Overcomer’s Guide to the Holidays

**Week 1, December 2**

**Reading Plan**

Day 1-

READ: [**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**](https://biblehub.com/niv/1_thessalonians/5.htm)

REFLECT: In this passage, Paul has written to the church at Thessalonica to help inspire their spiritual maturity. What are the specific instructions in this scripture? Why are we to do these things?

PRACTICE: This is a great scripture to help us stay focused and centered on Jesus. Write out the actions in this passage (in your journal, reminder on your phone) and refer back to it often.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: “Rest in the Prince of Peace” from Desiring God. (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/rest-in-the-prince-of-peace>)

REFLECT: According to this article, what is the native language of faith? How can you better experience God’s peace?

PRACTICE: Choose to make prayer your native language today and as you pray, ask that God would fill you up with His peace during this busy holiday season.

Day 2-

READ: [**Matthew 11:29-30**](https://biblehub.com/niv/matthew/11.htm)

REFLECT: It’s no secret that the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas is a whirlwind. We’re often left exhausted by the fast pace. What does Jesus say we are to do when we are weary and overwhelmed? What is it that holds you back from going to Him in those moments rather than something else?

PRACTICE: Take a moment to reflect on the things in your life that make you weary (maybe it’s holiday related, maybe it’s not), and go to Jesus. Sing a worship song, pray out loud, or meditate over your favorite scripture – whatever it is, find a way to seek refuge in the Savior.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: “Four Reasons to Slow Down” from Desiring God. (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/four-reasons-to-slow-down>)

REFLECT: What does this article name as the reasons to slow down? Which of the reasons do you relate to most?

PRACTICE: Look at the next seven days on your calendar. Where the spaces that you need to slow down? In your prayer time, ask God to show you the way.

Day 3-

READ: [**Psalm 145:18**](https://biblehub.com/esv/psalms/145.htm)

REFLECT: Throughout the story of scripture God reminds us that he’s available to us. He wants a relationship with us and he desires conversation with us. Prayer allows us to be in conversation with God. In this passage, what does David say happens when we call on the Lord?

PRACTICE: As you pray this week, remind yourself that your conversations with God draw him near to you. You can be open, honest, and vulnerable because He is near. As you’re praying, take a position that opens up your body (hands open, kneeling, etc), so that reflects the openness of your heart to God.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

WATCH: “The Main Ingredient in Effective Prayer” from Desiring God. (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-main-ingredient-in-effective-prayer>)

REFLECT: According to this article, what is the main ingredient for prayer? How does our prayer life change if we keep Him at the forefront of our prayers?

PRACTICE: When you pray this week, use the time to thank God for who he is and for all he’s done in your life.

Day 4-

READ: [**Romans 8:26-28**](https://biblehub.com/esv/romans/8.htm)

REFLECT: There may come a time based on circumstances or seasons of life where finding the words to pray seems impossible. This scripture gives us hope for those times. What does Paul say the Spirit does for us doing these times? What can we be assured of in these moments?

PRACTICE: In your prayer time today, spend some of the time in silence. Let it be a moment where the Spirit fills you up and where God can petition on your behalf.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

WATCH: “What is Prayer?”, a training clip by John Piper from Right Now Media. (<https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Training/Post/View/190192>) If you need a Right Now Media account, please visit [www.whoisgrace.com/rightnowmedia](http://www.whoisgrace.com/rightnowmedia) to register.

REFLECT: What stands out the most about how Pastor John Piper describes prayer?

PRACTICE: What can you do in your daily prayer life to better reflect God’s desire for the prayer life of a believer?

Day 5-

READ: [**Read Luke 11:1-4**](https://biblehub.com/esv/luke/11.htm)

REFLECT: The prayer from this passage is likely one of the most well known prayers in the history of Christianity. Jesus is giving his disciples specific words to use when they prayed to the Father. As you read this prayer, slow down and be aware of each word. How are these words relevant in your life today? How do you hear them differently today?

PRACTICE: Use the words of the prayer Jesus gave to his disciples to guide your prayer time today. Add in lines where you feel the spirit lead you.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: “Seven Simple Daily Prayers” from Desiring God. (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/seven-simple-daily-prayers>)

REFLECT: Which of these prayers do you need to pray this holiday season?

PRACTICE: Pray the prayer that you chose, and open your heart to Jesus so that he is above the busyness and chaos in this season.

**Week 2, December 9**

**Reading Plan**

Day 1-

READ: [**Matthew 18: 15-17**](https://biblehub.com/esv/matthew/18.htm)

REFLECT: How does Jesus teach us to resolve conflict? How do you need to adjust your way of resolving conflict based on this passage?

