

Advent 2020

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;



...those who lived in a land of deep
darkness on them light has shined.

Isaiah 9:2

Welcome to Advent 2020 daily devotional.

For me, the words from the famous passage in Isaiah 9:2, challenged me to think about how I respond to the ideas of darkness and light in the world around me.

Inside this devotional, you will find, readings, images, questions, and time to reflect. You will have also received a candle to begin your devotional time. Feel free to use it as best suits you.

I pray that through your own preparations throughout Advent, you will know God with you in the darkness and in the light, guiding you towards the promised Messiah.

29th Nov

The people who walked in darkness...

Isaiah 9:2

As we begin Advent, let us recognise the darkness that we have experienced in the last few months. In the oncoming darkness of winter, it can be easy to notice the dark, as we turn on the lights. But even in times where there are more hours of daylight, we can still be surrounded by a different kind of darkness.

So, I invite you to take the candle that came with this devotional and as you light it, hand over to God your worries, fears, emotions of what has happened and where you feel you are.



Spend some quiet time with God, recognising that you hold the light of God in you today.

As you begin, light your candle

30th Nov

- When did you first notice the dark?
- How did it make you feel?

‘In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said let there be light ; And there was light. And God saw that the light was good; And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day and the darkness he called night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.’ Genesis 1:1-5

When we are young, the dark is often something to fear, as we grow, we learn about the pattern of light and darkness. In this passage, we hear that at the very beginning there was God and there was also darkness. From the darkness God called the light. The dark was not something to fear, it had a place and a name. In the beginning it represented the night.

- How has the comprehension of darkness changed through your life time?

Spend some time thanking God for both night and day.

As you begin, light your candle

1st Dec

....have seen a great light; Isaiah 9:2

- What does the word 'light' mean?

Discover what the dictionary definition is.

- Is there a difference between physical light and spiritual light?

- What is it for you?

Consider what you feel you need illuminated in the coming weeks and into the new year. If you find it helpful write it down, so that you can return to it later.

As you begin, light your candle

2nd Dec

Go for a walk and see how many different types of light you can see.

In the space below, consider the different light sources around you and in the world.

Natural	Made by humans

What does this suggest about our need for light?

Spend some time thanking God for the variety of light in your life and how it makes you feel.

As you begin, light your candle

3rd Dec

- What does darkness mean for you?

If possible, find a dark place to sit and close your eyes.

Be still and be aware of your breathing, the noises that you can hear around you. Allow yourself to think.

- What did the darkness feel like?

During this time of the year many plants and seeds are buried deep in the darkness of the soil, resting in the dark and yet drawing on the sources of life around them to prepare them for their journey into the light.

It is important to remember the seasons and take time to sit in the dark and rest.

If I say, 'surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night', even the darkness is not night to you; the night is as bright as the day, the darkness is as light to you.

Psalm 139:11-12

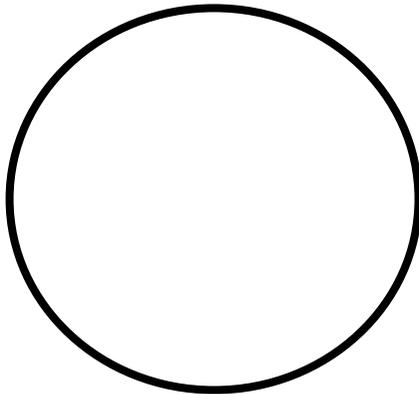
As you begin, light your candle

4th Dec

In the circle in the centre write where you have seen/heard God's light shining in the world today.

Around the edges write where God's light needs to be reflected.

Give thanks for where God's light is easy to be seen in the world and pray that it might be a beacon for those who are struggling to find their way.



As you begin, light your candle

5th Dec

In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:4-5

- What does '*...the life was the light of all people*' mean?
- Where have you seen the '*life*' lighting all people?
- What does this convey about the importance of '*all people*'?

Spend some time reflecting on this passage for yourself and hold in your prayers those who's light is surrounded by darkness.

As you begin, light your candle

6th Dec

***The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.
Psalm 119:130***

Take a piece of paper, draw a 6 petaled flower and cut it out.

Take a moment to reflect on a piece of scripture that has enlightened you and brings you a sense of peace with God.

Write it in the centre of the flower. Feel free to decorate the flower.

Now loosely fold each petal into the centre, until you are left with a loose hexagon shape.

Now or later on, take a bowl of water and place your flower on top and as you watch it unfold, let the words re-enforce what you know deep within you, the light of understanding.

As you begin, light your candle

7th Dec

Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light; but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness. Therefore consider whether the light in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it will be as full of light as when a lamp gives you light with its rays.”

