

## 2023 Advent Devotional Booklet Guidelines

Thanks for considering participating in the KBC Advent Devotional Booklet. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind.

### General Information About Theme, Sign-up Process, and Deadline

- The Scripture readings will follow the four weekly themes for Advent: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. For Christmastide (December 26 – January 6), the Scriptures will focus on aspects of the nativity, events surrounding His birth, the gifts to us as followers because of His birth, and Epiphany.
- To sign up and to review the scripture passages, please go to <https://tinyurl.com/KBCAdventBooklet23>. You may also find this link on the [KBC website](#) or contact Mary Hix at [mary.hix1@gmail.com](mailto:mary.hix1@gmail.com).
- Click on the day/scripture passages you would like and enter your email information. If you decide to change the day you select, you can do this on the sign-up, as long as the day you want is still available.
- **Devotionals, photographs, and artwork are due by October 6, 2023, but we would love to have them as early as possible!**
- For any submission, please send a short bio of two or three sentences about yourself, which will be included in a separate section. We want these for both writers and artists. The bio can be serious or light-hearted and can include whatever information you want people to know about you. You can include details about family, work, hobbies, education, how long you have been at KBC, or anything else!

### Written Devotionals

- Devotionals should address the scripture passage and the weekly theme, but you have flexibility in your approach. You can tell a personal experience, retell a passage using modern characters, or reflect on what you think the central truth is for the passage. Remember that Advent is a time of preparation and waiting, more than one of celebration. Christmastide can focus more on celebration of Christ's birth and on his return.
- **The devotionals should be no more than 400 words, which is just a few paragraphs. Please honor the word count!**
- Remember that the devotionals are not meant to be sermons or analysis. You don't have to be a scholar or literary giant to write a devotional. We just want to hear from you personally – why a particular passage is meaningful, what you think about the passage or how a personal experience revealed a spiritual truth to you.
- Don't hesitate to write about struggles or dark times. It's good to know that we all experience wilderness times. Focus on being real, not on sounding "right." Feel free to share experiences or insights from living through the pandemic.
- Each devotional will conclude with a short prayer of one to two sentences. The prayer should connect to the devotion or to the Scripture passage. If you want to write the prayer, please do. If not, we will write one.
- Please make the devotional a Word document and email it to Mary Hix at [mary.hix1@gmail.com](mailto:mary.hix1@gmail.com). You can also type the devotional into the body of the email if you cannot do a Word document. Please include a phone number in case we have a question.

## Artwork and Photographs

- Artwork includes photographs, paintings, drawings, Zentangles, pottery or other forms of artwork. Art such as pottery should be photographed in a high-resolution photo.
- Artwork and photographs can be submitted as a stand-alone devotional, to supplement other devotionals, or to accompany your own written devotional. Please review the sign-up sheet to see if your photo or artwork might work well as a stand-alone devotional by reflecting some aspect of a specific scripture. If so, please sign up under that specific entry. If you want your artwork to supplement other work or you're not sure it will work as a devotional, please sign up under the artwork/photographs tab. We just want to know what artwork or photos to expect.
- For the images to print well, we need high-resolution photos that are 350 KB or more. Please submit your photos and artwork to Dorothy Wagener at [dswagener7@gmail.com](mailto:dswagener7@gmail.com). If you have questions or need help in scanning artwork or photographing artwork such as pottery or other artwork, please contact Dorothy Wagener.

## Writing Tips

***Below are writing tips from The Upper Room and three sample devotionals from Goshen College to spark your imagination. Your own contribution will probably look and sound quite different from these, but notice the helpful guidance: write vividly, have one main point, and connect the Bible with common life.***

## Tips for Writing Devotionals

**Copy taken from The Upper Room Website:  
<http://devotional.upperroom.org/how-to-write>**

### ***Where do I begin?***

You begin in your own relationship with God. Christians believe God speaks to us and guides us as we study the Bible and pray. Good meditations are closely tied to scripture and show how it has shed light on a specific situation. Good meditations make the message of the Bible come alive.

Good devotional writing is first of all authentic. It connects real events of daily life with the ongoing activity of God. It comes across as the direct, honest statement of personal faith in Christ and how that faith grows. It is one believer sharing with another an insight or struggle about what it means to live faithfully.

Second, good devotional writing uses sensory details -- what color it was, how high it bounced, what it smelled like. Though the events of daily life may seem mundane, actually they provide the richest store of sensory details. And when we connect God's activity to common things, each encounter with those things can serve as a reminder of God's work.

Finally, good devotional writing is exploratory. It searches and considers and asks questions. It examines the faith without knowing in advance what all the answers will be. It is open to God's continuing self-revelation through scripture, people, and events. Good writing chronicles growth and change, seeing God behind both.

### ***How do I get started writing a meditation?***

When you find yourself in the middle of some situation thinking, "Why -- that's how God is, too!" or, "That's like that story in the Bible . . .," that can become a meditation. Excellent ideas come from reading and meditating on scripture, looking for connections between it and daily life. When you see such a helpful connection, here's a simple formula for getting it on paper:

1. Retell the Bible teaching or summarize the passage briefly.
2. Describe the situation that you link to the Bible passage, using a specific incident. Write down as many concrete, sensory details of the real-life situation as you can.
3. Tell how you can apply this spiritual truth in days to come.
4. After a few days, look carefully at what you have written. Decide which details best convey your message, and delete the others.

