



Dear Moorpark EV Free Church,

Today, (Dec. 14) marks 12 days until Christmas! Taking off of the song "The 12 days of Christmas", I would like you to pray for the next 12 days about some very specific things for yourself and for our church. I am going to try and send an email to you every day for the next 12 days. In each email, I will give you something to pray about. On each subsequent day, you will get an additional item to pray for. I am going to ask you to pray for that item, as well as the new item. Hopefully on Saturday morning Dec. 12, you will be praying for all 12 things! I am calling this the "**12 Days of Prayer**".

I admit that I am desperate for us as a church during this Christmas season. I am desperate for **His hand** to be upon us; that **His will** be evident to us; that He will be **glorified** through us! So what should we pray for first? I think we get a hint from Matt. 6:33. "**Seek ye first the kingdom of God...**"!

Our first prayer is that we would be **yielded to Him**. Above all else, we need to see life from a Kingdom perspective. We need to have the right priorities. I know there is much that competes for our attention: meals, shopping, buying gifts, family, putting up the Christmas tree lights, cleaning house, decorating our homes, sending out letters, taking the family picture, traveling to Grandma's house and much more. All those things are good! But I am asking you to let God speak to you **first!**

So here is a **prayer for today**: "*Lord, I ask that you would help me keep this Christmas in perspective. I have so many things on my "to do" list. Don't let it overwhelm me or control me. I want to put **You** first in my life and live according to that priority. I need "alone time" with you during this busy season. I want to see people and opportunities the way You do; I want to live this Christmas season as if you were coming to visit me personally. Lord, I yield my right to my schedule, my calendar and my plans! I need your direction Lord. Slow me down, so I can clearly hear Your voice!" Amen.*

In His Grip,

*Pastor John*

Sr. Pastor  
Moorpark Evangelical Free Church  
Day 1...12 Days of Prayer



Good morning! It is Wednesday Dec. 15... 11 days until Christmas! We are on Day 2 of our "**12 Days of Prayer**". I hope you will spend a few minutes today proclaiming, pondering, and praising God! We see all 3 responses in Luke 2.

First the **Angels proclaimed** that Jesus was to be born (*"For today in the city of David has been born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" ... v. 11*). It was a public announcement, made to the shepherds. Then after all the "hoopla", after all the visitors were gone, in the quietness of the moment, **Mary pondered** what had just transpired. (*"But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart in her heart" ( v.19)*). She just took it all in amazement! Then as the **shepherds** presumably went back to the sheep, they were **praising** God! (*"And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen" ...v. 20*). They had to tell everyone. What a great model for us: The Angels *proclaimed*, Mary *pondered* and the shepherds *praised*!

Let me ask you 3 simple questions. Are you **proclaiming** Jesus to your friends, coworkers, neighbors? Christmas is perfect time to "announce" that you are Christ follower! Are you **pondering** (not rushing!) and reflecting about Him? Our busyness obscures the true meaning of Christmas. Lastly, are you **praising** God for what He is doing in your life? You praise Him for what you've seen Him do and trust Him for what He will do!

So here is a **prayer for today**: *"Lord, I ask that you would help me to proclaim you, ponder you and praise you today. I am so grateful for what you've done for me, but I need courage to proclaim you to those who are far from you. Help me bold! Lord, I also stop...right now and need to listen to you. As I ponder, let me hear your voice clearly. Lastly, I praise you Lord for sending Jesus to be born and ultimately be the Savior of the world. I praise you and thank you!"*

In His Grip,

*Pastor John*

Sr. Pastor  
Moorpark Evangelical Free Church  
Day 2 ...12 Days of Prayer



Good evening! It is Thursday Dec. 16... 10 days until Christmas! We are on Day 3 of our "**12 Days of Prayer**". It has been great to hear from some of you that you are actually reading these email blasts and even forwarding them to friends. I am sorry it has taken all day for me to get this out. For you early morning prayer warriors, you'll have to pray tonight before you got to bed! 😊

**Immanuel... God with us!** In Matthew 1:23 Joseph is told by an angel that his "betrothed" (v.18-19) wife Mary is going to give birth to a son (Jesus) fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, "*Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear as son, and they shall call His name Immanuel...meaning **God with us***"! If anyone ever needed God to be with him, it was Joseph. Can you imagine what he must have been thinking?

- My fiancée Mary is pregnant by the Holy Spirit! Seriously? (v.19)
- I'm not the biological father but everyone is going to think I am. Now what?
- Is this child really the Messiah?
- Is this just really a bad dream (v.20)? Lord was that really You speaking to me?
- Has Mary really been faithful to me? Should I still marry her? (v.20)
- Lord, are you really in charge of all of this?