Luke 11:34-36



- How do you make sure your eyes are kept healthy?
- How does what you see impact how you act?
- How can your eyes be the lamps for your body?

If you find it helpful, take some time to look at your eyes in a mirror and ask God to help you truly see in the light.

As you begin, light your candle

8th Dec

There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Exodus 3:2

This is from the well known story of Moses and the burning bush. Having runaway from Egypt, Moses has started a new life keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, a Medianite priest.

One day the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a burning bush, something that not unusual, apart from the fact that the bush was not being consumed by the fire.

Moses stops to look and in taking in the sight, speaks with God. The light in this story is a way to attract Moses' attention. The use of a flame is a powerful one, as the bush could easily be burnt to the ground and yet when we contain the light of God, we are not destroyed, but stand as a beacon for others who maybe lost.

Take some time to consider how God attracts your attention and how you respond.

As you begin, light your candle

9th Dec

When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I give this land, Genesis 15:17-18

In this piece of scripture, we are in the story of Abraham. God has promised Abram that he will have as many descendants as stars in the sky and is sealing this promise- covenant, by passing through Abram’s offering.

Here the binding of God’s covenant with Abram is made with fire-pot and flaming torch. Although Abram is asleep, God is present in this light and yet hidden in the dark. There is an echo of the creation story here, where from the darkness came light and land.

This is a reminder than although we may not see it or be aware of what is going on in the darkness, God is still working, creating and fulfilling the covenant we live.

Take some time to be aware, when God is asking you to rest, in order that God’s inextinguishable light can shine through our offerings.

As you begin, light your candle

10th Dec

He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. 1 Kings 19:11-12

This year has had moments of being complicated, confusing, busy, full of fear and uncertainty and yet it has also allowed us to take time to be at home, to reflect on what is important to us and live in simpler ways. In the reading, Elijah found God in the still small voice.

Take some time to be still and listen for God and be watchful for God's light in this day.

As you begin, light your candle

11th Dec

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16

In the time when Jesus was speaking, candles were the light source, yet today with our electric lights, the inference is the same. We turn on our lights to use them, not to cover them up.

Jesus as ever is talking on more than one level, he wants to encourage those who are listening to understand that having made a connection to God, they are a source of light that shouldn't be hidden away and can't be hidden- just like a city on a hill cannot be hidden.

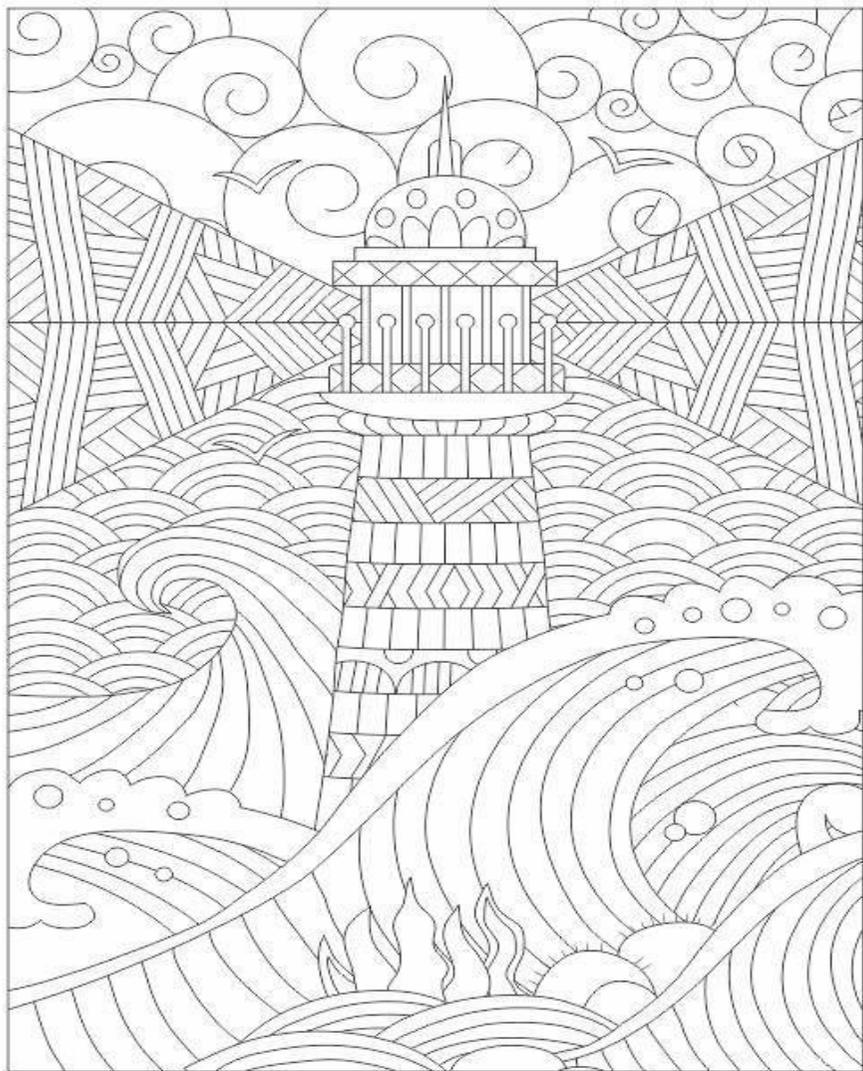
We need to let the light shine out, not to illuminate ourselves, but so that others can see God.