PRACTICE: In a moment of tension with a family member, try to practice this passage in working it out.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: “How to Resolve Conflict” from Cru about how to communicate clearly during conflict: <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/help-others-grow/collaborative-discipleship/lessons/2c-how-to-resolve-conflict.html>

Day 2-

READ: [**1 Samuel 26:1-12**](https://biblehub.com/esv/1_samuel/26.htm)

REFLECT: Why doesn’t David take the opportunity to kill Saul? How does the Lord work out vengeance for David? (see [**1 Samuel 31**](https://biblehub.com/esv/1_samuel/31.htm))

PRACTICE: Pray for those that rub you the wrong way, or disagree with you.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

PRACTICE: Do something nice for someone with whom you often have tension.

Day 3-

READ: [**Matthew 6:38-47**](https://biblehub.com/esv/matthew/6.htm)

REFLECT: How does the Lord care for those who are evil? What impact would it have on the world if every Christian lived this out?

PRACTICE: Brainstorm some ways that would be relevant today to do good to those who do evil to you. Do one of those things for someone.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: “Pray for Those Who Abuse You” from Desiring God. (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/pray-for-those-who-abuse-you>)

Day 4-

READ: [**Proverbs 15:1**](https://biblehub.com/esv/proverbs/15.htm)

REFLECT: How can your tone and words effect the direction of a conversation? What does it look like to soften a tense conversation?

PRACTICE: When tensions start to rise, take a deep breath and soften your tone.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: “Going Soft Against Wrath” from Desiring God. (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/going-soft-against-wrath>)

Day 5-

READ: [**1 Corinthians 13:4-7**](https://biblehub.com/esv/1_corinthians/13.htm)

REFLECT: How does the love described in this passage remind us of Jesus? How are you doing at loving others?

PRACTICE: List out the ways that you can believe the best in those who you struggle to like. Confess any sin in your life that leads to further conflict with someone. Ask God to give you a heart like His, to love the unlovable. Thank Him for loving you!

TAKE IT FURTHER!

REFLECT: What role does love play in conflict? How is it loving to resolve conflict quickly?

**Week 3, December 16**

**Reading Plan**

Day 1-

READ: [**John 12:1-7**](https://biblehub.com/esv/john/12.htm)

REFLECT: Why do you think Mary anointed Jesus? Why do you think Judas was angry about it? How did Jesus, who knew their true motives, react to each of them?

PRACTICE: Think of a time you did something with good intentions and were misunderstood or criticized. How can you avoid misjudging the actions of others?

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: [**Philippians 2:3-8**](https://biblehub.com/esv/philippians/2.htm)and[**4:8**](https://biblehub.com/esv/philippians/4.htm)

REFLECT: How will the truth in these verses help you guard against unrealistic expectations of yourself and others?

PRACTICE: What expectations did Mary and Joseph have as they anticipated the birth of Jesus? Watch this short video teaching by Margaret Feinberg on Right Now Media: <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/illustration/98056> (If you do not yet have a Right Now Media account, you can register for one here: <https://whoisgrace.com/rightnowmedia/>)

Day 2-

READ: [**2 Corinthians 2:15-16**](https://biblehub.com/esv/2_corinthians/2.htm); [**Galatians 1:10**](https://biblehub.com/esv/galatians/1.htm)

REFLECT: Paul reminds us in these verses that people will have varying opinions about what we do but we need to focus only on what Jesus thinks.

PRACTICE: Write Galatians 1:10 on a card and keep it in a prominent place so you can read it several times throughout the day.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: “Lay Aside the Weight of Christmas Expectations” from Desiring God-

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/lay-aside-the-weight-of-christmas-expectations>

Day 3-

READ: [**Philippians 4:6-7**](https://biblehub.com/esv/philippians/4.htm); [**Colossians 3:15-16**](https://biblehub.com/esv/colossians/3.htm)

REFLECT: How will an attitude of thankfulness reduce your anxiety?

PRACTICE: It’s easy to forget thanksgiving as we rush on to Christmas. Stop and thank God for at least ten ways He’s blessed you today. Each time today you begin to feel stressed immediately thank God for one of these blessings.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: [**1 John 5:21**](https://biblehub.com/esv/1_john/5.htm)

REFLECT: “*I needed to be mindful that my expectations were becoming idols. I was replacing true thanksgiving to God, and all the mercies he has shown, with turkey and pumpkin pie. Celebrating the birth of Jesus, the real reason for Christmas, was being replaced with glittery trees and presents. Those things are good gifts, but they are not meant to take first place in my heart*. “—Liz Holst

PRACTICE: Pray and ask God to show you if any of your holiday traditions might rival His first place in your heart.

Day 4-

READ: [**John 12:1-7**](https://biblehub.com/esv/john/12.htm)

REFLECT: How are you like Mary in this story (worshiping Jesus)? How are you like Judas in this story (judging or placing expectations on yourself/others)?

