

westhillschurch

12

Days of Christmas  
Challenge



## Merry Christmas WestHills Church!

You are holding **THE 12 Days of Christmas Challenge**. In it you will find a challenge to accomplish each day of the 12 days preceding Christmas. The challenge is simple, do them all. Each day you will find a **Challenge, A Passage to Read** (Scripture connecting to this Christmas Season), **A Thought to Consider** (a short devotional written by one of our pastors, elders or deacons), and **A Prayer to Pray** (feel free to pray more than what is written).

You can take these on as a family or as an individual. You will find some challenges easier than others. I look forward to hearing from you about your experience. In fact, please share updates on the WestHills Church FaceBook page. I know many of you will post on Instagram and Twitter but let's try and post to the church's FaceBook page too.

I know this season is busy and hectic and you will have to make choices and changes to accomplish these 12 challenges. Good. We need to be reminded of what this season is all about. We need to fix our gaze on Him. This is not about being legalistic, rather taking time daily to be mindful of who Christ is and what He has accomplished for all of us!

Here We Go!



Tyler Brown

# On the 1<sup>st</sup> Day of Christmas

## DECEMBER 13

### Challenge #1

Sometimes we need little reminders to help us do what we ought to do. Pray for 3 people by name who are lost. Designate (make or buy) and hang an ornament that reminds you to pray for each person.

### A Passage to Read

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. 1 Timothy 1:15-17

### A Thought to Consider

I often say that I had a mechanical bypass when I was five. That's my way of saying I have limited mechanical skills. So, when I have to fix something around the house, I usually go immediately to YouTube and watch someone else do the job. It helps me to see how the task can be accomplished. If the person on the video can do it then there is a good possibility I might be able to do it also. In 1 Timothy 1:15-17, the Apostle Paul basically says that if the Gospel can change his life then it can change anybody's. There is no one too far from the grace of God. Perhaps, you have written someone off as being too far away from God. Maybe you have given up praying for them. Remember, Paul was a Christian killer. He literally sought to rid the world of the name of Jesus. However, all of that changed on the road to Damascus. This Christmas, why don't you pray that God would break into that person's life just like he did in Paul's.

### A Prayer to Pray

Father, I pray for those who are far from You. I ask that You give them a Damascus Road experience. Open their eyes and their heart to your Gospel. Amen.

*Written by Marty McLain, WestHills Church Teaching Pastor*

# On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Day of Christmas

## DECEMBER 14

### Challenge #2

People love to get hand-written personalized notes because they show an extra measure of time and thought. Send a note of encouragement by postal mail to someone whom God brings to mind this holiday season.

### A Passage to Read

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. Galatians 4:4-5

### A Thought to Consider

We have all heard the saying “his time had come”, usually in reference to someone passing away. In this verse however, Paul is using it in the completely opposite way. He is speaking of God’s eternal plan to redeem (buy back) His entire creation from the curse of sin and death. John tells us in his Gospel that “The Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory”. If you want to know what someone really loves, you just have to look at where they spend their time and money. God “spent” His son for us and because He stepped out of eternity and into time, we now can step out of time and into eternity when our time comes. There is no greater gift that God could have given us.

### A Prayer to Pray

Father, thank You for sending Your son at the perfect time. Jesus, thank You loving us so much that You would come and dwell with us. Holy Spirit, open our eyes to the glory of who Jesus is and what he has done so that our lives would be changed by Your power into people who live with eternity in mind. Amen.

*Written by Curt Kicklighter, WestHills Church Elder*

# On the *3rd* Day of Christmas

## DECEMBER 15

### Challenge #3

God's Word should be a BIG part of our Christmas tradition. Read Matthew 1:18-2:12 aloud as a family.

### A Passage to Read

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. 1 Timothy 1:15-17

### A Thought to Consider

Growing up, Christmas was always about Santa and gifts. In my non-Christian family, what we wanted and what we received were the most important things on our minds. No mention was ever made about Jesus, the manger, or Bethlehem. As a senior in high school, I heard the Gospel for the first time and chose Christ and the forgiveness He brings. Christmas, as well as my entire life, was forever changed. My views, motives, goals, words, and actions were radically different because of Jesus. This decision opened a whole new world to me. It was like living in a dark room for eighteen years, and suddenly, someone brought me into the light. Christmas is not only a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus; it is a time to celebrate the mercy, love, and forgiveness he gives to those who call on Him. Through the gift of Jesus, we have access to His power over sin, His life-change, and His redemption. Not only does He save us, He changes us. As the Christmas season is in full swing, let's remember Jesus and his gift of salvation from our sins and the change He continues to work in us. Let's celebrate that!

