



B R E N D A J A N K

An Advent Devotion 2021



Run Hard. Rest Well.®

Run Hard. Rest Well. positions people to thrive, families to flourish, and the church to multiply by equipping God's people to embrace a pace and passion for work, rest, and rhythm that is biblical, transformative, and sustainable. Since our launch in 2015, we have served 12,000 people and 200 churches, ministries, and businesses worldwide. Ground breaking, life-giving, and evidence-informed, Run Hard. Rest Well. champions rest, equips leaders and changes lives.

Passionate about helping people exchange Christmas Chaos for Christmas Quiet, we work hard all year equipping people to explore the what, why, and how of making God's plan for rest and rhythm compelling, accessible, practical, and transformative. **May these six Advent Devotions bring you "peace and quiet" as you journey to the manger.** Through Covid-19 crisis, comeback, and recovery, join us, **as 2021 unfolds.**

We Offer

Seminars and Retreats (in person and on-line)

"A Rest That Works"

"Catch Your Breath"

"Lead The Change"

Books and Videos

RunHardRestWell.org

Contact Information

Brenda Jank

260-239-1297

brenda@runhardrestwell.org



BEST CHRISTMAS EVER

Do you want to enjoy THE best Christmas ever – no matter your exhaustion, your bank account, your panic?

Ask yourself these three questions and write down the answers.

- List 3 Christmas things that give you great joy.
- List 3 Christmas things that leave you drained, depleted, and irritable.
- List 3 Christmas things that make your heart beat hard for Jesus.

Do it. Grab a pen. Think it through. Take the time.

Now – free, ruthless and determined . . .

- Star or circle the items that will make this THE best Christmas ever.
- Cross out the items that are not a right-fit for THIS Christmas, this year. (These are not “bad” things, they just aren’t conducive to allowing your BEST Christmas ever, to unfold.)

Now, share this list with someone who knows you and loves you. Talk it through. Share your fears. Share your hopes. Share your heart’s desire for something more this Christmas.

Then – commence, move forward, advance into the BEST Christmas ever, with eyes dancing and heart beating with joy for the Advent journey before you.

CHRISTMAS COME & GO

This Christmas God wants us to come.

Come!

Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

This Christmas God wants us to go.

Go!

Go! Move out like the shepherds to find the babe in the dark of night. Then go again! Move on. Move out to the streets, to your neighbors to declare all you have seen and heard.

This Christmas God wants us to let-go.

Let-go!

The need is great.

We need to let-go of unbearable and unrealistic expectations – those fueled by others and those fueled by our own desires and drive.

So many Christmas preparations are dominated by demands that separate us from the longing of our hungry hearts. We long for a simple celebration – heaven's declaration of Hope eternal and Love divine found in a newborn infant's cry. But we settle for less. Amidst frenzy and exhaustion, we shortchange ourselves and those we love, content to exchange Christmas Quiet for Christmas Chaos once again.

This Christmas – come.

Come, all you who are weary.

Make your way to the manger.

Pause. Linger. Bend down low.

Look love in the face and let-go.

Choose one weight, one taxing burden, one ruthless expectation.

Pry it gently from your heart and hands, and lay it down.

Breathe.

Claim the rest your heart longs for.

Claim the rest God longs for you to know.





EMPTY HANDED NO MORE

I am a lousy gift-giver. I am not stingy, just routinely uninspired. Once in awhile, however, inspiration and energy collide and I am giddy with the joy of giving THE perfect gift to someone I love or someone God lays on my heart. Imagine the heart of our Father right now. No doubt He is giddy with anticipation for the gifts He has for His children. He is THE Gift Giver of all time and His inspired generosity will take our breath away, if we let it. The gift of Jesus comes with specially marked gifts for each of us.

A few years ago, in a particularly desperate time, someone sent me the sign "Take What You Need." It had "rip off" tags that included words like: peace, strength, patience, joy, perseverance, forgiveness ...

It reminded me of everything God had for me. This Advent we need to remember one thing about Jesus. He is everything we need.

Wailing, then swaddled, Jesus came.

Victorious, and enthroned, Jesus comes.

Revelation 3 reminds us that he comes knocking on our door.

The door of our heart.

The door of our hurt.

The door of our hurry and scurry.

What do you need this Christmas?

Name it out-loud, and ready your heart to receive.

Don't be afraid

Nothing is impossible with God

The Mighty One has done great things

Great news of great joy

Wonderful Counselor

Prince of Peace

Luke 1:30

Luke 1:37

Luke 1:49

Luke 2:10

Isaiah 9:6

Isaiah 9:6

That's not all. There is Hope. Forgiveness. Joy. Passion. Purpose.

The list goes on.

Close your eyes.

Open your heart.

Visit the Bethlehem Babe, and receive.

And don't you dare walk away empty handed.

What are you asking Jesus for Christmas this year?

THE UNOPENED GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

It is a rare thing for a wrapped Christmas gift to remain unopened for very long. Yet, Christmas after Christmas, untold gifts from Heaven remain unclaimed and unopened. Would you like to claim your Christmas treasure this year? The directions are simple.

1 word, 3 questions and 5 minutes = a Christmas to remember

Over the next 12 days, revisit the Christmas story, one word at a time – one, precious, powerful word at a time. Release your imagination and your emotions and you will meet Jesus, alive and well, under the tree and in your heart.