- How do you try and hide your light?
- Do you feel you need to hide your light?
- In what ways do you give glory to God?

As you begin, light your candle

12th Dec

Reflect on what is lighting your way today.



As you begin, light your candle

13th Dec

**Go and take some light to someone else
today.**

Maybe phone a friend you have not spoken to in a while
or send a gift to someone or help someone in need.

Let God's light shine from you today.

Don't hide your light.

LET PEOPLE SEE
THE *JESUS* IN YOU.

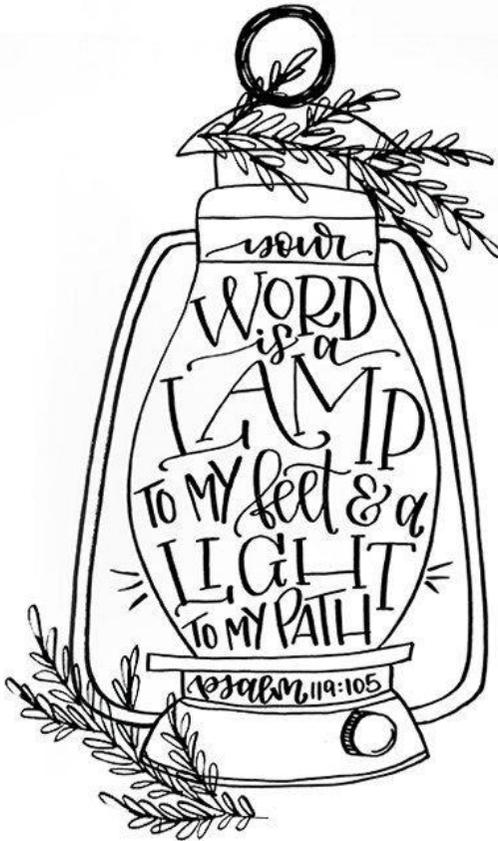


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As you begin, light your candle

14th Dec

**Take some time to reflect on this psalm
and what it means to you.**



As you begin, light your candle

15th Dec

Noticing when darkness falls.

Be aware of the gathering darkness.

Sit, wait and be aware.

Notice how your vision changes. How the things around you appear to alter in the dimming light.

- Consider whether you are in a familiar place.
- Does it feel different tonight?
- What are you most aware of?

Lord, draw us closer to you as our vision changes. May we see your light and life around us in this new night. Show us what newness is coming into the world, that we maybe aware of your presence surrounding us.

As you begin, light your candle

16th Dec

Take a moment to gaze at the stars.

- Do you recognise any of the constellations?

Take some time just to stare into the sky allowing yourself time to see other stars. The light from some of the stars in our galaxy was created tens of thousands of years ago. It is possible that some of the lights that we see are from stars that no longer exist.

***O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
When I look at your heavens, the work of your
fingers, the moon and the stars that you have
established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of
them, mortals that you care for them?
Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.
Psalm 8:1,3-5***

Within these evening lights is the glory of God. No matter how far away they are or whether they still exist, they are full of God's honour and glory.

As you begin, light your candle

17th Dec

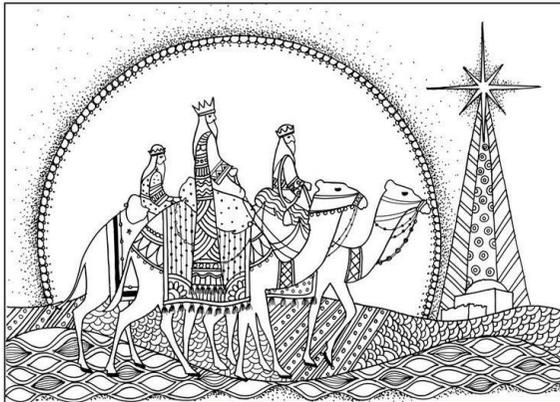
Long before Mary was told she was going to have a baby, a star came into being, that would be studied and followed by people from the East.