What an idea! **God with us!** Do you need Him today? Absolutely! We need Him and we need to sense His presence more than ever. God is still with us, especially when we are going through a difficult time, or through a puzzling relationship, or through a stressful decision. What is it that you need most from God today? I'm guessing that if you were assured of His presence, it makes whatever you're going through better...though not necessarily easier! 😊

So here is a **prayer for today**: "*Lord, I am so grateful for your presence. Give me the courage to trust you in this situation \_\_\_\_\_ (name it)! I want to be able to trust you like Joseph and Mary did 2000 years ago. ! I am going to trust in your **presence**, not stress over my **problems**! May I be reminded that you are with me...no matter what!*

God With Us!

*Pastor John*

Sr. Pastor

Moorpark Evangelical Free Church

Day 3 ... "12 Days of Prayer"



The sun isn't up as I type this. It is Friday Dec. 17... 9 days until Christmas! We are on Day 4 of our "**12 Days of Prayer**". I am sitting with cup of coffee in my hand, and I read this, "*And they were both **righteous** in the sight of God **walking blamelessly** in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord*" (Luke 1:6). The scripture describes the life of integrity Elizabeth (ancestor of Moses' brother Aaron and sister to Mary) demonstrated. She would give birth to John the Baptist (cousin to Jesus) some 6 months before the birth of the Christ child. She was described as righteous and blameless.

She had waited a long time for this baby (remember Sarah). Elizabeth was the much older sister to Mary and had lived for years wondering what she had done wrong to be barren (Luke 1:7, 25); yet she patiently persevered and trusted God. People who walk with God trust Him with circumstances that at the time seem confusing, hard to understand and often discouraging; but Elizabeth would have none of that. Even when her husband Zechariah loses his speech temporarily because of his lack of faith (Luke 1:20), there is no indication that she ever waffled or doubted! We also know that she was the first to really recognize that Mary was carrying God's son in her womb (Luke 1:41-44). How did she know? Her walk with God was so intimate, that the Holy Spirit revealed it to her.

How about us today? Would God describe us as **righteous** and **blameless**? Do we **wait** on God? In other words, do we patiently trust God no matter the circumstances? Second, do we **walk** with God? Do we have an intimacy and connection with God?

So here is a **prayer for today**: *Lord, I confess that I am far from righteous. I need to depend on the Holy Spirit to live as you intended. Help me to patiently **wait** on you today and to ask what you are trying to tell me. I trust you with my future and I choose to **walk** with you no matter what.*

Waiting and walking. Will you join me in doing both this Christmas season? See you again tomorrow. I can't wait! 😊

In His Grip,

*Pastor John*

Sr. Pastor

Moorpark Evangelical Free Church

Day 4 ... "12 Days of Prayer"



Where did the day go? I've been gone all day doing a wedding and just now sat down in front of a computer screen. It is Saturday Dec. 18... **8 days** until Christmas! We are on **Day 5** of our "**12 Days of Prayer**". I've never tried to write to the same group of people 12 days in a row. I guess if I were a "blogger", I would be better at this! Lord, what do you want me to say?

Let's go back to weddings. I can't find anywhere in the Bible that describes the wedding ceremony of Mary and Joseph. After Joseph hears from the angel in the dream, all we see is this obscure little verse in Matthew 1:24, "*...and Joseph arose from his sleep, and **did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife.***" No fanfare, no pictures, no wedding reception, no honeymoon, no nothing! Now I'm sure there was something, but we just don't know exactly what... because the Bible doesn't describe it. But here is what I do know: It wasn't all about the happy little couple; it wasn't about spending a ton of money; it wasn't about making sure that someone is happy; it wasn't about any of that! It was about....drum roll please.... "**Obedience**"! That's right. It was all about obedience! Joseph **did as the Lord commanded!** Joseph didn't balk, complain, whine, argue, quit, fight, or want a "do over". He simply did what God told him to do. He took Mary as his wife...pregnant and everything. He obeyed!

Wow! I want to be that kind of man. I want to simply obey, when God tells me do something. **I want to obey the first time!** Not a second chance like Jonah. He ran the **first** time (Jonah1:1-3). Not like Abraham who lied about his wife **2** times (Gen. 12:12-20; Gen. 20:1-7). Not like Peter who denied Jesus **3** times (Luke 22:54-61). I want to obey God the first time. How about you?

