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uniting to change society



Profile of a King

Advent reflections on the birth of Jesus

We spend so much time making judgments and placing people in boxes – family, background, money, influence or nationality.

The word 'profiling' has become part of our language as we use human standards to assess people, inside and out. But the birth of Jesus breaks all these divides and

instead speaks of welcome – to the poor, the outcast, the forgotten, the judged – even welcome to us.

These daily devotionals will look at different aspects of Jesus' birth and seek to challenge our stereotypes but also encourage us in our adoption as sons and daughters of Christ.

Prayer guide is written by Andy Freeman. Andy works for 24-7 Prayer, an organisation which believes in prayer, mission and justice.

For more information please see www.24-7prayer.com

Sun 29th Nov Word	Mon 30th Nov Family
Read: John 1:1-14 Reflect: There at the beginning of time, yet born as a baby. It's hard to think of a greater contrast than that. Yet the Bible reflects a journey of God desiring to be present – in a garden, in a burning bush, in a tent and a temple and now in a human baby. Pray: Consider this miracle and thank Him. How does it affect your view of humanity around you?	Read: Ephesians 3:14-19 Reflect: God's journey of being present with us culminates in this incredible invitation. God the family, three in one, is the source of our family name – He makes family for us – and He invites us all into this family of love. We are adopted sons and daughters of Christ, invited into the 'fullness of God'. Pray: To God as Father this morning. How do you feel being part of His family? Pray for those who are without family today.
Tue 1st Dec Long-awaited	Wed 2nd Dec Least
Read: Isaiah 9:2-7 Reflect: A royal birth, prophesied through generations, awaited by a nation. Yet we know the events we're about to celebrate were missed and misunderstood – both then and today. A hidden birth, and an unglamorous king characterised the ministry that Jesus was to have, welcoming the outcasts, the hidden and the hopeless. Pray: That we wouldn't allow our expectations to make us miss God at work today. How are we welcoming the stranger or clothing the naked? (Matt 25:35).	Read: Micah 5:2-4 Reflect: Jesus was born amongst the smallest clan, the least of the tribes. Bethlehem was insignificant and unimportant, but as with David it became a birthplace of a king. Nationality and national pride is growing again in its influence and importance in our world today. Yet Christ was born in the least, and born for the least. Pray: For the nations of the world, for humble leaders and for compassion and kindness.
Thurs 3rd Dec Broken Lines	Fri 4th Dec Abraham & Isaac
Read: Matthew 1:1-17 Reflect: Take a look at the genealogy of Jesus. Many of his forefathers are liars, thieves, adulterers, even murderers. Jesus' family wasn't pretty. Jesus wasn't made or unmade by the mistakes of those past. The redeemer of humanity had no problem with crooked paths or broken lines – He embraced humanity in all its flaws and fullness and loves us still. Pray: For yourself and your heart. Let go of your flaws and failures and give them to Jesus.	Read: Genesis 22:1-19 Reflect: Jesus' family line begins with Abraham and Isaac, yet even here we have a knife-edge moment. Abraham, 'man of faith' had to endure the wait for a son, then be prepared to face the moment of sacrifice. Yet God's promise of his descendants takes on a new significance when you consider Jesus. Pray: About those promises God has made you, but that you need to wait for or that you feel are under threat.

