



## *A Christmas Message*

**From the Alleluia Elders**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are in a season of joy, of expectation. We are in a season where we wait in joyful expectation of celebrating our Savior's birth.

As in most Christmases, we celebrate this time with relatives and friends. And so it will be this year. But we have a blessing that most people don't have. We live our lives among relatives and friends. We acknowledge that we all have the same Father, and so we have the same brother, Jesus Christ.

He was not born of a queen or a princess in a castle but in a small town to a young, everyday woman. He was not laid in an ornate crib after His birth but in a manger cradled by straw. He did not spend His life commanding but in healing and

teaching, and His teachings were unusual even by today's standards, for He taught to love our enemies, forgive and pray for those who harm us in some way. He taught us to not just help people but to help them beyond their expectation. (If someone asks you to carry their load one mile – carry it two.)

He did not wear a crown or a luxurious robe but wore common clothes. At times, He must have been very weary, but still He taught and found time to come before His Father in solitude. If He passed us on the street today, we may not even have noticed Him. He might even have been wearing coveralls or a work shirt and jeans. But if He spoke to us our hearts would melt, for He would speak of love; love for

the Father and love for each other.

With our limited abilities, we have a hard time comprehending this vast ocean of love that He spoke of. But, we live in a body of believers that try every day to incorporate it into our hearts. We have committed ourselves to follow Him and His teachings. We believe that Jesus is our Lord, our God and that all He said and taught was from our Creator.

We are not perfect, but at least we recognize our imperfections and work to eliminate them. We stand together as His people dedicated to Him. We worship together, have joyous times together, work together and mourn together, and we do this all in His name for His glory.

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*Peace on Earth, To Men of Goodwill*

# Developing a Habit of Prayer ... Continuously



By Ania Hatfield  
11th Grade

When I was asked to write this article for the Dove on Developing a Habit of Prayer, the first thought that came to me was I am the least qualified person to write this. I struggle with having a daily prayer time, and I often "forget." I then proceeded to bury the idea and procrastinate, hoping that it would pass. But as you can tell, that did not work. I thought and prayed about this and realized that I am very qualified to write this article. After all, the theme is not my *developed* habit of prayer, rather, *developing* a habit of prayer.

My parents have always stressed a personal prayer time, and when my brothers and sister and I were little, we had a time set aside

to have a prayer time. I used to love finding a quiet spot in the house, where I could not hear anything else. There were no outside noises. Many times I would hide away in a closet or a corner where no one could find me. Then, I would pull out my little book of saints, or my Bible, and read one of my favorite stories. My favorite was the story of Saint Therese. I always loved starting my day out with my favorite saint.

As the days and months went on, they turned into years, and starting my day out with stories of how others found Jesus became dull. They had exciting lives, don't get me wrong, and they did amazing things. I became jealous, so I

started slacking in my prayer time and eventually, they stopped all together. The one thing that I was missing in my own story is the one thing that the children's little book of Saints seldom mentions and never stresses. Each saint had a special devotion to prayer. Not just reading about God in the Bible, but getting to know God through personal prayer.

When I finally found what I was missing, it had been a little over a year since I had really sat down and tried to have a prayer time. Two years ago at a prayer meeting, Bill Beatty talked about personal prayer times, and he gave us a card with an example of a personal prayer time format. I was determined to have a prayer time every day and follow that card. I knew that if I was going to have a better relationship with God then I needed to pray, and this seemed perfect. The next morning I did what the card said. I tried to follow it exactly and found that it didn't really work for me. I didn't feel any different. I talked to some of my closest friends and asked them what to do. My best friend, who was also trying to start having a personal prayer time, said to me, "It's a format, an example. Everyone is different. Find something that works for you."

So I started to try to get up every morning and talk to God, but I found myself falling asleep over and over again. I then proceeded to move my prayer time to before I went to bed, and found that it was

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## Peace on Earth, to Men of Goodwill

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Some may think we are a little odd or even perhaps crazy, but so they thought of His disciples. Yet, how can we be odd when we dedicate our lives to Him that dedicated His life for us. He stretched out His arms and endured terrible pain, and we realize that every pound of the hammer on the nails that pierced His feet and hands were to expiate our sins and make us holy. The blood that poured from His body washed our sins. Can we ever comprehend such love?