So here is our **prayer for today**: *Lord, I want to obey you no matter what! I simply want to do what you've asked me to do. I want to get it right the first time. Like Joseph, I want to get up and do as you've commanded me to do. What is that "thing" Lord? Is there anything I am resisting you on? Right now, I yield my will to your will. PS. God...thanks for giving me Cheryl as my wife over 32 years ago. Every time I do a wedding, I am reminded of what a blessed man I am because of her! ☺*

In His Grip,

*Pastor John*

Sr. Pastor

Moorpark Evangelical Free Church

Day 5 ... "12 Days of Prayer"



**Fear**...it is one of the most powerful emotions known to man. The Bible tells us over 375 times to "**Fear Not**". I admit, I'm normally not "a fearful kind of guy"! But if I were in the shepherds' field facing an angel, I think I would be quaking in my "sandals"! Historically angels often brought bad news and if they showed up on your doorstep, it was cause for concern. Luke 2:8-10 gives us a glimpse. I like the King James version (just the way I memorized it when I was 6 years old)! ☺

*8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were **sore afraid**. 10 And the angel said unto them, **Fear not**: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord!*

What would you have done? How would you have responded? These lowly shepherds were the first to hear the "good news". I'm sure they didn't know what it all meant, but they moved from "**fear**" mode to "**find Him**" mode. They moved out in faith and sought out Jesus. They went to take a look for themselves. We have friends, relatives, coworkers and neighbors that need to find Jesus! They need to put aside their fears, and discover who He is for themselves. That is why we have a Christmas "Eve" Eve service. We want people to move **from fearing to finding Him!**

So here is our **prayer for today**: *Lord, I want the kind of faith (like the shepherds) that moves me from **fear** to "**finding**" you! Keep me from being afraid to invite my friends from discovering Jesus. Help me to be like the shepherds who heard the good news and then went and found Jesus. Lord, I need to "find" you this Christmas season. I want the joy of discovering who you are anew, fresh and in ways that calm my fears about the future and anything else!*

It is Sunday Dec. 19... **7 days** until Christmas! We are on **Day 6** of our "**12 Days of Prayer**". Who do you know who needs to "**find**" Jesus? Will you invite then for this Thursday night?

In His Grip,

*Pastor John*

Sr. Pastor

Moorpark Evangelical Free Church

Day 6 ... "12 Days of Prayer"



It is Monday Dec. 20 and it is cold and rainy! It is **6 days** until Christmas! We are on **Day 7** of our "**12 Days of Prayer**". It is another good day to cozy up near the fireplace and to read a good book with a hot cup of coffee. **Reality check:** I have to go to work, clean the house, figure out Christmas dinner, wash a stack of dishes a mile high, finish my Christmas shopping and wrap **the gifts** so there is something under the tree!

**Gifts**...where did the tradition of giving Christmas gifts begin? Historically there are traditions dating back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century with St. Nicholas. He was particularly benevolent with small children and had a reputation for being generous and kind. Biblically, we would point to the Magi. According to Matthew 2:1-2, "... *Magi came from the east to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born the King of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.'*" According to v. 11 they brought **gifts of gold** (a gift for a king), **frankincense** (a gift for a priest), and **myrrh** (a burial ointment for one who would die...a savior). This entourage (probably more than 3) came to find Jesus almost a year after he was born. Their pilgrimage could have taken up to year depending on when they first saw the star.

The important part is that the gifts were an outflow of their worship. They actually "**fell down**" and **worshipped** Jesus. Mighty men, wise men, important men...humbly knelt before the Christ child! Talk about a baby shower or housewarming **gift**! Ultimately the gifts they brought would finance the family's trip to Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15). What gifts do we bring to Jesus today? Is our worship reflected in our sacrifice? What He wants most is... you! That is the treasure of His heart.

So here is our **prayer for today:** *Lord, like the Magi, I worship you today. You are my King; you are my Great High Priest; you are my Savior! I praise you for sending your Son to be born. I want to give You a sacrificial gift...that costs me something. So, I bow before you and give you my most important treasure... me...my life! Take **all of me** Lord!*

In His Grip,

*Pastor John*

Sr. Pastor

Moorpark Evangelical Free Church

Day 7 ... "12 Days of Prayer"



It is Tuesday Dec. 21 and it is **5 days** until Christmas! We are on **Day 8** of our “**12 Days of Prayer**”. Last night, for the first time in 372 years, there was a total lunar eclipse that coincided with the winter solstice (which marks the first day of winter and also is the shortest day of the year). Most of us did not stay up to watch the event because the cloudy weather precluded “optimal **star** gazing”!

