

12 Names of *Christmas*

The title is centered on a light gray marble background. The number '12' is in a large, dark red serif font. Below it, 'Names of' is in a smaller dark red serif font, and 'Christmas' is in a large, dark red cursive script font. The text is flanked by two branches of dark green holly leaves. Below the text is a gold bell with a dark red bow.

by Meredith N Mills



Bible Study Tools

“What’s your favorite holiday?”

I asked this question recently at my weekly, elementary Bible class. We always begin our time together with a get-to-know-you question. This week, we talked about holidays. With one exception, all the kids announced Christmas was their favorite. They love the lights and the music, the talk of peace on earth and joy to the world, and of course, the presents.

For many, Christmas truly is the most wonderful time of the year. For others, though, the holidays don’t bring happiness and hope. Sometimes the season magnifies loneliness or grief. For others still, December is simply a blur of one to-do item after another.

Wherever you find yourself this Christmastime, God welcomes you close. He invites you to bring your joy or your sorrow, your peace-filled heart or your overwhelmed one. He offers to be your safe place — no matter what your soul carries.

In the devotions to follow, we’ll look at twelve names of Jesus described in the “Christmas stories” of Scripture. I pray these readings will be a welcome pause amid the busyness of the season. May our hearts find joy this Christmas as we celebrate the coming of the Christ Child.





A Light Has Dawned



Isaiah 9:2

The kingdom of darkness, the valley of death's shadow, creation groaning for redemption. When describing the state of our world, the Bible paints a colorless picture. And every person who's ever lived knows the chill of this world gone dark. Our souls are gripped by grief. Our hearts hunger for what's real. Our lives bear the marks of sin's presence. On a global scale, suffering covers the planet.

Yet for all who walk in darkness, the Light of the World has come. God's glory is wrapped in the form of a baby, and this baby holds the hope of the world. Like the first rays of dawn, the Sunrise from on high breaks into our night. He rises with healing in his wings. With tender mercy and unstoppable power, he's here to push back the shadows and guide us to the path of peace.

He will rescue us from the domain of darkness and reveal God's heart to the nations. He will reconcile us to the Father and bring us into his Kingdom of light.

Because light always wins.

"Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace" (Luke 1:78-79).

To Ponder

Where does your soul most feel the darkness? Which spaces in your life need the light of Christ's presence?

To Pray

Light of the World, you are welcome here. Shine your healing light into my soul. Where there's confusion, speak your truth. Where there's sadness, grant me joy. May I experience the light of your presence in a fresh, life-giving way this Christmas. Amen.





To Us a Child Is Born



Isaiah 9:6

For those who've grown up seeing images of the Christ Child, this description is familiar. We imagine a baby in a manger, surrounded by animals as his adoring parents look on nearby. Today, though, let's pause to consider the wonder captured by this simple description of Jesus as a child.

In his coming, the Creator took on creation's form, limiting himself to a human body. And not just any human body, a baby's body. A baby who'd grow in a virgin's womb. An infant who'd need nourishment every few hours, who'd require diaper changes and his face wiped clean. A child who'd fully rely on the parents who cared for him. The One who holds all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge would grow in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man.

Jesus entered our world like we do, as a child. He became like us so he could reach us. At Christmas, God displayed how deep and how wide, how high and how long his love truly is.

"Because God's children are human beings — made of flesh and blood — the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death"
(Hebrews 2:14).

To Ponder

What emotions do you feel as you think of Jesus as a child? What difference does it make to know he experienced life as we do?

To pray

Thank you, Jesus, that you get it. You understand the complexities of being human. You've experienced the same type of struggles that we face. Thank you for sympathizing with our weakness and for offering your strength. Today, I especially pray for help with _____. Amen.





To Us a Son Is Given



Isaiah 9:6

Jesus, the Son. Such a tiny word, a simple name. Yet, oh, how deeply profound.

As the virgin's Son, he was Mary's constant reminder of her favor with God...and her lack of favor with those who doubted his miraculous conception.

As David's Son, he was Israel's long-awaited Messiah. His coming ushered in the kingdom God had promised to King David a thousand years before.

As the Son of Man, he was humanity's perfect Person. He walked in unbroken fellowship with the Father. He sinlessly kept God's law and reflected the Father in ways no mere human ever could. Then he died so people could come back to God.

As the Son of God, he was God in the flesh. Before his coming, no person could see God's face and live to tell of his wonders. Yet now, humanity could see the light of God's glory in the face of Christ.