### A Prayer to Pray

Father, Thank You for Your Son. Thank You for the change that He brings to the world and the change He brings to me as I seek Him. Continue to work in me to help me love You with everything that I am and love others the way You've commanded. Amen.

*Written by Alan Vincent, WestHills Church Deacon*

# On the 4<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas

## DECEMBER 16

### Challenge #4

Sometimes ministering to family is more awkward than strangers. Call an out of town family member and let them know you prayed for them. Don't forget to pray for them first!

### A Passage to Read

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. 3 A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." 6 A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. 9 Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" 10 Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.

11 He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.. Isaiah 40:1-11

### A Thought to Consider

Isaiah 40:1-11 is powerful. The most comforting word ever spoken came tenderly from our God when he said; "her warfare is ended, that here iniquity is pardoned", comforting words flowing freely from grace, yet a costly price was paid when He said: "she has received from the LORD'S hand double for all her sins." Who received it? Jesus, the God Man bore the guilt of the world. The Infinitely Holy for the finite sinner, the Shepard for the sheep. Then "A voice cries:" "...prepare the way of the LORD". We see God at work in the hearts of his people, making ways straight in the desert of our lives, lifting hearts of despair, making proud thoughts low, making level, unfair hearts, making smooth the rough places of life, preparing a repentant heart to see the Glory of God. Given eyes to see the glory of the Lord, we see clearly the futility of the pursuits of life without God. God said: "All flesh is grass and all it beauty is like flowers of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades but the word of our God will stand forever." This Christmas Season let us herald the good news of the gospel, the mighty work of the spirit and the steadfastness of the word of God. "Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:10-11). God is so good to us.

### A Prayer to Pray

Father, let me consider your grace. Let me consider the free gift of your salvation. Help me to understand that while I deserved death, you gave me life. Not only did you give me life, but you did so by sacrificing your own Son. Help me to grasp what that means. Amen.

*Written by Stevie Walker, WestHills Church Elder*

# On the 5<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas

## DECEMBER 17

### Challenge #5

There are those who need our help. As we celebrate God's free gift let us follow His example. Give a gift to a family in need at WestHills. See details below.

### A Passage to Read

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,. Philippians 2:8-10

### A Thought to Consider

This time of year we wrestle with the wants and needs in our lives. Sure, I want this and that, but do we ever ask ourselves, "what do others need?" Around Christmas each year, our family purposefully gets dinner somewhere with a drive thru. We do this so we can pay for the person behind us. Having done that, our kids ask us from time to time, "when are we going to buy someone's food again?" What a challenge from a 6, a 5, and a 3 year old. This simple act gives my wife and me a wonderful opportunity to teach our children about giving. This Christmas, will you ask God for an opportunity to show the love of Jesus to someone through the act of giving? Your gift to someone might meet a momentary need, but it may open the door to share the gift of salvation, which is everlasting. The day is coming when every knee will bow, so let us show people the love of Christ through the spiritual act of giving. You've got this!

### A Prayer to Pray

Father, You have done so much for us. Thank You for all that You have provided in our lives and for the gift of Your Son. This Christmas would You put an opportunity in front of me to help someone who is in need. I love You Jesus and it is in Your name I pray. Amen.

*Written by Aaron Hefty, WestHills Church Student Pastor*

### Help a Family:

11 year old boy's clothes (size 14, shoe size 5.5)

18 month old boy's clothes (size 2T-3T, shoe size 6, diaper size 4-5)

Teenage girl (shirts S/M, stretch/skinny jeans size 4/5, dress size S/M, shoe size 8)

Teenage girl (shirts M/L, stretch/skinny jeans size 8/9, shoe size 9)

Mom (Shirts S/M, Jeans size 4/5, Shoe size 7-8)

If you could wrap these gifts and leave at church that would be best. Age appropriate toys for little ones would be great. Gift cards from grocery store, Wal-Mart would also be helpful. Place post it note on wrapped gift so we know who the gift is for.

# On the 6<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas

## DECEMBER 18

### Challenge #6

Taking time to read God's Word is a must. Read Luke 1:26-56 out loud as a family.

### A Passage to Read

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed"

Luke 1:46-48

### A Thought to Consider

In 2010, comedian Harris Wittells coined the phrase "humblebrag" to describe people's use of false humility as a way to brag about something without seeming to, well, brag. Here are some examples of humblebragging:

*"I am so tired of steaming vegetables for Ben. Is it weird he loves eating vegetables so much?"*

*"We are officially broke. Who knew having a nationally ranked junior golfer was so expensive?"*

*"I can't believe I misplaced the papers I need to sign for John to get into the gifted program. I'm so disorganized!"*

*"Just got visited by the angel Gabriel telling me I will be the mother of Jesus, the promised Messiah. Guess it's time to start making some new clothes... #momproblems"*