There was another “**star**” event that signaled the birth of the Messiah over 2000 years ago. Ironically, it was the conjunction of Jupiter (The King’s star) and Saturn (the star of the Messiah) that happened in 7BC that some astronomers conclude was the “**star in the east**” that Magi followed. The prophet Amos called it the “star of the gods”. Tradition says that “God created Saturn to shield Israel”! Jewish astrologers/astronomers had been looking for this event for decades. The unusual pairing happened 3 times that year and scholars have now verified such an occurrence. So we have both historical evidence and Biblical evidence that such an astronomical event occurred! This is why the Magi (Jewish astrologers from Babylonia) were so excited to find the Messiah.

So what is the importance of the **star** for us today? The **star** signified the hope of Messiah for those who had been waiting and looking for it. The Messiah (to the religious Jew) was a fulfillment of prophecy, the political deliverer from Rome and the Savior of the world! For us, Jesus is the Messiah who gives us hope; He is our deliverer from sin; He is our Savior and our Redeemer. We are hopelessly lost without Him. The star reminds us that God can orchestrate anything He wants and when He wants!

So here is our **prayer for today**: *Lord, thank you for the reminder of the Star. Your Star reminds me that I need to follow you. I need to see that You are at work behind the scenes in ways that are amazing! Thank you for giving me hope and delivering from the sin that separates me from You. I want to “shine” in ways that reflect your glory and majesty. Help me to be a light to those who seek you today!*

In His Grip,

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Day 8 ... “12 Days of Prayer”



One of my favorite verses at Christmas is Isaiah 9:6. *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”* (KJV). According to this verse Jesus is given 4 titles:

1. **Wonderful Counselor**: He has an exceptional way of understanding me. He is my **adviser** and He **listens** to me! (Isaiah 28:29)
2. The **Mighty God**: He is powerful enough to be the Lord of my life. He is my **defender** and He **fights** on my behalf! (Deut. 10:17)
3. The **Everlasting Father**: He reigns eternally with the Father. He is **eternal** and He **adopts** me into His family! (John1:1-3)
4. **Prince of Peace**: He brings ultimate peace to the world. He is **sovereign** and **reconciles** me with God. (John 14:27)

Do we realize as believers all that Jesus is to us? He is our advisor and defender; He is eternal and sovereign; He listens and fights for us; and ultimately he has adopted us into His family and reconciles us with God. Jesus has done all of this and more! This is the Good News that the angel proclaims to the shepherds (Luke 2:10-11). It is Wednesday Dec. 22 and it is **4 days** until Christmas! We are on **Day 9** of our **“12 Days of Prayer”**. This is great news!

So here is our **prayer for today**: *Lord, I can hardly fathom how awesome you are. Thank you for reminding me of about who You are and what You have done. Don't let me take these things for granted. You are my wonderful counselor; you are my mighty God; you are eternal; and you are the sovereign prince (God the Father is king) who brings us peace. I will pause right now and give you thanks. I sit in awe of you today...my king, my father, my lord!*

In His Grip,

*Pastor John*

Sr. Pastor

Moorpark Evangelical Free Church

Day 9 ... “12 Days of Prayer”



It is Thursday Dec. 23 and it is **3 days** until Christmas! We are on **Day 10** of our “**12 Days of Prayer**”. Tonight is an important night. It is our **Pre Christmas Eve** service at Moorpark Country Club. It is our chance to tell our community why Jesus is important to us. Our theme is *Christmas Begins with Christ*. Everything begins and ends with Jesus Christ! Christmas isn't about food, family, friends, football, or fun! It is about our **faith!** Tonight at our service, I will tell you why Christmas apart from Christ produces an empty, commercialized, narcissistic experience. It rings hollow without Him. Ultimately, if Jesus isn't the “reason for the season”, then we have:

- **Santa without a Savior**
- **Gifts without God**
- **Presents without His Presence**
- **Sentimentality without Substance**
- **Commercialism without Christ**
- **Family gatherings not Faith gatherings**
- **Lights on Houses not Houses of Light!**

This is just the beginning! We will talk more about this tomorrow night. Speaking of which... There is still time for you to invite someone you care about. I still have plenty of invite cards at my house if you want to come by and grab them. This service and Easter are by far our greatest opportunities for outreach as a church. It is when we can reach the “**CEO**” crowd (Christmas/Easter only). Your neighbors, coworkers, relatives, friends (and anyone else you think of!) need to be invited. Just as important, we need you there! Don't let rain, last minute shopping, fatigue, cranky kids, or any other excuse keep you from coming! It is going to be awesome!

So here is our **prayer for today**: Jesus, don't let me leave you out of Christmas. I want Christmas to begin with Christ! Let me start each day with you and end each day with You! I want you to be forefront and center during these next several days. I want your **presence** more than **presents!** Help me to share my faith with someone during this season by giving me an opportunity to be kind to someone. Help others see “You” shining through me.