What promise, what joy, this Son brought to the world!

"You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:31-32).

To Ponder

As you think of Jesus the Son, which facet of this role is most beautiful to you? Why?

To pray

Son of God and God the Son, thank you for all you accomplished in this role. I'm amazed by your wisdom and your power. Thank you for opening the way back to God. Amen.





The Government on His Shoulders



Isaiah 9:6-7

Most royal babies live in palaces. Maybe that's why the Magi looked for the new Ruler in Jerusalem. As King of the Jews, surely, they'd find him in the capital city. But no, his family lived in an obscure little home in the obscure city of Bethlehem.

As would prove true over and over in his earthly life, King Jesus would do things differently. The government would rest on his shoulders — an everlasting kingdom that would cover the earth. But he wouldn't live like an earthly King. Instead of staying in a mansion, he'd travel the countryside serving his people. Instead of ignoring the plight of the vulnerable, he'd promote justice and peace. Instead of amassing an army to destroy his enemies, he'd pray for their forgiveness.

King Jesus came to lift up the lowly, welcome the overlooked, and lay down his life for those who hated him.

This is the King we celebrate at Christmastime — a King whose kingdom and its peace will never end.

*"...Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?
We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship
him" (Matthew 2:2).*

To Ponder

Where has God acted differently than you expected or hoped he would? Does your image of King Jesus differ with the Bible's portrayal of him?

To pray

King Jesus, you are Ruler like no other. Thank you for your heart of mercy toward your people. Fashion my heart to be like yours so I can live well as a citizen of your kingdom — reflecting your heart and living out your values through the power of your Spirit. Amen.





Wonderful Counselor



Isaiah 9:6

From the beginning of time, God has desired to speak with his children. He walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden. He talked with Moses as one speaks to a friend. His voice has thundered out of the fire and whispered in the silence. Now, with the advent of the Christ Child, God would speak to humanity as a human.

Throughout his time on earth, Jesus would teach people about the Father's heart. He'd instruct his disciples in the ways of his kingdom. He'd answer questions and give counsel and work miracles for those who came to him.

Today, Jesus continues this ministry through the presence of his Spirit and his Word. As our Wonderful Counselor, he calls us to draw near, close enough to listen to his heart. He longs for us to bring him every inch of our souls — the pretty parts and those we'd like to keep hidden, the parts we're pleased with and the places in desperate need of his light. He stands with open arms to receive us. He yearns to reveal his heart, to renew our minds, and to direct our steps. In this deeply personal space, we can experience God as our own Wonderful Counselor.

"...He, your Teacher, will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will see your Teacher. Your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right or to the left" (Isaiah 30:20-21).

To Ponder

In what areas do you need God's counsel today? How can you make space to quiet your heart and listen for his voice?

To pray

Wonderful Counselor, you are my Teacher and my Guide. Your ways are wonderfully good, and you still work wonders on earth. Today, I need counsel specifically regarding _____. Teach my heart and give me courage to follow how you lead. Amen.





Mighty God



Isaiah 9:6

How could a manger hold the Most High God? The One who made the wood that became his cradle, who grew the alfalfa that became his mattress, who taught the weavers that made his swaddling clothes – this God lay tucked within the works of his hands.

What beauty and dignity he brought to the mundane.

In his presence, a virgin became the mother of the Messiah. In his presence, a stable became his throne room. In his presence, shepherds became his ambassadors.

Jesus showed us the power of God to make common things glorious.

He pours strength into our weakness and meaning into our daily routine. He calls everyday people from each nation, tribe, and tongue and creates his beautiful, multifaceted family. Through us, he reveals his power to the world.

“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (1 Corinthians 1:27).

To Ponder

Where do you need God to infuse life into your everyday spaces today? Which mundane places need the meaning and purpose only he can give?

To pray

Mighty God, thank you that you are both powerful and personal. You are enthroned on high and close to the brokenhearted. You care about the smallest details of my life. Today, please give me your perspective and your strength for _____. Amen.





Everlasting Father



Isaiah 9:6

What would the perfect parent look like?

Whether yours were good parents who made some mistakes or ones you could never describe as “good,” our heavenly Father is altogether different. He is consistently good, constantly available, always for us and working on our behalf. He relates to us with the perfect balance of truth and love.

The baby born in a manger came to show us the Father. In case we misunderstood him in the Old Testament or misjudged him by comparing him to earthly parents, the Son will make him known. Because he is one with the Father, Jesus could bear the Father’s resemblance with absolute perfection.

