

DECEMBER 16TH, 2014



SCRIPTURE: *My mouth is filled with Your praise and with your glory all day long. Ps. 71:8*

THOUGHT: Wow. Christmas is less than two weeks away and you're still here. Thank you. I adore you for walking with me through this Advent, looking to keep Jesus at the center of our celebrations. How much more must it please our Father for His love eclipses mine. You can trace the desire of our Creator to do life with us all through the Holy Scriptures. Friend, our schedules may be getting tighter as Christmas nears, and perhaps it's becoming harder to squeeze this devo in, but if Jesus is occupying more of our thoughts, we are winning, big time. Remember, we're not trying to find time in our day for God, we're trying to find God throughout our day!

ACTION: Today, let's try and be aware of how long we go without a thought of God, and close the distance the next time, and the next.

TWEETABLE: Yes! Let's keep setting aside time in our day to seek God, but let's not check it off like one more appt. in the day planner. #HeartWideOpen

DECEMBER 17TH, 2014



SCRIPTURE: *My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you... Galatians 4:19*

THOUGHT: As we spend this time watching and waiting for Jesus, I imagine us looking something like Mary, growing in expectation as she watched her body grow with child. This Jesus-seeking, God-honoring Advent we're looking to live is such a worthy and holy mission, as was Mary's. And just as she needs more nutrients as sweet baby Jesus is formed in her and not less, we need the ongoing nourishment of His Word. Just as she needs more rest and not more work, we need to rest in the finished work of Jesus and take no pleasure in our own efforts to pursue Him.

ACTION: As we sip a favorite beverage, and nibble a snack or meal, let's imagine being filled with the Holy Spirit of God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. Plan to repeat the exercise whenever we feel depleted.

TWEETABLE: Trying to live for Jesus without living with Jesus is exhausting. Drink from the well! #HeartWideOpen

DECEMBER 18TH, 2014



SCRIPTURE: *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 26:3*

THOUGHT: The beautiful graces of our Jesus are ours for the taking today. Everything He is, He is for us, He is in us. Only, we can't stock Him—no matter how hard we try. We are vessels that are either full or empty. We can't store His peace in us but we can draw on the Prince of Peace who is ever present. Let's remember this when we hear the countdown today, and we'll surely hear it. From a thousand directions we'll hear the Christmas countdown. Just know that with that "shopping days 'til Christmas" number comes a choice, to feel the pressure or swap it at the throne for today's fresh supply of peace.

ACTION: Every time we heard the Christmas Countdown today, let it be a prompt encouraging us to run to the throne to refuel on the love and peace of Jesus!

TWEETABLE: Don't let yourself be at the mercy of men when you have access to God. #HeartWideOpen

DECEMBER 19TH, 2014



SCRIPTURE: *Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. Psalm 119:18 (NIV)*

THOUGHT: TGIE, right? There are plenty things I love about working from home, the dress code being one of them. Casual Friday looks much like Casual Monday around this office so I'm certainly not here to "dog" the practice of dressing down. (Dixie Belle, my spoiled canine and sole employee, was practically begging for that mention.) Still, Casual Friday's unspoken theme seems to be "not much is expected today" and I'm thinking that's probably the unintended consequence since we do tend to live up or down to expectations. It's why I remind us, as Christmas draws ever nearer, to guard against casual celebrations of Who He is and what He wants to do in and through us. Come, Lord Jesus.

ACTION: Today let's expect God to speak to us through nature, through His word, or through other people and refuse to acknowledge coincidence over Immanuel, God with Us.

TWEETABLE: Asking God to show you the wonders in His Word and in His world acknowledges that treasure lies beyond the casual observer's eyes & you want it! #HeartWideOpen

DECEMBER 20TH, 2014



SCRIPTURE: *And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. I Peter 1:8-9*

THOUGHT: I plan to be through Christmas shopping when you read this. I really do. But, if I am still shopping, I hope I'm being intentional about it. Why would I say that? Because I know me. I know the closer it gets to Christmas the more prone I'll be to buying ill-advised purchases and this Advent will be like so many others, more about having to buy presents and less about getting to experience Jesus. That's the Christmas that leaves me exhausted and empty. It's also a principle that holds throughout our Christian experience. Following Jesus because we think we have to is ill-advised and life-draining. This Jesus life is a get-to!

ACTION: Let's be conscious today of the times we say "I have to" about anything to do with Christmas and purposefully change our language to reflect the privilege we have to experience this Advent season.

TWEETABLE: To know the overflowing life of the indwelling Christ, we must understand that what He asks of us is a get-to, not a have-to! #HeartWideOpen