HOLY PLACES GUIDE

Light in the Waiting

25 Days of Advent & Christmas Reflection

A December journey of hope, attentive prayer and small acts of kindness.

THIS JOURNAL BELONGS TO

DECEMBER

1 Make room for hope

Isaiah 9:2-7

A December 1-25 devotional, not a calendar of the changing liturgical Advent dates. Begin with a quiet breath. Light can be a fitting image for hope in a difficult season. Read Isaiah in context before reflecting on how Christians have received this passage in Advent.

TODAY'S QUESTION

Where do I long for light, and what might patient hope look like today?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Offer one person a few minutes of undistracted attention.

A PRAYER

God of hope, help me begin this season with attention and kindness.

DECEMBER

2

A branch of peace

Isaiah 11:1-9

The vision of a renewed world includes justice and peace. Let the passage enlarge your concern beyond your own comfort.

TODAY'S QUESTION

Whose need for peace should become part of my prayer?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Choose one small action that reduces tension in a relationship.

A PRAYER

God of peace, guide my words and actions toward the good of others.

DECEMBER

3

Comfort for the weary

Isaiah 40:1-11

Comfort in Scripture is more than a cheerful phrase. Notice the passage's images of strength and tender care, and consider what real encouragement requires.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What kind of comfort helps me, and what kind of comfort can I offer?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Send a thoughtful message that does not demand a reply.

A PRAYER

Merciful God, teach me to offer comfort with patience and respect.

DECEMBER

4 A humble beginning

Micah 5:2-5a

Christians read this passage in connection with Bethlehem and the coming of Christ. Notice how an apparently small place becomes part of a larger hope.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What small beginning deserves care in my life?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Encourage someone whose quiet work is easily overlooked.

A PRAYER

God of small beginnings, help me value faithful work that goes unseen.

DECEMBER

5

Prepare a way

Mark 1:1-8

Mark opens with a messenger preparing the way. Consider preparation as a change in attention and practice, not merely a fuller calendar.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What could I simplify to make room for what matters?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Remove one unnecessary demand from the day.

A PRAYER

God, make space in my life for honesty, generosity and renewed attention.

DECEMBER

6

Waiting without easy answers

Luke 1:5-25

Zechariah and Elizabeth's story begins with long waiting. Their particular experience should not be used as a promise that every longing will be resolved in the same way.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What unresolved hope do I need to name honestly?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Listen to someone without offering an explanation for their difficulty.

A PRAYER

God of mercy, remain near in the things I cannot resolve.

DECEMBER

7

An unexpected greeting

Luke 1:26-33

The announcement to Mary interrupts ordinary life. Read slowly and notice the difference between a calling and having every detail explained.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What unexpected responsibility or possibility needs thoughtful attention?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Make space to consider a request before answering it.

A PRAYER

God, help me listen carefully when life takes an unexpected turn.

DECEMBER

8

An honest question

Luke 1:34-38

Mary asks how the announcement will unfold. Questions can belong within a faithful response rather than standing outside it.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What question am I hesitant to bring into prayer?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Invite a sincere question in a conversation and receive it respectfully.

A PRAYER

God of wisdom, meet me in honest questions and guide my next step.

DECEMBER

9

The gift of a visit

Luke 1:39-45

Mary and Elizabeth meet with recognition and joy. Their encounter invites reflection on the encouragement people can offer each other.

TODAY'S QUESTION

Who helps me feel seen without needing to impress them?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Visit, call or write to someone who may appreciate companionship.

A PRAYER

God, make me attentive to the gift of another person's presence.

DECEMBER

10

A song that looks outward

Luke 1:46-55

Mary's song connects personal gratitude with a larger vision of mercy and justice. Notice whose circumstances receive attention.

TODAY'S QUESTION

How might gratitude widen my concern for others?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Support a practical local effort that meets a real need.

A PRAYER

God of mercy, let my gratitude become generosity and concern for justice.

DECEMBER

11

A name and a beginning

Luke 1:57-66

The birth and naming of John are surrounded by neighbors' questions and wonder. A new beginning can affect more than one household.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What new beginning would I like to support rather than control?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Ask someone beginning something new what help they would actually welcome.

A PRAYER

God, help me encourage new beginnings with humility and care.

DECEMBER

12

The way of peace

Luke 1:67-80

Zechariah's song ends with images of light and guidance into peace. Reflect on peace as something practiced as well as desired.

TODAY'S QUESTION

Where could a more patient response change the course of my day?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Pause before sending a difficult message; revise it for clarity and kindness.

A PRAYER

God of peace, guide my feet and my words toward reconciliation.