I'm pretty sure that Mary didn't have Facebook, but even if she did, she probably would not have posted anything close to a humblebrag. Having read the account of Gabriel's visit to Mary and her reaction (after the initial fear and questions) it's clear that Mary was incredibly humble. She recognized the honor it was to bring the Messiah into the world, but she didn't allow that to go to her head. Perhaps this is one of the reasons God chose her instead of someone else. Proverbs 3:34 says, "Toward the scornful he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor." Yet as great as Mary's humility was, it was just a sliver of the humility that Jesus exemplified. He left his Father in heaven, came to *earth as a man, and died a humiliating death to pay for our sins.*

### A Prayer to Pray

Father, I want my soul to magnify You! Help me recognize any source of pride or arrogance in my life and be rid of it. May I humbly serve You in whatever capacity You lead me. Thank You for sending Jesus to humbly die for my sins so that I can be reconciled to You. Amen.

*Written by Dan Bartram, WestHills Church Elder*



# *On the 7<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas*

## **DECEMBER 19**

### **Challenge #7**

Invite a friend, co-worker, neighbor, or fellow church member out for a cup of coffee or a meal.

### **A Passage to Read**

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

### **A Thought to Consider**

One day when Jay was in preschool, he came into our home office where I was busy preparing for classes the next day. He asked me if I would play with him. Although I really didn't want to stop what I was doing, I thought it best to take some time to play with him. I asked him what he wanted to play. He stated, "Let's run and race each other." In the middle of running our first race, he looked up at me and said, "Daddy, I love you!" Wow! Those words penetrated my heart and made me realize how much it meant to him that I spend time with him. Surely, one of the greatest presents you can give someone is your presence. Amongst the busyness of the holiday season, make time to give the gift of your presence to someone. The Lord did so when He became flesh and dwelt among us, so we could see, experience, and know His glory, grace, and love firsthand.

### **A Prayer to Pray**

Lord, in the midst of the busyness of the Christmas season, help me to make sure I make a priority of spending time with you and those you have placed around me. Amen.

*Written by Duane Yoder, WestHills Church Elder*

# On the 8<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas

## DECEMBER 20

### Challenge #8

Most people will not visit a church until they are invited. Invite THREE people to the WestHills Church Christmas Eve service.

### A Passage to Read

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. John 3:16-18

### A Thought to Consider

Every weekend while watching football we see banners in the end zone displaying John 3:16. We think “what an awesome evangelism tool,” and as we enter this Christmas week the message is magnified and the opportunities abound. My mind reflects on the glorious angel’s appearing and announcement (Luke 2:10-11). As the glory of the Lord shone, we are to be “the Light” declaring the Gospel. The angel declared, “I bring good news.” We need to be deliberate about our declaration of John 3:16. The angel emphasized “news... that will be for all people.” John says four times it is for the world! The angel declared “a savior (Hebrew) who is Christ (Greek)”. A word is given in multiple languages for the world. The apostle John declares it is through God’s son “that the world might be saved.” Let us take advantage of the opportunity to declare the Good News of Christmas. God has entrusted us with the same message as given to the angel. Let us be bold in declaring the message, not just a banner, but in our light, life and words. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

### A Prayer to Pray

Father, forgive our failure and weakness in declaring Your life changing message of salvation. We realize that is the message of Christmas and we ask for strength to declare it as loud as our Christmas celebration.

*Written by Wally Sheats, WestHills Church Elder*

*On the 9<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas*

## DECEMBER 21

### **Challenge #9**

The peace the world is desperately in need of comes from God. Purchase and then give someone a Bible, God's word.

### **A Passage to Read**

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:4-7

### **A Thought to Consider**

Definition of Anxious: means full of mental distress or uneasiness because of fear of danger or misfortune, greatly worried.

That describes a lot of us, especially those last two words. I know it describes me sometimes. I get overwhelmed with things that happen in my life. My family would tell you different because I don't show worry or anxiety easily, but I do get anxious. God's Word tells us not to be anxious for anything. His Word tells us to rejoice always. You might be asking, "How can I rejoice when my world is upside down and I have no idea what's going on in my life?" I don't know, but God knows. This season is about Jesus' coming. You see God didn't just send His Son here to die for our sins. He came so that we might have life and have it more abundantly. That's why Paul tells us in Philippians to take every problem and situation to Him with thanksgiving and present our requests to God and his peace that surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. This season we can celebrate the salvation He brought but also the life changing peace that comes from Him as well!

### **A Prayer to Pray**

Dear Lord, I pray that we will learn to take everything to You and leave it with You. Help us to rejoice in You and give thanks even when it's hard. Teach us how to listen, trust, obey, follow and surrender to Your will and Your Word. In Jesus' name Amen.