PRACTICE: Realize you can never really know the story behind the words and actions of others and sometimes not even your own. Pray and ask God to help you remember this and give you grace for others and for yourself.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: [**Matthew 26:6-13**](https://biblehub.com/esv/matthew/26.htm); [**Mark 14:3-9**](https://biblehub.com/esv/mark/14.htm)

REFLECT: How is this story just a bit different when told by Matthew and Mark? What have you given or could you give Jesus that would be as meaningful as the ointment she gave?

PRACTICE: Listen to this song by Cece Winans about the Alabaster Box

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qR6HSSm5YUM>

Day 5-

READ: [**Romans 8:1**](https://biblehub.com/esv/romans/8.htm); [**Psalm 46:1**](https://biblehub.com/esv/psalms/46.htm); [**Philippians 4:13**](https://biblehub.com/esv/philippians/4.htm); [**Psalm 27:1**](https://biblehub.com/esv/psalms/27.htm); [**Psalm 119:105**](https://biblehub.com/esv/psalms/119.htm)

REFLECT: God’s word is the only source of true expectations for how we should live and for what we can count on from God. How can you use the promises you find in the Bible (like the verses listed above) to change how you view yourself and others?

PRACTICE: Read the above verses again and put your own name in each one to personalize it (ie.“*There is therefore no condemnation for* [your name] *who is in Christ Jesus*.”)

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: [**Hebrews 4:14-16**](https://biblehub.com/esv/hebrews/4.htm)

REFLECT: Jesus has experienced all the frustrations of life that we experience. How does this give us confidence as we pray?

PRACTICE: Stop and take some time to pray over your holiday expectations and ask Jesus to help you line them up with His expectations for you.

**CHRISTMAS WEEK**

**December 23-29**

**Reading Plan**

Day 1-

READ: [**Luke 2:1-21**](https://biblehub.com/esv/luke/2.htm); [**2 Corinthians 1:20**](https://biblehub.com/esv/2_corinthians/1.htm)

REFLECT: Jesus is born! God always had a plan to rescue us from the sin and death of this world, and Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, the Savior of our hearts. In Him God fulfills every promise.

PRACTICE: Sing your favorite Christmas hymn with eyes closed, in full praise to the Father and the Son.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

REFLECT: From ancient times, the church prayed the seven “O Antiphons” prayers during the season leading up to advent. Each prayer begins with a name of Jesus and reveals a promised fulfilled. Each day of this week, read and reflect on one or two of these ancient prayers. (source: “[Advent in Church and Cultural Tradition](https://www.crosswalk.com/special-coverage/christmas-and-advent/advent-in-church-and-cultural-tradition-11623364.html)”)

PRAY: *O Wisdom, O holy word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care: Come and show your people the way to salvation.*

Day 2-

READ: [**Exodus 3:1-12**](https://biblehub.com/esv/exodus/3.htm)

REFLECT: From ancient times, the church prayed the “O Antiphons” prayers during the season leading up to advent. Each prayer begins with a name of Jesus and reveals a promised fulfilled. Each day of this week, read and reflect on one of these ancient prayers.

PRAY: *O Sacred Lord of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain: Come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.*

*O Flower of Jesse’s stem, you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples; rulers stand silent in your presence; the nations bow down in worship before you: Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid.*

Day 3-

READ: [**Exodus 12:40-42**](https://biblehub.com/esv/exodus/12.htm)

REFLECT: From ancient times, the church prayed the “O Antiphons” prayers during the season leading up to advent. Each prayer begins with a name of Jesus and reveals a promised fulfilled. Each day of this week, read and reflect on one of these ancient prayers.

PRAY: *O Key of David, O royal power of Israel, controlling at your will the gate of heaven: come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and lead your captive people into freedom.*

Day 4-

READ: [**John 1:1-18**](https://biblehub.com/esv/john/1.htm)

REFLECT: From ancient times, the church prayed the “O Antiphons” prayers during the season leading up to advent. Each prayer begins with a name of Jesus and reveals a promised fulfilled. Each day of this week, read and reflect on one of these ancient prayers.

PRAY: *O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: Come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.*

*O Ruler of all the nations, the only joy of every human heart, O keystone of the might arch of humankind: Come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust.*

Day 5-

READ: [**Joshua 1:9**](https://biblehub.com/esv/joshua/1.htm); [**Matthew 1:21-23**](https://biblehub.com/niv/matthew/1.htm)**;** [**Matthew 28:20**](https://biblehub.com/esv/matthew/28.htm)

REFLECT: From ancient times, the church prayed the “O Antiphons” prayers during the season leading up to advent. Each prayer begins with a name of Jesus and reveals a promised fulfilled. Each day of this week, read and reflect on one of these ancient prayers.

PRAY: *O Emmanuel, ruler and lawgiver, desire of nations, savior of all people: Come and set us free, Lord our God.*