As the Father abounds in love and faithfulness, so Jesus is full of grace and truth. As the Father waits eagerly to show mercy, so Jesus has compassion on those who come to him.

And the best part about knowing Jesus as our Everlasting Father? We’ll never have to say goodbye. Our perfect Parent is and was and will be forevermore.

“You parents — if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him” (Matthew 7:9).

To Ponder

What emotions well up inside when you hear the word “father”? Are there any inconsistencies in your view of Jesus and your view of the Father?

To pray

Everlasting Father, thank you for being my perfect Parent. Show me where I’ve misunderstood your heart. Teach me to believe the truth about you and shape my heart-felt beliefs to align with this truth. Amen.





Prince of Peace



Isaiah 9:6

Peace on earth. It sounds like a beautiful ideal. Like a far-off dream we could chase but never catch. Like an unfulfilled longing destined to lie buried in our souls forever.

Because this earth is anything but peaceful. From armed conflicts to verbal battles, sometimes our world seems broken beyond repair. Even within our own hearts, we feel restless, weary, and fragmented.

Yet like springtime coming to end Narnia's long winter in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, God's peace came to us in the Christ Child. And when he came, everything began to change.

The God who is whole stepped into our broken world. He came to restore our relationship with the Father, to heal our wounded and weary souls, to establish his kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. Like a seed, this kingdom is taking root in human hearts, mending them and making them whole through relationship with the Prince of Peace.

It may seem like slow growth by human standards. But from heaven's perspective, it's a revolution. The Prince of Peace has come and set up his kingdom. It's spreading to hearts all over the world.

Peace is here, wrapped in the tiny body of the Christ Child.

"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 favor rests'" (Luke 2:13-14).

To Ponder

How is your soul doing? If a peace meter existed, with peace at one end and chaos at the other, how would you rate your heart today?

To pray

Prince of Peace, I long for your peace — on earth and in my restless soul. I invite you into the places where I carry chaos. Mend what's broken. Calm my storms. Quiet my heart with your love. Amen.





Immanuel



Matthew 1:23

At the dawn of Creation, humanity lived connected to God. Made in his image, Adam and Eve enjoyed unhindered friendship with their Maker. They walked with him in the cool of the day and ruled with him over the works of his hands.

His nearness was their good. His presence gave them unrestrained joy. He was to them a wellspring of living water and the very bread of life.

Then the unthinkable happened. The serpent planted seeds of mistrust, and the humans let the seeds take root. They trusted a lie instead of trusting the Truth and a garden of deadly fruit crept into their souls.

As children of these first parents, we've all eaten the fruit of that garden. Each of us has been alienated from God.

Yet God never forgot his people. Before the first lie, before the first sin, God had a plan — one with a costly price he was willing to pay. Like a king trading his robes for rags and his palace for the streets, the Creator donned humanity and entered our world that first Christmas Day.

God with skin on. With physical feelings and emotional complexities, with sinless perfection and relentless love. The Master became the Servant, the Holy One our sacrifice.

Through his sacrifice, we can come back to God. Through his Spirit, we can experience God with us once again.

"Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence" (Ephesians 3:12).

To Ponder

Where do you feel most disconnected from God today? What difference would his presence make in that lonely place?

To pray

O Immanuel, thank you for coming to be with us. I invite you into _____, a place in desperate need of your presence. Teach me to see you in this situation and to live in the light of your nearness. Amen.





Shepherd God's People



Matthew 2:6

Of all the names we've pondered thus far, Shepherd is perhaps the most tender. This baby in a manger would be our Good Shepherd.

To show us what he is not like, the Bible offers a disturbing picture of some very bad shepherds in Ezekial 34. They satisfy their own desires by exploiting their sheep. They ignore the weak and let the wounds of the injured fester. They turn a blind eye to missing members of the flock, ruling harshly those who remain. Because of their neglect and abuse, the sheep wander away where their isolation attracts ravenous wolves.

It's for these sheep the Good Shepherd has come — to seek and rescue the lost, to tenderly care for their needs, to heal their wounds at his own expense, and to restore their weary souls.

With deep compassion and delight, he'll gather his lambs to his heart. He'll give them rest beside still waters and lead them onto the right paths. When they travel through dark valleys, his loving presence will drive away fear. With his shepherd's rod, he'll fend off both wolves and abusive shepherds. He'll surround them with his goodness and mercy.