In His Grip,

*Pastor John*

Sr. Pastor

Moorpark Evangelical Free Church

Day 10 ... “12 Days of Prayer”



It is Friday Dec. 24 and it is **the day before** Christmas! We are on **Day 11** of our **“12 Days of Prayer”**. Here are a few statistics for you:

- 95% of you are spending time with family or friends today and tomorrow.
- 90% of you are off work today or only have to work a half day.
- 80% of you are going to eat too much these next 3 days rationalizing that the diet can start in January.
- 70% of you are done with your shopping. (The other 30% are making a promise to never wait this long again!)
- 60% of you couldn't "sleep" in this morning because your mind was buzzing with your "to do" list. Of this 60%, 97% will be women!)
- 50 % of you will open gifts tonight and if you have young kids, the other 50% will wish they had when your kids try to get you up at 5:30 am tomorrow!
- 40% of you still have to wrap at least one gift!
- 30% of you haven't sent out Christmas cards; and now you are debating the merits of a New Year's card!
- 20% of you will read Luke 2 tonight as part of your family tradition. Another 20% will decide to try it tonight as a result of reading this.
- 10% of you are wondering where I came up with these statistics. I made them up...really! ☺

But here is a statistic you can count on! 100% of us **need a Savior**. ...100% of us are **lost without Him**... and 100% still have someone in our life that is far from God! Don't stop praying. I am thanking God for last night's Pre Christmas Eve service. We had my "racquetball friends" (Emory is an agnostic and George is an atheist) come over to our house for a "post service" dessert and coffee. I can finally say there was a breakthrough in communication. They are still far from God, but more open to talk now that they have been in my home, our wives have met and the gospel has been presented. It wasn't awkward and I think we all enjoyed a genuine time of just getting to know each other better. George even invited me to his house to watch the Lakers on his 82 inch TV! Now that is progress! In the end it is all about relationships!

So here is our **prayer for today**: Lord, give me a chance to talk to someone about Jesus today. Help me to be bold in sharing my faith in a way that will be redemptive not rude! Help me to be compassionate not combative; kind not condescending; loving not lecturing; patient not pushy; and ultimately gracious not graceless! Thank you for being my Savior! Glory to God!

In His Grip,

*Pastor John*

Sr. Pastor

Moorpark Evangelical Free Church

Day 11 ... "12 Days of Prayer"



It is foggy outside and the sun is trying to peak through the clouds as I sit down to write to you for the final installment of our Christmas blog. It is Saturday Dec. 25 and it is **Christmas Day!** We are on **Day 12** of our **"12 Days of Prayer"**. I hope you have enjoyed our last 12 days together! Hopefully you've read, reflected, paused and prayed! Taking time to be **intentional** during this Christmas season has what these last 12 days has been all about.

Today we celebrate the **incarnation**. It is a big word that describes a simple concept: God becoming man. Today is Jesus' birthday and we celebrate it! This date some 2000 years ago became the fulcrum of history. His **birth** is the basis for our modern calendar (even if it is off by 4 or 5 years!); his **life** is chronicled in the 4 gospel accounts; and his **death/resurrection** is the most important miracle in the Bible. Christianity without the incarnation is just like any other religion.

Jesus becoming a man is marked by His entrance into human history through the Virgin birth. *God became man and dwelt among us* (John 1:14). In order to do that, Jesus had to give up 4 things:

- ✓ **His Place** of dwelling ...from heaven to earth (John 6:51; 16:28)
- ✓ **His Possessions**...from riches to poverty (II Cor. 8:9; Luke 2:7; 9:58)
- ✓ **His Power/** Glory...Heavenly glory to obscurity (John 17:5)
- ✓ **His Position**...From equality with God to servanthood/man (MK. 10:45; John 14:28)

Jesus gave up all of this for us. This is the simple message of the incarnation. It was His gift to us. So when you open your gifts today, pause and thank Him for His gift. Be intentional! Don't just tear through your presents, but be aware of His Presence! After all Christmas Begins with Christ!  
☺

So here is our **prayer for today**: Jesus, I thank you for your birth, life, death/resurrection. It is the reason that I am even celebrating today. I praise you for what You gave up in your **earthly** life; so that I could I could have **eternal** life. Your birth demonstrates your **love**, your life gives me my **faith** and your death/resurrection gives me **hope!** Thank you God for the incarnation. May you be glorified today!

In His Grip,

*Pastor John*

Sr. Pastor

Moorpark Evangelical Free Church

Day 12 ... "12 Days of Prayer"