### ***Tips to keep in mind***

- Begin with studying and meditating on the Bible so its power supports your words.
- Connect scripture with your own life. Your experience is unique.
- Avoid preaching ("you should ...," "you need to ...," "we must ...," etc.)
- Use language and examples that appeal to the five senses. Tell what you heard, saw, touched, smelled, tasted. When appropriate, use dialogue to tell your story (but no more than two exchanges).
- Make only one point. Think snapshot, not movie.
- Seek always to encourage readers to deeper engagement with the Bible.

***Below are three different devotionals. Notice how each one takes a slightly different approach. The first one provides a theological truth and then provides an example to show its meaning. The second one describes a personal experience in which the writer discovers and applies a spiritual truth. The third one summarizes the passage, provides context, and then makes a personal connection to the passage. There are many different ways to approach a devotional; feel free to be creative!***

## **Sample Devotionals**

**Scripture:** Hebrews 8:1-2

By John Piper

The point of the book of Hebrews is that Jesus Christ, God's Son, came not just to fit into the earthly system of priestly ministry as the best and final human priest but to fulfill and put an end to that system and to orient all our attention on himself, ministering for us first on Calvary as our final sacrifice and then in heaven as our final priest. The Old Testament tabernacle and priests and sacrifices were shadows. Now the reality has come, and the shadows pass away.

Here's an Advent illustration for kids—and those of us who used to be kids and remember what it was like. Suppose you and your mom get separated in the grocery store, and you start to get scared and panic and don't know which way to go, and you run to the end of an aisle, and just before you start to cry, you see a shadow on the floor at the end of the aisle that looks just like your mom. It makes you really hopeful. But which is better?

The hopefulness of seeing the shadow, or having your mom actually step around the corner? That's the way it is when Jesus comes to be our high priest. That's what Christmas is. Christmas is the replacement of shadows with the real thing: Mom stepping around the corner of the aisle and all the relief and joy that gives to a little child.

-Taken from <https://www.desiringgod.org/books/good-news-of-great-joy>

**Scripture:** Psalm 22:23-31 (NRSV)

By Abbie Kaser

The moment I would pinpoint as the most challenging of my entire life would be my first day as a camp counselor. It had been a very hot day with my group of nine 4th-6th graders, which included complaints, constant fighting for attention, and a quickly spreading epidemic of homesickness. Making one difficult decision after another left me exhausted. My friends, whom I had grown to rely on during orientation, were preoccupied with their cabins, all of which seemed to have relatively few issues. By the time “lights out” finally came, I curled up on my bunk and the pressure of my insecurity and doubts as a leader filled my chest.

It seemed like I had barely fallen asleep when a deep, building-shaking boom of thunder woke me up. Before I knew it, every girl was crying and yelling my name. I’m not sure how I figured out what to do or what I ended up saying, but after a few minutes the storm had passed and everyone calmly fell asleep. God heard my prayers and was there to give me the strength I needed to comfort my cabin. From that day on, I had a renewed confidence in my decisions and my abilities through the awesome power of God, making me successful and grateful as I continued to learn and lead throughout the summer.

Even when we are in difficult situations and feeling “upside down and inside out”, God is there to give us strength we don’t know we have. The fulfillment and joy as a result of these experiences are wonderful reminders of God’s presence. Praise be to God.

Taken from <https://www.goshen.edu/devotions/category/2014-lent/>

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 31:1-6 (NRSV)

By Rose Shetler

Does life sometimes feel like a wilderness, devoid of joy and comfort? What are the things that hold you in captivity? And where is God when life hurts?

In today’s passage, the prophet Jeremiah is speaking to the people of Judah who were taken captive by the Babylonians. He brings the weary exiles the words of the Lord. The words offer assurance that they are the people of God who has not forsaken them, but who is with them and loves them with an everlasting love. The words are ripe with expectant promise that the captives will be restored to their homeland and will once again enjoy the work of their hands and the fruit of their labors. And yes, the words leap with songs of joyful celebration and noisy merrymaking! For the day will come when those in captivity will hear the call to go up to Zion, to the Lord their God, and live in peace and freedom.

Not only have the captives survived the sword and been promised restoration, but the grace in the Babylonian wilderness is this: it is the assurance, comfort, promise and joy that God loves them and is with them, even here, even now, even in this captivity.

I’ve known the wilderness times. I’ve been captive to fear and discouragement, hopelessness and doubt. My natural desire is to get through, get out, get away as quickly as possible from the wilderness in which I’m held captive. But sometimes in my haste, I miss the grace of the wilderness times. I forget that God loves me with an everlasting love, that God is with me there – especially there. As sure as the promise that God will restore me is the assurance that God loves me even when life hurts. Perhaps it is this realization that is a greater grace than the speed at which I move on to freedom. Indeed today, this is the grace to be found in your wilderness too. May it be so.

Taken from <https://www.goshen.edu/devotions/category/2014-lent/>