Take heart, weary sheep. Your Shepherd is here. Listen for his voice. Lean into his presence. Receive his tender care.

"He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young" (Isaiah 40:31).

To Ponder

Why do you think God chose shepherds to receive the news of his Son's birth? Do you identify with any of the descriptions of the weary, wounded sheep listed above? Where do you most need his tender care today?

To pray

Good Shepherd, how tender your heart is toward your sheep! Thank you for your faithful care. Help my heart to stay close to yours today. Amen.





Joy to All People



Luke 2:10

Have you ever known someone whose presence lights up the room? Wherever they go, they spread the gift of joy — noticing souls, listening to hearts, speaking life, compassion, and care.

Our world received the ultimate gift of joy when Jesus entered our scene. He unleashed his joy as he proclaimed the Lord's favor, bringing justice and righteousness to earth. For the oppressed, he offered freedom and to the brokenhearted, comfort. Beauty for ashes, praise for despair, blessing woven into our grief.

Joy! Joy to the world! Great joy for all people and peace to those who receive the Lord's kindness.

For all of us who come to King Jesus, this joy is our inheritance. Like a seed, he plants it in our souls and nourishes it with the living waters of his presence. When the scorching heat comes and the weeds try to choke out its life, joy can stay rooted in our hearts because God's joyful presence is our strength.

Jesus' coming brings joy to the world and joy to the uttermost parts of our souls.

"Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling! Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you" (Psalm 43:3-4).

To Ponder

Does this season find you joyful or heavy-hearted? Where do you most need the joy of the Lord to be your strength?

To pray

God, you are our exceeding joy. Sometimes, though, sorrow eclipses my joy. Please draw me close. Plant your supernatural joy deep within my soul and help it take root so I can experience this fruit of your Spirit. Amen.





Call His Name Jesus



Matthew 1:21

Jesus. His name wasn't unique among his people. Perhaps it was common because of its meaning — The Lord Saves. Imbedded in the name Jesus was the tension of longing for the promised deliverance, and faith that he really would save them. What made this Jesus unique, however, was that he was The Lord who Saves. Our longings realized. Our faith made sight.

While most Israelites of his day looked for political deliverance, Jesus knew a deeper rescue must come first. For at the core of each human festered a wound no earthly leader could cure. The souls of humanity were turned inward—away from the Light of the World, broken and continuing to break, starving for the true Bread of Life.

To save us, God had to rescue us from our sin. That's why he sent his Son. The baby in a manger would become the man on the cross. After healing the sick and loving the lost, after perfectly keeping God's Law, Jesus would pay for humanity's redemption. In his own body, he'd carry our sins. Through his death and resurrection, he'd offer us new life.

And for all who would receive this Savior, he'd send his Spirit to live in our hearts and continue his work of salvation. This is the Christ Child we celebrate at Christmas. Jesus, the Savior of the world.

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

To Ponder

How has God dealt with sin in your life? Have you experienced his healing and deliverance? If not, I invite you to imagine him holding out the most beautiful Christmas gift you've ever seen — a gift of new life and forgiveness. Will you take it? If you've already experienced the joy of salvation, how is God continuing to set you free?

To pray

Jesus, my Deliverer, thank you for refusing to treat our deepest wounds with a surface solution. Thank you for making healing and forgiveness possible. Please spread redemption to every part of my soul so I can run free in new life. Amen.



Jesus' first advent brought hope and light to a world in desperate need of a Savior. He revealed the Father's heart as he lived among us, and he opened the way back to God as he died for us. His coming ushered in the kingdom of heaven on earth.

One day, he'll come again to finish what he started.

Advent reminds us that the God who was faithful to send his Son the first time will be faithful to send him back again, this time to banish sin and darkness forever. To rid the world of sickness, death, and oppression. To rule the earth as its rightful Prince of Peace.

As surely as he came the first time, Jesus is coming again.

“A thrill of hope – the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!
Fall on your knees! O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born!
O night, O holy night, O night divine!”

Meredith N Mills writes about letting go of the try-harder life through knowing God's heart and resting in his grace. She's passionate about helping wounded and weary Christians build (and rebuild) authentic, life-giving faith. You can download her 7-day devotional, Flourish: Devotions from the Garden to Help You Thrive, and subscribe for her email devotions, Multifaceted: Reflections on the Heart of God, at MeredithNMills.com/freebie-library. She'd love to connect with you on Instagram, Threads, and Facebook. Image credits: ©Getty Images/Rawpixel, NATTAWUT SAKIT