To follow a star would not have been an easy task to complete on your own. Although we have no record of how many Magi there were, we assume based on the gifts there would have been at least three. Making this difficult journey one that was shared.

We all have our own signs to follow, yet those that we share with others are always more manageable.

Consider the groups that you are apart of:

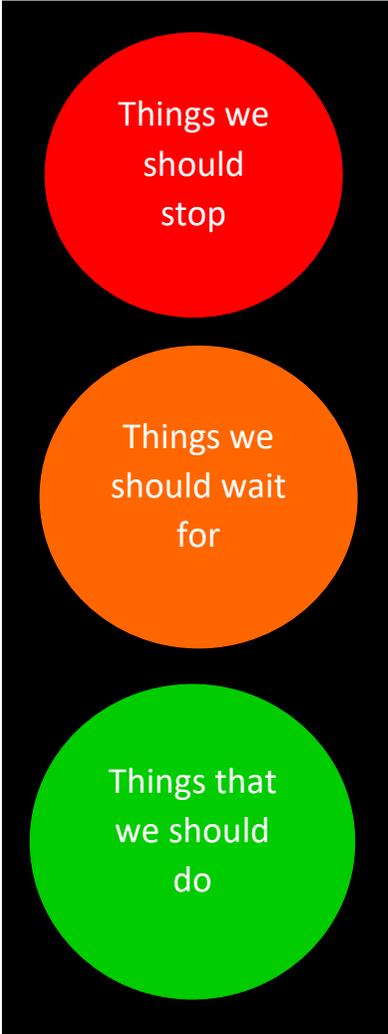
- What have they brought to your journey?
- How have you supported them in theirs?
- How do we keep each other going, when we lose sight of the signs that we follow?



As you begin, light your candle

18th Dec

Using these lights, take some time to pray
for:



Things we
should
stop

Things we
should wait
for

Things that
we should
do

When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Matthew 1:18-22

Joseph can often be lost in the background of the story of Jesus' birth. However, his task requires just as much faith and trust in God as Mary's.

- Where do you see God's light in Joseph?
- How did God help Joseph?
- How does Joseph's role bring glory to God and light to the world?

As you begin, light your candle

20th Dec

‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the mighty one has done great things for me, and holy is his name.’

Luke 1:46-50

This is part of Mary’s song of praise. After an encounter with her cousin, Elizabeth, Mary begins to understand and see that what the angel said to her was true.

We need to have other people who are able to help us realise that we are able to complete the tasks that we are asked to do. Mary would have probably been overwhelmed when she realised that it was real.

Yet, her song of praise, shows that Mary is trusting God, even though at that moment she will not have known what it was to be the mother to the Messiah.

Maybe there is a calling on your life at the moment, why not seek out someone who can use their light to guide you. Remember that all light is of God.

As you begin, light your candle

21st Dec

***O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie !
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light ;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.***

We often sing this carol as we approach Christmas, giving us an image of a sleepy town, where candles would have lit the windows of the packed inns, an image inspired by the imagination of the carol writers. We do not know exactly when Jesus was born, yet the image of a Jesus as a saviour being born into the darkness of night is very symbolic.

However, no matter when he was born, the town of Bethlehem would have been alight with fires. The inns would need to make meals for guests, homes would need to be warm and when darkness fell, light would have led people home.

Look at the lights of the houses and streets that surround you. Pray for your neighbours, that their hopes fears are held in the everlasting light.

As you begin, light your candle

22nd Dec

Then an Angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

Luke 2:9

- What is the 'glory' of God for you?
- Why was it terrifying?
- How do you let God's glory shine in and through your life?
- What might you have to do to allow the glory to shine around you?

As you begin, light your candle

23rd Dec

Outside of the city,
In the fields, and on the
hill,
The fire of warmth and
protection,
Signals that life goes on
still.



There outside the city,
Passed by many on their
way,
Are those who do not
have a warm house in which to stay.

Yet their lights shine out to the city,
Unnoticed and yet still so bright,
And it is to these, who will receive, a heavenly sort of light.

For here outside the city,
Away from all the noise,
Are the hearts that are ready to spread the news that
overjoys.

For though outside the city,
Their light is but the same,
As those who in the city, call out Jesus' name.

As you begin, light your candle

24th Dec

Spend some time reminding yourself of the story that leads to the birth of Jesus.

Use the space to make some notes.

- Where does it start?
- Who is involved?
- How the story comes about?
- What do you learn about God from looking at this story?

As you begin, light your candle

25th Dec



GO AND SHINE LIKEWISE...

Happy Christmas

God Bless