So now we are in a season to celebrate His birth, a season of joy, a season to move closer to Him, to

love Him, to adore Him, to thank Him for coming to us. As Elders, we thank you for dedicating your lives to Him, our Lord and our God. We are so blessed to be living among a people who fully appreciate our Lord and our Savior. We thank you for supporting us and loving us. We thank you for being examples of holiness to us.

May God bless you abundantly this Christmas Season and be assured that all of you are in our hearts and prayers.

Your Servants,

The Elders

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# Lord, I Surrender...

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no different. Pushing myself to stay awake never really resulted in a fruitful prayer time. The only prayer I said with any fervor was Lord, please let me stay awake. I could not pray without falling asleep. I tried one last thing, keeping a prayer journal.

Every morning the first thing that I say is, "Lord, I offer you all the prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day for all your intentions." Every night before I go to bed, I write about my day and anything that is on my mind in a journal. Every page starts with a simple phrase: "Lord, I surrender myself to you; mold me and make me yours. I love you."

After I finish writing, I spend time praying in tongues and just meditating on what the Lord has done for me and showed me that day. I have found that I can tell a difference on days that I don't have a prayer time and days that I do. I always feel better on days that I start with the Lord.

I still struggle with getting up in the morning and remembering to pray at night, but it's getting better. And one thing I am certain of is that I will never perfect it. The only thing I can do is keep getting better, and who knows, what works for me now may not work in a few years. The point is, developing a habit of prayer is not something you can do in a matter of days or weeks. It is a matter of your whole journey, and it ends in heaven. So this is what I am doing: continuously "developing my habit of prayer."

## Golden Life is Blessed Again



The boys were jumping on leaves to pack them in during a work party



Patty Harmon suggests meditating on the following song, especially verses 3 and 4, in light of the current world situations in order to maintain our peace and hope during the coming year.

### **I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day**

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow  
(1807-1882), 1867

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day  
Their old familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet the words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

I thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along the unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head:  
"There is no peace on earth," I said,  
"For hate is strong and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good will to men."

Till, ringing singing, on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,  
Of peace on earth, good will to men!



# Family Prayer — Our Environment of Life

From the Pastoral Team

As we move into the Christmas season, thoughts focus on the holy family and what it must have been like for them in occupied Israel. Mary and Joseph were told by the Romans to move from their well-known surroundings of Nazareth to a far off town where Joseph's roots were said to be in the place called Bethlehem (about 80 miles away). We can imagine that Mary and Joseph had to place all their hope and trust in God that He was going to take care of them for the treacherous four or more days' journey on which they were to embark. Mary, in the last month of her pregnancy and ready to deliver, must have wondered why God was asking them to do this. It must have been very unnerving at the least, yet

they pressed on to Bethlehem trusting that they were in God's care. There must have been lots of prayers and crying out to God before they set out on their trip. They have to be a tremendous example for us in trusting God in all circumstances.

This leads us into the second part of our theme for the Pastoral Team and that is family prayer (Rule of Life #2). We need to look to the example of the holy family about what we should be as a family. Scripture tells us little about how the family lived their day to day life, but there are several instances in the Bible where the gospel writers talk about the trials they faced and how they went through them. We can imagine that the holy couple often

would come together to pray about things going on in their lives. Luke's gospel chapter two tells us the story of Jesus at the age of twelve leaving his parents and remaining in Jerusalem in the temple to question the scribes and Pharisees regarding the things in the Scriptures. His parents were frantic over where he may have been and were searching for him about three days. Again, what must have gone through their minds (how did we possibly lose the Messiah)? There must have been powerful prayers of thanksgiving once they found him. Again, they set an example for us on how to handle those crises, which appear in our lives.

Over the next several weeks, we will be hearing testimonies from Alleluia families on how they have handled family prayers and life together. We will have articles from some young families and some older ones. Each will tell us what things they did to bring Jesus into the center of their family. We are doing this to encourage us to persevere with centering family on the Lord. Just as we used our Dove articles on personal prayer to encourage our prayer times, we are also calling us to live to the best of our abilities our Rule of Life #2 – each family should have a daily prayer time. Remember that the family that prays together stays together.

