

Daily Devotionals for Advent *Congregational Challenge*

We are inviting you to write a biblically inspired devotional that Flanders Baptist and Community Church will be using during the incoming Advent period to encourage everyone to be closer to God. All current or former members, attendees, and friends of our congregation are called to participate in this important endeavor. Your devotional, which may be as short as one paragraph, will be included in a series of daily devotionals that we will make available to our community at the end of November or early December.

You may even invite your loved ones to participate in this wonderful congregational challenge. Devotionals may appear on our newsletter, Facebook page and website, and may be read in our worship services during Advent. The **deadline** to submit yours is: **Sunday, November 12th, 2023**. You may email (fbccdd1@gmail.com), bring a hard copy to the church or even mail it to the church.

Here are the guidelines to write it:

- 1) Describe your emotions (joy, sadness, frustrations, hope, etc.) at the time you are writing your devotional
- 2) Write about the reasons behind your emotions (a loss, a health challenge, an exciting new chapter of your life, etc.)
- 3) Talk about how the presence of God helps you deal with your current state of mind
- 4) Point to a biblical story, passage or teaching that is related to your current state of mind
- 5) End on a positive note, and write about the ways the birth of Jesus brings joy, peace and other great things to you as well as other people

An Example of a Daily Devotional

This morning, as I was searching for a document in my home, I unexpectedly found my late mother's death certificate. As I touched this sort of symbol of the saddest period of my life, I felt like a fire burning my fingers down. To make things worse, the picture of her that we used for her funeral service was right there. Suddenly, a very bright and sunny day turned into an exceedingly gloomy one. For an unknown number of seconds, minutes, or perhaps a whole chunk of eternity, old feelings came back to my soul. A dark hole overpowered my heart, and my entire being was consumed by grief. So many things went through my mind: doctor's offices, emergency rooms, hospital beds, blurring faces of nurses, therapists, treatment plans, and so on.

I was lost in my teary thoughts when, suddenly, an idea came to enlighten my imagination. My mother's death certificate was a reminder of the extreme fragility of human life. However, her genuine smile in the photo embodied all the amazing things we did together as well as the joy she brought to me and the universe. On the spur of the moment, God inspired me to see the big picture. I took a deep breath. My mother was a gift to this world. She is now resting in godly peace. Because my mind was renewed by God's presence, my grief began to make way for hope. That experience reminded me of what the Bible says in Psalm 30 v. 11: "You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy."

This season is the ideal time to think about the birth of our Savior Jesus. Everyone knows that childbirth is a nerve-racking and painful process. But the day a baby is born, while pain is still in the picture, joy becomes the most defining moment in the lives of new parents. Thus, the presence of suffering does not necessarily mean the absence of joy. While we all go through trials and tribulations, Jesus' birth reminds us that if we have faith, God will always bring joy and peace into our lives. More importantly, the birth of Jesus means that one day, our joy will be perfected, and we will inherit eternal life.

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