Sat 5th Dec David	Sun 6th Dec Solomon
Read: Psalm 51 Reflect: Much is made of Jesus' descent from David, yet it's through Solomon that the line continues. In Psalm 51, David repents of his affair with Bathsheeba which resulted in murder and the death of a child, yet also led to Solomon's birth. We're often quick to throw out people or situations due to mistakes, yet God's grace acts differently. Pray: For people you know you've judged this week. Forgive them if you can and pray for God's grace to be at work.	Read: 2 Chronicles 1:6-10 Reflect: You may remember that Solomon got an incredible offer from God. Ask for anything. His ask was for wisdom and the Book of Proverbs was one of the outcomes. Solomon teaches us that along with the privileges of power and opportunity come great burdens – to choose well, to act in the right way. The baby King Jesus shows us that power doesn't always have to be used – sometimes the wise thing is to give it away. Pray: Ask God for wisdom in your life today.
Mon 7th Dec Ruth	Tue 8th Dec Hezekiah
Read: Ruth 1:3-18 Reflect: Jesus' line isn't even all about Israel. Here is Ruth, a Moabit, once an enemy of Israel, yet an Old Testament picture of faithfulness and of family. Ruth's love for Naomi shows us that the Kingdom of God isn't decided by birth or by blood. Pray: For enemies, whether personal or national. Pray that God would shower His love and blessing on them.	Read: 2 Kings 18:5-7 Reflect: A good king in the line of Jesus. I love the way the writer of Kings acknowledges Hezekiah's contribution, not by political deeds or military victories but by his steadfastness and loyalty. Hezekiah 'held fast', often in the face of ridicule and of opposition – at a time when many sought to destroy Israel. Pray: For a friend who needs to persevere today. Pray for faithfulness, strength and the ability to hold fast to God.
Wed 9th Dec Exile	Thu 10th Dec Mary
Read: Psalm 137 Reflect: The line of Jesus is punctuated by exile. Generations forced to live in a foreign land. Psalm 137 expressed all the doubt and anger that the Jews felt and in the end spills over in bloodthirstiness. Yet even in this moment, Jesus' line continues and God is able to restore and redeem. Pray: For the displaced, for the refugee and for the asylum seeker. Pray for those around you, and in other nations today.	Read: Luke 1:26-38 Reflect: Mary, mother of Jesus. The statement itself is incredible. A teenage virgin, addressed by angels, called to be the mother of Christ, called to risk everything for God's plan. Luke's account of events ends with Mary's simple obedience; 'may it be to me as you have said'. Pray: For the strength to be obedient, to follow God's call on your life, whatever the cost.
Fri 11th Dec Choosing the poor	Sat 12th Dec Joseph
Read: Luke 1:46-56 Reflect: The choice of Mary to be the mother of Christ led her to realise, in the power of the Spirit, that something incredible was being expressed by God himself. Blessing for Mary, but also for the generations to come, particularly for the poor and the hungry whom she represented. Pray: Through Mary's song, how does it make you feel? Where does it lead you in your prayers today?	Read: Matthew 1:18-24 Reflect: The virgin pregnancy gave Joseph some pretty tough decisions and it's interesting to note that honouring Mary always seemed to be his motivation. Again, Joseph was obedient when God called him to be – for him in the face of disgrace. Joseph is steadfastly obedient to God and faithful to Mary. Pray: A simple prayer of obedience. I am here God, I am yours.
Sun 13th Dec Zechariah	Mon 14th Dec Elizabeth
Read: Luke 1:5-22 Reflect: Not everyone in this Advent story showed simple obedience. Zechariah's very human response was to laugh – my wife pregnant? No way. He pays a price for not believing the angel – silence until the birth. The funny thing though is that this consequence brings belief – Zechariah insists on the name – John. Pray: Think about when you've faced God's consequences for your actions. How do you feel? What faith is God calling out of you?	Read: Luke 1:23-25 Reflect: Elizabeth is overjoyed at being a mum. To her, this is a moment of love from God, and from vindication – from her disgrace, as she sees it, at being barren. There are many people around us today who feel disgrace – for who they are, or who they're not – maybe for things they've done. Our God loves to redeem, to vindicate, to restore. Pray: Reflect on the restoration God has done in your life. Pray for those around you who feel 'disgrace'.