For this new adventure, you will need:

- One of the following
 - Your imagination
 - A notebook or 12 pieces of paper – and a pen, colored pencils or some crayons
 - A camera
- A copy of the “12 Words for Christmas” (below) to insert into the blanks of these 3 questions, one word for each day.
 - What does _____ look like in the Christmas story? (what, when, where, who, how)
 - What has _____ looked like or felt like for you this past year?
 - What does _____ mean to you this Christmas?

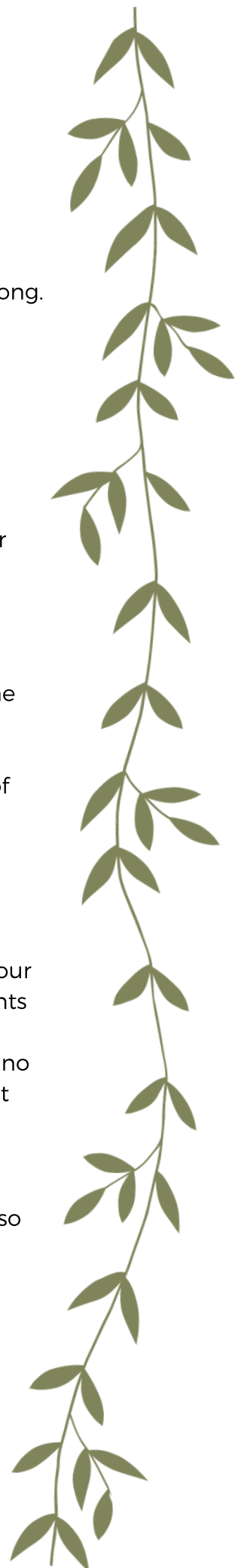
THEN, in whatever manner stirs your heart – visit this word. Make it your own. Ponder and pray your way through the thoughts, images, insights and emotions it evokes. Some may journal. Others may draw, list, or doodle. Some may ponder, grab their camera or their Bible. There is no “right way” to unwrap these gifts, but there is only one way to make it happen – Take Five and Do it.
- 5 quiet minutes, maybe an occasional 10.

12 Days. 12 Words. 12 Gifts.

Give God a few quiet moments each day and He will give us His heart, and so much more.

12 Words for Christmas

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Longing | 2. Thankfulness |
| 3. Homelessness | 4. Gift(s) |
| 5. Preparation | 6. Go |
| 7. Waiting | 8. Hospitality |
| 9. Peace | 10. Expectation |
| 11. Joy | 12. Hope |





WHAT GOD WANTS FOR CHRISTMAS

What does God want for Christmas this year?

God wants, well, everything.

God is jealous. We were made for Him, but live separate and distant lives.

The list, God's Christmas List, reveals the true measure of His heart and passion for each He calls his own.

This Christmas, this year, this day, this hour, God wants . . .

- My fears ... each one
- My failures and my broken pride
- My dreams and desires, the longing of my heart
- My sin that separates and divides. Each weakness, every fault
- My attitude
- My default setting – my “mode of operation” that keeps me stuck in various emotional places
- My thinking and my thoughts. Every pattern of my mind.
- My perspective
- My priorities
- My pursuits and passions
- My ideals
- My relationships – the good ones, the strained ones, the ugly ones
- My heart
- My hope
- My hands and feet, my eyes and ears
- My strength
- My home
- My things – His name tag belongs on every item I own and everything I want
- My confidence
- My time

My response? Man alive, I've got some work to do

Nothing in my life escapes Jesus' claim, desire and pursuit.

My surrender in all things, my gifting to God, my all and all, is to

him, the greatest gift of all. What paves the way? Not my own

ability, but the resurrection, NEW LIFE, power made possible by the entry of God into the world 2,000 years ago and my world, today.

CHRISTMAS THROUGH THE EYES OF MIKE & MARY

"Look, Mommy, we're playing Mike and Mary." Anna and Noah had their heads covered with baby blankets.

"I'm holding baby Jesus." One of Anna's baby dolls was wrapped in a blue blanket. Noah grinned and cocked his head. They made a charming Bethlehem couple.

"Are you playing Mary and Joseph?" I gently asked.

"No, we're playing Mike and Mary!" Before I could say anything, they were off—perhaps to Egypt, maybe to Cincinnati. Who knows?! But they were gone.

My little gurus of fun brought a needed smile to my face. The whole scenario was incredibly cute, but fundamentally flawed. Hmmm. It got me thinking. Does my celebration of Christmas contain any fundamental flaws? Who's on center stage? Too often, I forget. I forget to celebrate this remarkable intrusion of heaven upon earth, of Light into darkness. I forget to bow down—to wonder, whisper, worship. But, it's never too late.

*"But I, by Your great mercy, will come into Your house; in
reverence will I bow down..."*

Psalm 5:7

Let's do it. Let's bow down low, with knees pressed into hardened dirt sprinkled with straw and clumps of mud. There's a small child before us, a newborn, fresh from His mother's womb, fresh from the throne of heaven. His cries pierce the stillness of a star-studded night. This babe awakens a longing in each of us—a longing only He can fill. And He will fill us. Our hearts will overflow. He will heal, restore, give life—and make all things new. May these blessings and more be ours in abundance.

