

LIFEWORDS

Lifewords Prayer, December 2019

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." ... Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

Luke 2:10-11,13-14 NIV

Christmas can so often be about the things that draw the eye and consume the mind. From the lights and the busyness, to the big-budget Christmas adverts and present-buying sales, to the school nativities and work parties. There is so much that seeks to grab our attention and fix our gaze.

In this passage from Luke a similar thing is happening: the angels arrive on the scene and are pretty hard to miss. The angel declares "good news" and "great joy for all the people" to a backdrop of "the heavenly host" – they put on quite a show for the shepherds! But in contrast to what we so often face in the run-up to Christmas, the angels are getting the shepherds attention by proclaiming something that lasts, something that is deeper: the joy and peace that comes with the good news of Jesus Christ.

While Christmas comes and goes; while presents are advertised, bought, unwrapped and often forgotten, Jesus brings joy and peace that is ever-lasting, all-encompassing, and that is everything we need for Christmas and beyond. This Christmas-time as we seek to be and share good news, "may the God of hope fill [us] with all joy and peace as [we] trust in him, so that [we] may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit," (Rom 15:13).

Happy Christmas! Welcome to the December edition of Lifewords Prayer. This month we have stories from people sharing *Meet the Cast*, news from around the world, an update from Kenya, and a look back at some of the stories we've shared this year. Please join us as we pray.

1-7 December

Meet the Cast

This Christmas we have brought back our *Meet the Cast* booklet and people have been ordering it to use with children, schools, and at family services. Please pray for young people around the UK who are engaging with the nativity story, and for those who are sharing good news with them this Christmas.

- Rev Jeff Hughes from Birkenhead has ordered *Meet the Cast* to use at a number of Christmas events aimed at children. These include presentations to 12 classes at three different schools, and also a special needs school, children attending a street nativity, a Santa's grotto event, and a stay and play group. Give thanks for churches all over the UK who are reaching out to young people in their communities this Christmas.
- Godmanchester Baptist Church is making stations for each character from *Meet the Cast* and is inviting all the local primary schools along. Daniel Beckett from the church said: "I am going to use the booklets in primary schools as part of a prayer and reflective space, to explain the characters in the nativity story." Praise God for creative initiatives like this. Pray for Godmanchester Baptist Church, that they would see lots of children and families engaging with the Christmas story.
- Children's and Youth worker, Sam Dallimore, from Bournemouth Community Church ordered *Meet the Cast* for a Santa's grotto at the church in December. "We want to give out bags for all the children coming. As part of this bag we wanted to give them something of the Christmas Story. *Meet the Cast* is brilliantly put together and I thought this could be perfect to give out to the families that will be coming into our building over the Christmas period." They are hoping to welcome 1,500 people to the grotto. Please pray that this event would be a success and that lots of people who don't ordinarily come to church would go along.

Visit www.lifewords.global to browse and order Christmas resources. The last day for ordering in time for delivery before Christmas is 16 December.

8-14 December

Stories from around the world

All over the world Lifewords supporters are ordering our Bible resources and sharing good news. Here are just three stories of God's Word at work:

- Valéria Moura from Portugal uses Bible resources with people she meets: "I give them everywhere I go," she says, "bus, supermarket, taxis, restaurants, shopping centres. Sometimes I go to a place, like a coffee shop, just to give the booklets, I love to spread the word of God everywhere I go." In France, Liliana Kostrzewa says: "I'm going to spread the little books among my friends that have never asked themselves life questions or that are searching for answers and connection with the spiritual world." Give thanks for people like Valéria and Liliana who share the Bible one-to-one with their friends and the people they meet. Pray for conversations and ways-in to talk about the Bible.
- In Sweden Per-Olof Soderkvist shares the Bible with immigrants from Iran and Afghanistan living in Sweden. "Many of them are waiting to be expelled from Sweden back to Afghanistan," he says. Give thanks for the Lifewords range of resources in other languages. Pray for those communicating the gospel to people who don't speak their language. Ask for patience and compassion, and that the words of the Bible would speak clearly to those that read them.

