

Sample Devotional from HOME, HOPE, AND HOLIDAYS: WINTER DEVOTIONALS

'Tis' the Season

Life flows in seasons, and winter is upon us. While I don't enjoy cold temperatures, I do love the holiday season. As soon as Halloween ends, I go into full holiday mode. I've always savored the delectable meals, meaningful gatherings, and cozy naps of Thanksgiving. I've always relished the inviting scents, twinkling lights, and festive music of Christmas. My enchantment with the holiday season far outweighs my aversion to the cold.

In fact, each season of life is characterized by its own blessings and challenges. Harsh winter weather and seasonal stresses are accompanied by celebrations, festivities and joyful gatherings. Similarly, the coming spring brings warmth, beauty, and growth along with a plethora of biting bugs and pollen. Clearly, we don't live in a perfect world, but we can make the most of each season.

The author of Ecclesiastes shares his own meditation on making the most of life.

God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end. So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can. And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God.

Ecclesiastes 3:11–14

As humans with limited knowledge and foresight, we can find joy in each day even when we don't understand God's plan. Some seasons are characterized by a greater measure of blessing and some by a greater measure of trial, but God is at work in each. The author of Ecclesiastes, therefore, encourages us to be happy, enjoy life, and revel in God's gifts. Less-than-enjoyable moments of toil and labor will always be part of life, but our load will feel lighter when we take every opportunity to celebrate God's generous provision.

Over the next few months, you and I will talk about making the most of each season. Since we are approaching the season of Christ's advent, we'll discuss how his birth, life, death, and resurrection enable us to live with peace, joy, and confidence. We'll seek to follow in his footsteps by learning about compassion and kindness. We'll also spend a good deal of time with Jesus' forefather David. We can learn much about God's faithfulness from the life of the flawed, but fully devoted king. Finally, since our life of faith can only grow to maturity in the context of relationships, we'll discuss strategies for healthy communication, forgiveness, and selfless love.

As we approach this holiday season, I pray you experience the fullness of Christ's joy and peace. More importantly, though, I pray you experience profound spiritual growth and a deeper understanding of Jesus' love than ever before.



Lord, thank you for guiding me through every season of life. Empower me to recognize the blessings in every season, even difficult ones. Help me learn to live with peace and joy that endures despite my circumstances. As I enter this new season, I ask you to search my heart and refine my soul. Give me endurance, perseverance, and fortitude as I seek to follow your will. Grow my faith as I draw nearer to my Savior. As I learn from the example of Christ, teach me to offer selfless service, unconditional love, and perpetual forgiveness. Fill my heart to overflowing with your love so that I can bless and encourage others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Personal Reflection

Make a list of people with whom you have meaningful relationships or frequent contact in your current season of life. Whether your interactions are a source of joy or frustration, thank God for each individual and ask God to bless them. Pray for God's guidance as you seek to cultivate relationships that are healthy and holy in every sphere of your life.