*Written by Greg Walker, WestHills Church Deacon*

# On the 10<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas

## DECEMBER 22

### Challenge #10

Give a gift to someone you don't know. Ideas: Place quarters in laundromat for people to discover, buy groceries for the person in front of you, hand random person some cash, take a neighbor you've never met a wreath, bring coloring books and crayons to doctor's office, take cookies to firemen or police officers...

### A Passage to Read

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. Isaiah 9:6-7

### A Thought to Consider

The highly anticipated DC Comics movie "Justice League" premiered the week before Thanksgiving this year. One of the posters promoting the movie contains an image of the super heroes surrounding the words "You Can't Save the World Alone". Each hero has an ability that is rare and unique and we are told that without them all hope for humanity is lost. But as anticipated as the movie was, the birth of a baby, predicted a little over 500 years before it happened was the most anticipated event in all of history. The terms Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace might sound similar to terms used to describe our fictional heroes, but fortunately for mankind they describe our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And unlike the heroes in the movie, He can and has saved the world alone. Without Him all hope is truly lost, but because of Him we have the assurance that He loves us and that one day we will get to spend all eternity with Him.

### A Prayer to Pray

Father, help me to grasp the significance of who Jesus is and what it means to know Him as Savior. Help me to worship Him this season as I consider what His coming meant for the world. Amen.

*Written by Leslie Sexton, WestHills Church Elder*

# On the 11<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas

## DECEMBER 23

### Challenge #11

Give to a missions organization. Suggestions: International Mission Board, Safe Refuge International, The Pantry, Fullerville Mission, Douglas County Pregnancy Resource Center.

### A Passage to Read

And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 1 John 5:11

### A Thought to Consider

The old grainy tube TV had worn out its welcome. It was time. Ten years ago this month I had my eye on a new 42 inch rear projection high definition wide screen. I had researched. I had saved. I had waited until it was on sale. It was time! But then, at a worship leading seminar, a friend challenged me to give sacrificially to a mission organization that was drilling “Jesus Wells” to provide fresh drinking water in a remote Asian village. At the seminar, I was learning that worship was so much more than playing guitar and singing songs. It means giving my very life – a living sacrifice, as Paul says in Romans 12:1. My time, my energy, my resources... everything I have on the altar to the God who gave it all to me in the first place? (...even that shiny new TV??) Yep. As I considered all that God had given me, I was moved with compassion for those who did not even have a regular source of clean water. So, my purchase would have to wait. The money I had been saving for a TV instead bought a well that I’ll never even see. And it was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. My heart explodes with joy every time I think about that Jesus well. There are so many tangible ways to worship through giving... how will you “give yourself away” this Christmas?

### A Prayer to Pray

Father, help me hold things with an open hand. Help me to be willing to give as You guide and instruct, no matter the cost. Instruct me this season on how to give and to whom. Help me to be obedient. Amen.

*Written by Jeff Rakestraw, WestHills Church Elder*

# On the 12<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas

## DECEMBER 24

### Challenge #12

A simple challenge, but an important one.. Attend a WestHills Church Christmas Eve Service (11am or 5pm). If you are out of town, attend a Christmas Eve Service where you are.

### A Passage to Read

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. 4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:3-7

### A Thought to Consider

While attending seminary in Fort Worth I decided (Shelbie decided) that I should look for a part time job. I applied to be a sales associate at Eddie Bauer in the local mall. The job interview took place in the Food Court with the manager in front of an Orange Julius. "So Tyler, What do you bring to the table? What are you able to do to help our store and our company?" I managed to come up with a few things and actually got the job. This passage got me thinking.. If you can imagine an interview with God in front of a Chick-fil-A (more godly than an Orange Julius) and He asked you, "so Joe, what do you bring to the table?" I think if we gaze across that mall table with the gum stuck up under it and actually consider the perfection, holiness, and righteousness of the Lord, we might realize that we bring nothing to the table. We've got nothing but sin, unrighteousness and rebellion. That's the power of God's gift in Jesus Christ. His grace, His mercy is why we are heirs, we are his children, we can be confident of eternal life.

### A Prayer to Pray

Father, help me this season consider Your grace. That while I sinned against You-- You saved me. While I deserve death You gave me life. Help me to consider what Christmas is really all about. Thank You God for loving me.

*Written by Tyler Brown, WestHills Church Senior Pastor*

Thanks for taking part in THE 12 Days of Christmas Challenge! On behalf of the Elders and Deacons at WestHills Church, we pray that each of you will have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We want to thank you for your faithfulness to our Lord's work through WestHills and to say we are excited about what God has planned for us in 2018 as we share His love with others.

*Hank Harper, WestHills Church Elder*

Merry Christmas

2017

