

# DAILY DEVOTIONAL

## Christmas Lights / Week 2

This is love: not that we loved God, but that **he loved us and sent his Son** as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

1 JOHN 4:10 NIV

### DAY 1

Often, when we talk about God, we think about all the things we are supposed to be doing. Like there's a list of things to do to keep Him happy. But this verse from 1 John is a reminder of what is and always will be true *first*. Not that we have to do anything to earn God's love, but that God's love has been freely given to us. That is what everything else builds upon.

So next time you are tempted to think you have to do something to earn God's love, to prove something to Him, remember what John said—John who spent three years of His life hanging out with Jesus and knowing Him firsthand: God loved us first. Anything we do isn't to earn God's love, but to show appreciation for what we already have.

**Write a letter to God telling Him all the ways you appreciate what He has done. Not feeling it? Write a letter of all your confusions and concerns. He can take it!**

You see, at just the right time, **when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.**

ROMANS 5:6 NIV

### DAY 2

Think about a pop quiz you were totally unprepared for or getting news that your family was going to have to move out of state. You feel like you have no control over what is happening around you. But then something happens, and everything changes. There's a fire drill and the quiz is cancelled. The move is called off. Something happened. Someone stepped in, and it changed everything. That's what Jesus has done for us. At just the right time. He is our assurance that we need that we matter and belong, and that our sin will not keep us separated from God's love. That's good news!

Think of someone in your life that needs to hear this good news. Write down that person's name somewhere you'll see it each day. **For the next seven days, pray for an opportunity to let that person know this good news.** When an opportunity arises to share, pray for the courage to do so!

That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, **not counting people's sins against them.**

2 CORINTHIANS 5:19A NIV

### DAY 3

The word "reconcile" means making right. When we read this verse that tells us God reconciled the world to Himself, it means this was God making right the relationship between the world and Himself, fixing what was broken, closing the gap in the relationship, drawing us to Himself. And it all started with the birth of Jesus. There was no way for us to know exactly what God thought of us, unless God showed up Himself to tell us. And that's what He did with Jesus.

**Think about one relationship in your life that needs to be reconciled, or made right.** Ask God to show you three ways to reconcile before the end of the year. You'll enter 2021 stronger than ever!

Neither height nor depth, **nor anything else** in all creation, **will be able to separate us from the love of God** that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 8:39 NIV

#### DAY 4

We've all messed up. Maybe you accidentally scratched your parents' car or you lied to a friend. We could point to something that pushed us further from someone we cared about, which makes this verse amazing. Paul, the guy who wrote this, is saying that there is NOTHING we can do that separates us from God. And Paul should know. He had a bad past—it included being responsible for the death of people who followed Jesus. So it's true for Paul and it's true for you.

What a relief, right? **Today, write down a few things you may have thought would separate you from God's love. Then put a big red "X" through them, writing below them, "nothing separates me from God's love."** Isn't that a relief? God's love for us is unchanging, even when we are at our worst.

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

JOHN 15:13 NIV

#### DAY 5

When we hear the word "love" we all probably have an idea that comes to mind. We would all probably describe it differently. But John, one of Jesus' closest friends, tells us in a letter that God is love. And in the verse we read today, John writes that the greatest kind of love involves sacrifice, which is exactly what Jesus did for us. He literally died to show us His love. But there are countless ways we show our love for our family and friends in a different kind of laying down of our lives. Every time we give up what we want for the sake of someone else, we are laying down our lives.

**Ask God to give you three ways today to lay down your life for your friends. It may be giving up the prime parking spot when you hang out, calling a friend you know is going to talk forever but really needs it, or something even more sacrificial.** Practice loving like Jesus has loved us.

The wages of the righteous is life, but the earnings of the wicked are sin and death.

PROVERBS 10:16 NIV

#### DAY 6

Think about a paycheck. It's what someone earns for the work they've done. This proverb uses the words "wages" and "earnings" referring to life. The writer is suggesting that the life we want later is connected to the way we live now. However, that doesn't mean when bad things happen that we did something to deserve it. It isn't God punishing us because life isn't just what we've done wrong. It just means that what we do and say now impacts later on. There are consequences or decisions, not because God is mad at us, but because poor choices lead to poor results.

**Think about the kind of life you want later. What can you start doing now to invest in the kind of future you want later?**

**"Glory to God** in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

LUKE 2:14 NIV

#### DAY 7

Record a voice memo on your phone of this verse from Luke and play it back any time you see a specific thing (you decide what) in your day (the cafeteria, the color red, your brother, etc). Think of it as a reminder to look for God's glory, His work, all around you.