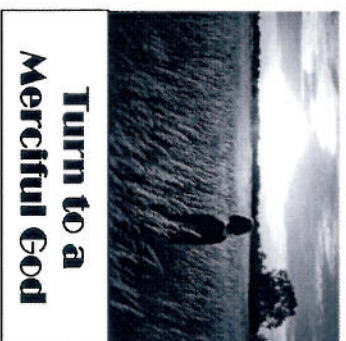


God's Story Our Story

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December 4, 2016



Devotion: Use this resource at home to guide your household's daily devotions. You can do this alone or with others; in the morning, during the day, or at night. Find a routine that works best for you.

Pray: Light a candle and open your devotion time with a prayer.

Lord, we have nothing to fear from you. Bring us back into your presence, rejoicing in your promises and basking in your mercy. Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Reflect: Reflect on the key verses from Sunday's reading.

Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Joel 2:12-13

Study: Study the reading and consider the background.

We think the Lord demands so much from us. But really, God is making just one simple request: come home to me, my children. I've got something amazing for you!

Consider: Consider this theme for the week's text.

God desires that we turn to God. At this Christmas time, we can remember that love (for God and for others) is all that truly matters.

Read: Read the following daily readings to deepen your understanding of Sunday's text. After the reading, ask the follow-up questions.

Sunday: *Turn to a Merciful God*, Joel 2:12-13, 28-29

Monday: *End of Babylonian Captivity*, Ezra 1:1-11

Tuesday: *Lament over the Ruined Country*, Joel 1:1-12

Wednesday: *Call to Repentance and God's Response*, Joel 1:13-20

Thursday: *Dedication of the Temple*, Ezra 6:13-22

Friday: *Ezra Restores Torah as Law*, Nehemiah 8:1-12

Saturday: *Dedication of Jerusalem's Wall*, Nehemiah 12:27-47

How do God's people respond to God's deliverance?

Connect: Connect in conversation with others in your household. Discuss the following questions, or simply check in with "Fights" and "Lows."

What was a high point of your day? What was a low point?

How is your community of faith preparing for Christmas? What difference will your preparations make in the larger community around you? What can you do to bring hope and renewal to people in need?

What in your life requires repentance and renewal? Who in your life needs hope? How can you bring hope to those who need it?

Do: By acting on what we learn we make God's word come alive. Do the following activity this week.

Make a list of all the things you think you need to do to prepare for Christmas. Add to your list activities or events that give you the opportunity to love God, your neighbor, or yourself. For every love activity you add, remove something less important from your list. See how your holidays are transformed as love activities dominate your season.

Bless: Close your devotion with a blessing.

May God fill your days with love. Amen.