- In Brazil, Carlos Mendes is part of a missionary group that reaches out to widows, orphans, the homeless and those with mental health issues. Give thanks for the Bible's comfort, peace and healing. Pray for Carlos and others like him who are ministering to the marginalised and broken. Pray for compassion, wisdom and insight as they seek to help and bring hope.

15-21 December

Sharing Bible booklets in Kenya

In the month of October, the Lifewords team in Kenya distributed nearly 18,000 Bible resources through partnerships with churches and organisations. Clara Ngobolia shares with us some of the ways that supporters are using Lifewords resources:

- "Sister Esther and Sister Virginia use Lifewords Bible resources with patients in hospitals across Nairobi. They offer compassionate care to the patients, and counselling, comfort and encouragement to the bereaved. They use *Why Me*, *Inspiring Prayer*, and *Who Cares About Me*." Give thanks for people all over the world who minister to the sick and vulnerable, sharing good news and hope with them. Pray for guidance and discernment as they seek to uplift and speak truth and love into their lives.
- "We have continued ministering to prison inmates, and through this initiative, many of them are finding hope as we share the Bible's life words. Through our outreach to inmates, they have grown in respect and honesty. Also, chaplains in correctional centres have partnered with us and are finding our resources very helpful as they help prisoners become spiritually rehabilitated." Praise God for our ongoing ministry in Kenya's prisons and for the partnerships that have been established. Pray for inmates, that God's light would shine in their lives and show them forgiveness and a new way of living.
- "Students both in primary and high school levels have been studying for their national examinations that usher them to high school and college respectively. To encourage these candidates, we shared *Don't Be Afraid* with them. One student told us: 'I was feeling like I was facing danger but after reading the message of *Don't Be Afraid*, I am assured of God's presence with me and now I can face my exams without fear.'" Praise God for the way the Bible offers comfort and a new perspective. Pray for these students that they would find help and hope in the Bible, and that they would know that God is with them.

22-28 December

As we reach Christmas week, please join us as we look back at some of the stories from *Interact* magazine this year. Thank you for your ongoing support and prayers for Lifewords ministry.

- At the beginning of the year we shared with you about Liberté Harris who is one of the chaplains at HMP Pentonville in London. She uses Lifewords resources with the male inmates at the prison – helping them discover God's forgiveness and hope. "I can't express just how much one of these small booklets means to the inmates," she said. "When they are in hopeless situations, these words of hope help get them through each passing hour." Praise God for Liberté and other chaplains who support people all over the world. Pray for them as they listen and offer help to those they work with. Pray that God would give them compassion, wisdom and guidance for the lost, lonely and vulnerable.

- In the summer we talked about the Ninefold Path, and how groups all over the world are using it to explore the beatitudes. In Australia, an Aboriginal community in Port Augusta, were discovering a Jesus-centred practice that reflected their own spirituality. “The Ninefold Path helps us see Jesus in a new light,” says Auntie Denise, one of the Christian leaders of the community. “Where Christianity arrived to *tell* us the ‘correct’ thing to think, the Ninefold Path helps us to *see* the way Jesus wants us to live. For us Aboriginals, that’s a much more powerful understanding of faith and practice.” Give thanks for how NINE BEATS and the Ninefold Path helps us read the Bible in a new way. Pray for groups who are using the resource, that God would help them discover new things and continue to journey in their faith.
- More recently, *Interact* reported on how our *Consider the Wildflowers* resource is helping women caught in exploitation, and how from a seed of an idea it has grown and is bringing hope and beauty to different contexts. Give thanks for the group of women who helped write the booklet, shared their struggles and hopes. Praise God that other women are now able to discover God’s love and forgiveness. Pray for those women all over the world who are caught in exploitation – pray that God would rescue, restore and heal them.

Thank you for praying with us! Your partnership in prayer is vital to all that we do as we share the Bible’s life words around the world. You can also make a donation to our work online at www.lifewords.global, by post, or by calling 020 7730 2155.