Tue 15th Dec Belief	Wed 16th Dec John
Read: Luke 1:39-45 Reflect: Elizabeth and Mary meet, babies leap in wombs, God's spirit is in the room. Elizabeth declares the wonder of the baby Mary carries, but also commends Mary's belief – Mary has accepted what God is doing in her and through her. What unbelievable miracles is God doing this Advent? What is he asking you to believe in? Pray: The words of Elizabeth; that we will be able to believe what God is doing in us.	Read: Mark 1:1-8 Reflect: John wasn't called to be the Message, his job was to prepare the way. I wonder whether John struggled at any time with this. He wasn't the point, but the man coming after him was. Yet John had an incredible impact, crowds gathered, many were baptised. John, however, was always humble, knowing his task. Pray: For the humility of John. Our call is always to point to Jesus.
Thur 17th Dec Desert	Fri 18th Dec Human
Read: Isaiah 40:1-5 Reflect: Israel had been in a desert for 400 years. No prophecy, no word from God. Then John came. Isaiah prophesied the role John would play – ushering in the baby King, the God-man Jesus. It seems fitting then, that John's voice was in the desert, that's where Israel was, lost and wandering, needing their shepherd. Pray: About your deserts today. Where do you need a straight path, a voice calling?	Read: Mark 1:9-11 Reflect: Have you ever considered why Jesus was baptised? John's baptism was for the forgiveness of sins, yet Jesus had no sin. Even here, Jesus declares His humanity, and that He is with us. In a few days we celebrate His birth, as a baby, human, needing to learn, to be cared for and to be nurtured. God became flesh. Pray: Spend some time simply contemplating the humanity of Jesus. How can this be?
Sat 19th Dec Unattractive	Sun 20th Dec Contentment
Read: Isaiah 53:1-3 Reflect: Images and paintings of Jesus often say a lot about those who've made them: blond hair, white skin, shining in appearance. It seems Jesus was a little different, nothing out of the ordinary according to Isaiah. Pray: Ask Jesus honestly what preconceptions you have about Him, or about yourself, or what experiences you project onto Him. Ask Him to challenge you today.	Read: Luke 4:22-30 Reflect: Isn't this Joseph's son? You can almost hear the snide voices. Who is this guy? His dad only works with wood, what's he doing here? Even 30 years on, at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus was still wrongly judged – still His birth and blood were reasons for exclusion. Pray: Jesus understands the walk of those wrongly judged and prejudiced. Spend time with Him today and ask Him to speak to you about an injustice which you should pray about and act on.
Mon 21st Dec Occupation	Tue 22nd Dec Magi
Read: Luke 2:1-3 Reflect: Jesus was born into a land under military occupation. The census was about power and control for the Romans, and had nothing to do with citizenship for the Jews having to travel. The difficult journey for Mary must have been compounded by the knowledge that the Romans were making this all happen. Pray: For those who wake this morning in countries occupied by foreign armies. Pray for their safety, pray for peace.	Read: Matthew 2:1-12 Reflect: Kings from the east travel to see Jesus. These guys may have been astrologers and certainly weren't local. They brought extraordinary presents, prophetic in nature – pointing to His kingship and His death. Even here, Jesus' coming sacrifice pervades the celebration of birth. Pray: About this King, born to die for us. How do you feel about sacrifice and suffering? What questions do you have for God? Ask them now.
Wed 23rd Dec Shepherds	Thu 24th Dec Birth
Read: Luke 2:8-20 Reflect: This was no celebrity birth, no film-shoot from 'Hello' Magazine, no entourage to attend. For Jesus, the audience is humble shepherds, the profession of David. Summoned by a choir of angels, these unlikely witnesses to the birth of the Messiah are filled with joy and praises to God. Pray: Thank God for the unlikely family of Jesus – where He welcomes the unlikely and excluded. Pray for those in your community who feel that they don't fit in.	Read: Luke 2:4-7 Reflect: Take some time and read and imagine the events of Jesus' birth, which will be celebrated around the world on Christmas Day. Imagine the conditions of the birth, the unremarkable surroundings, the remarkable visitors and story. The gospel writers shared that Mary treasured all the things she saw. Pray: Spend some time reflecting on the events of Christmas. Treasure who Jesus is and who He is to you.