

ADVENT MEDITATIONS WEEK ONE



This week's Advent Meditations come from Henri Nouwen
Source: "Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen,"
Ligouri Publications, 2004.

Day 1: "In the Midst of Our Dark World"

"I keep expecting loud and impressive events to convince me and others of God's saving power...Our temptation is to be distracted by them...When I have no eyes for the small signs of God's presence- the smile of a baby, the carefree play of children, the words of encouragement and gestures of love offered by friends - I will always remain tempted to despair..."

"Hidden Hope" Meditation: Isaiah 11:1-3

Prayer:

"We welcome you small child of Bethlehem, whose coming we await with quiet attention. Shield us from the shouts, screams, the empty promises of the season, and encourage us to turn our hope to your coming. We know that the promise is hidden in the stable in Bethlehem and rooted in the offspring of Jesse; let us look for our salvation there. AMEN."

Advent Action:

"Today I will look for one small sign that God is present in my daily life. I will give thanks for his presence. "Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p2-3).

Day 2: "The Root of Patience"

"The French author Simone Weil writes in her notebook: "Waiting patiently in expectation is the foundation of the spiritual life." Without patience our expectation degenerates into wishful thinking. Patience comes from the word "*patior*" which means "to suffer"...What seems a hindrance becomes a way; what seems an obstacle becomes a door: what seems a misfit becomes a cornerstone."

"Blessings Falling on the Faithful" Meditation: Hebrews 6:9-12

Prayer:

"Lord, give us patience so that we may truly see obstacles as doors, the "not-quite-rights" of life as a foundation, our sufferings and indifference as eventual gateways to good works, to diligent service, and to our inheritance of salvation. Make the challenges on our spiritual journey into opportunities to say "yes" to your love. AMEN"

Advent Action

"Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, by watchful alertness. Prepare the way of the Lord by making and Advent calendar of proposed contributions of service to others or positive changes in your own spiritual life. Don't plan too precisely, however; leave room for God's input."

"Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 4-5).

Day 3: "In Solitude, In Activity"

"Somewhere we know that without a lonely place our lives are in danger. Somehow we know that without silence words lose their meaning; that without listening, speaking no longer heals; without distance, closeness cannot cure... The careful balance between silence and words, withdrawal and involvement, distance and closeness, solitude and community forms the basis of Christian life..."

"Preaching and Praying" Meditation: Mark 1:35-39

Prayer:

"Lord, grant me a taste for solitude so that I might find in my heart the holy place where you live and can tell you truthfully how I am feeling. Grant me also an understanding of when to act in response to your call to me. AMEN"

Advent Action:

"Our Lord went out to a deserted place to pray before he started his journey throughout Galilee to proclaim the message of the Good News. Look back on your past life and identify its active moments. Also examine the times of solitude you have experienced. Assess how you functioned under both conditions. Make sure that in the coming Advent season there is a balance between the two aspects of your spiritual journey."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 6-7).

Day 4: "How Do You Pray?"

"Take the gospel of each day and spend ten minutes with it. Read it, and read it again. Walk into the world with the gospel on your heart. ...[It] can become like a painting on the walls of your inner room, the inner room that is your heart..."

"First Things First" Meditation: Matthew 6:25, 32-33

Prayer:

"Lord, I live "out in the open" for most of my everyday life. Let me find the offspring of the root of Jesse so that his grace and blessings will flow to my "outer life" where I must face the turmoil and temptations of life. Grant me also a recognition of the fact that my "inner life" with you is the greatest reality. AMEN"

Advent Action:

"Find a scriptural motto to add to your Advent preparation calendar. Hold these words in your heart each day. Some suggestions might be as follows: "The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces" (Isa 25:8); "Should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left?" (Jonah 9:1) or "Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart" (Prov 3:3)."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 8-9).

Day 5: "Staying Close to God"

"If you want to follow Jesus... [you must] control what you take in every day. When you are on the bus or subway in your car, why busy your mind with the garbage of advertisements? Why fill your mind with television and radio? Somehow you have to decide what your mind will receive. ...It is good to have a prayer on your lips wherever you go...When you are waiting for the cashier in the supermarket, getting mad because he or she doesn't hurry say a little prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." Take that prayer with you wherever you go..."

"Pray Always" Meditation: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

Prayer:

"Lord, let my life be an unceasing prayer to you despite its labors and losses; grant me a gracious heart that overflows with gratitude to overcome and wash away all my worries. AMEN"

Advent Action

"This Advent, be generous in your prayers for others and their well-being."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 10-11).

Day 6: "The Discipline of Community"

"Jesus didn't live alone. He had Peter, John, and James around him. There were the Twelve and the other disciples. They formed circles of intimacy around Jesus. We too need these circles of intimacy, but it's a discipline...Where are you getting your affection? Who's touching you? Who's holding you? Who makes you feel alive? Who says, "You are a beautiful person, you are the beloved of God, don't forget it?"

"A New Life" Meditation: Ephesians 4:1-6

Prayer:

"Lord, we ask for the discipline needed to be a true member of our communities. May we choose and be chosen to be God's Beloved. AMEN"

Advent Action:

"It is said that the original Christmas tree grew out of an evergreen that was part of the setting for the medieval morality plays acted out on the steps of churches. This tree was used to represent the Garden of Eden. Create a small tree on which you hang apples (or their representation) to remind you of the failings that you wish to avoid this Advent. The apples, of course, stand for the fruit of the tree of good and evil with which Satan tempted Adam and Eve."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 12-13).

Day 7: "The Seeds of the False Self"

"The two main enemies of the spiritual life [are] anger and greed. They are the inner side of a secular life, the sour fruits of our worldly dependencies. What else is anger than the impulsive response to the experience of being deprived? When my sense of self depends on what others say of me, anger is a quite natural reaction to a critical word. And when my sense of self depends on what I can acquire, greed flares up when my desires are frustrated. Thus greed and anger are the brother and sister of a false self....."

"Transformation in Christ" Meditation: Romans 12:1-2

Prayer:

"Lord, renew our souls so that we may find what is good and acceptable and perfect in your eyes. Open our eyes to see beyond the lures of the world – the prizes of success, the rewards of wealth and position, the seductions of a modern life lived out at a frenetic and competitive pace. Help us to sever our dependencies on the world's distractions and give us an opportunity to find ourselves in the shelter and safety of your wings. AMEN"

Advent Action:

"Forego one of the world's distractions for a day: television, all-but-the-necessary phone calls, negative comments about anyone, music in the car on the way to work, busy work of any kind, surfing the Internet, reading magazines, and so on."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 14-15).