT

Christmas is a story of surprise and wonder. An angel surprised Mary. Shepherds were surprised to see a baby in a manger. To celebrate what God has done, we too must make room for surprise and wonder.

We know the story and we don’t know it. In that tension, wonder grows, and when it does, we discover some long-needed truth to fill our hearts with God Himself.

This season, substitute push and stress for wonder. Let God surprise you in the middle of routine. Let God help you find a new way to see Jesus come to you, and let the wonder teach new ways to thank Him.



Take a wonder walk. How did God make so many different colors and textures?


SATURDAY- KEEPING WATCH

There were shepherds living out in the fields...keeping watch. Luke 2:8

Shepherds watch sheep. That’s their job. But on this special night, while they were watching sheep, God showed up!

Interesting that this important message came to simple men doing mundane work. What would happen if we followed their example? What if we “keep watch” for God while we do house chores or run errands?

Don’t ignore the orde to keep watch first. God’s message will come amd send us on life-changing journeys of great joy, just like the shepherds.



Keep watch today while you work, play, or study. Make a space for God to speak, and He will.


WEDNESDAY-LONG JOURNEYS

IMagi from the east came...to worship him. Matthew 2:1,2

The Magi receive the award for taking the longest journey at Christmas. They followed a star in search of what all scientists strive to discover: the origin of life.

It always stuns me that God brought Gentile scientists to Jesus the only way they knew--by way of astrology! That reminds me that God can use anything to help people find Him.


We should never give up on someone who’s taking a long journey to find Jesus. God knows what “star” they will follow.



Do you know someone taking a long journey to Jesus? How can you encourage them this Christmas?

PRAYING THIS WEEK . . .

God,
I am beginning to understand
that your coming
is deeper and more personal
than I treat it,
especially at Christmas.
Wake me up and help me watch you
work in my life and in those I love.
Overwhelm me with your love that I
may do the same for others.



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Week 4: Dec. 21-Dec. 25, 2025

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SUNDAY-STARTLED

They stood there ...filled with joy and wonder. Luke 24:1

Are we so familiar with the Christmas story that it no longer startles us? When we are startled, we take another look. We are captured by what we can't understand.

There is nothing ordinary, simple, or coincidental about God sending Himself as a baby. This week, follow the first responders. They all took journeys that changed their lives. Isn't that what you want from Christmas, too?

Enter worship like Mary or Joseph, "startled" by what God did. Open your heart to be "startled" anew.

♡ *Walk into the sanctuary as if Jesus himself waits for YOU!*

MONDAY-HOLD ON TO HOPE

Hold unswervingly to the hope we profess ...he who promised is faithful Heb. 10:23

Emily Dickinson wrote that "hope is a thing feathers" because it flies away. Not God's hope. He wrapped His heart in flesh and sent it to us. Our hope has a heartbeat!

Christmas is a good time to reflect on where we place our hope and why. Our hope rested in the manger, hung on a cross, and walked out of a tomb! We don't just hope it is true; we let the certainty of God's gift stabilize hope in our broken world. This hope doesn't fly away. Never!

♡ *Where are you depending on something or someone else to give you the hope you need?*

TUESDAY- WHOSE BIRTHDAY?

Praise the Lord! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. Rev. 19:1

Do we forget whose birthday we celebrate? Have we made our plans without asking what the honoree wants? It's not too late. Jesus doesn't want to lose us in the excesses of the season. He doesn't want *his* celebration tainted by what he never asked for. He just wants us.

What will remind us that Jesus didn't come to *decorate* the world? He came to *change it*. And the only way he will do it is one heart at a time. Does he have yours?

♡ *Take 3-minute breaks today. Ask, "Am I celebrating how you want to be celebrated for your birthday?"*

CHRISTMAS EVE-BREATH OF GOD

I will put breath into you. and you will come to life. Ezekiel 37:5. NLT

God breathed a pure and empowering breath to shape lifeless clay into a breathing, thinking human being. That same breath pumped tiny lungs and opened the nostrils of Jesus as he uttered his first cry.

When we were born into God's kingdom, God breathed into us a new life. Why do we not recognize the majesty and miracle of such indwelling?

Christmas is just a breath away. As we recognize and celebrate Jesus' birth; celebrate your own new-life birth, too!

♡ *Let God's breath resuscitate you today. With Christmas in your heart, you will celebrate better.*

CHRISTMAS-COME SEE!

The word is near you. Rom. 10:8

Today, we celebrate how Jesus, the Word of God, was born into our world. We remember that we do not serve a distant God. He doesn't just live next door, He lives in us.

Don't let this truth dangle like some tease. Read the story again. Take another look in the manger. Recognize the power of God that broke through our world in a way no scientist can. God Almighty invites you to come and see for yourself!

♡ *Contemplate God's nearness today. Let God come close in every part of today's celebration.*

PRAYING THIS WEEK , , ,

God of all Hope,
Come to my stable heart.
Help me understand how
forgiveness, redemption, and
transformation
bring everything I could hope for
and saves me
from other hopes that fail.
Amen!

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THANK YOU!

Thank you for joining me during this special season. I hope something made you think, wonder, or dig deeper.

I especially pray that God met you in these four weeks in ways that renewed your understanding about what Jesus came to do in us. He alone gives what we need to live his love, hope, peace, and joy for the rest of the year.

May God bless your New Year with unexpected blessings and unending peace.

Debbie Goodwin ♡