DECEMBER

13

A difficult decision

Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew tells the birth story with attention to Joseph's decisions. Notice the seriousness of the situation and the care required in responding.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What decision needs both compassion and careful judgment?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Seek wise advice about an unresolved decision.

A PRAYER

God, help me act with integrity when the next step is difficult.

DECEMBER

14 God with us

Matthew 1:22-23

Matthew connects Jesus' birth with the name Emmanuel. Let the theme of God's presence invite prayer without expecting every hardship to disappear.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What helps me remember that I need not face everything alone?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Offer companionship rather than an instant solution.

A PRAYER

God with us, teach me to receive and offer faithful presence.

DECEMBER

15 On the road

Luke 2:1-5

Luke describes a journey to Bethlehem within the pressures of public events. Consider the human effort involved in travel and displacement.

TODAY'S QUESTION

Who around me is far from home or facing an uncertain journey?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Learn one practical way to support newcomers in your community.

A PRAYER

God, watch over those on difficult journeys and show me how to care.

DECEMBER

16

A child is born

Luke 2:6-7

The birth is told with few details. Read what Luke actually records before adding familiar images from songs, cards or nativity scenes.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What do the simplicity and physical details of this passage help me notice?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Offer practical help to a caregiver or family, if welcomed.

A PRAYER

God, make me attentive to vulnerable lives and ordinary needs.

DECEMBER

17 Night watch

Luke 2:8-12

The announcement comes to shepherds keeping watch at night. Notice how the story attends to people at work outside the center of public importance.

TODAY'S QUESTION

Whose work sustains my life while going largely unseen?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Thank someone whose necessary work is often overlooked.

A PRAYER

God, help me see dignity in the people and work I too easily pass by.

DECEMBER

18 Good news and peace

Luke 2:13-14

The song of the heavenly host places praise and peace together. Reflect on how celebration can lead toward care for a troubled world.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What would make my celebration more generous and peaceful?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Choose a peaceful response in one ordinary disagreement.

A PRAYER

God, let praise shape the way I speak and act toward others.

DECEMBER

19

Come and see

Luke 2:15-20

The shepherds respond, visit and share what they have heard. Their movement invites attention to the difference between receiving news and acting on it.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What good intention needs a small practical step?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Follow through on one modest promise.

A PRAYER

God, help me respond to what is good with concrete and faithful action.

DECEMBER

20 Pondering quietly

Luke 2:19

Mary's quiet attention offers a pause within the movement of the birth narrative. Not every meaningful experience needs an immediate explanation.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What moment would benefit from quiet reflection rather than a quick conclusion?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Set aside five minutes without a screen or another task.

A PRAYER

God, give me a patient heart and room to notice what I do not yet understand.

DECEMBER

21

A patient hope

Luke 2:22-35

Simeon welcomes the child and speaks words that include both hope and pain. The scene resists a version of faith that leaves no room for sorrow.

TODAY'S QUESTION

How can I hold hope without denying what is difficult?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Check in gently with someone for whom this season is hard.

A PRAYER

God of hope, help me remain tender toward joy and sorrow together.

DECEMBER

22

A faithful witness

Luke 2:36-38

Anna's brief appearance includes worship, gratitude and speech to others. Notice the significance of a life of attention, even when few details are recorded.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What quiet practice has shaped my life over time?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Thank an older person or mentor for a specific contribution.

A PRAYER

God, help me honor the patient faithfulness of people around me.

DECEMBER

23 Seeking with humility

Matthew 2:1-12

Matthew describes visitors following a star and finding the child in a house. The text does not place this visit at the manger on the night of the birth.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What does a humble search for truth require of me?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Ask a thoughtful question and listen before offering your opinion.

A PRAYER

God of wisdom, keep me open to learning and careful with what I claim to know.

DECEMBER

24 Care in a threatened world

Matthew 2:13-15

Matthew tells of danger and a family's flight to Egypt. Pause with the vulnerability of families forced to leave home rather than treating the journey as a decorative detail.

TODAY'S QUESTION

Whose need for safety should shape my compassion?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Support a trustworthy effort that assists displaced families, if you are able.

A PRAYER

God of mercy, be near to families seeking safety and guide us toward practical care.

DECEMBER

25

Light to carry forward

John 1:1-14

John opens with the Word, life and light. On Christmas Day, let celebration become a beginning: a renewed willingness to receive grace and practice love.

TODAY'S QUESTION

What simple practice of love will I carry beyond this season?

My response, gratitude or prayer

A SMALL ACT OF KINDNESS

Choose one generous habit to continue after Christmas.

A PRAYER

God of light, let the hope of this day shape my ordinary life. Amen.