

FRIENDS AND PRAYER

Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and incense and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11, NIV)

WHEN THE MAGI ARRIVED IN BETHLEHEM some time in Jesus' early childhood, they came bearing gifts. They were gifts meant to signify royalty and death. Not the kind of gifts we would give today. And not meant to be prescriptive for our sometimes excessive traditions. Yet we give.

It may be entirely unhelpful to jump into Christmas so soon, but the season has arrived. I'm not going to help you shop, though your local pro would probably be pleased if I reminded you that he's stocked the place with some great ideas for the golfers on your list (wink, wink). What I am going to do is encourage you to give gifts of another kind.

If I were to ask you to sit down today and write a list of those you know who could use blessings this year—salvation, mercy, healing, income, companionship, peace in the home—I'm sure your names would quickly number 25.

Now recognize that the number of days between today and Christmas is still the same as it has always been: 25. It's a perfect fit!

So let's say that in addition to any other gifts you might give this year, you give the gift of prayer. That is, take calendar in hand (one that's quick to print is included as page 2 of this PDF) and fill it in, one name or more per day, right up till Christmas. Put the calendar in a can't-miss spot, and start praying.

You might add encouragement to your prayers, sending Christmas cards with a personal note that includes mention of your prayers. You know those who will receive this gesture well enough. You also know it's more than a gesture. You're inviting the Lord of Christmas to invade the space of someone who needs him.

Jesus has no hesitations in answering prayers that ask him to attend to the spiritual, physical, relational, and emotional needs of the people in your life. This is why he came to Bethlehem in the first place: to be "God with us." His same presence is available now, by way of his Spirit.

Give the gift of prayer this Christmas, then seek the wonder of his answers this season.

Opening questions What's the hardest part for you about getting ready for Christmas? • What two or three people first come to mind as those you should pray for this season?

READING 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Ephesians 1:15-18; Luke 6:28

Wide-reaching prayers (1 Timothy 2)
Who is listed among those who should receive our prayers? What kinds of prayers should be prayed? What is the purpose in praying them?

Prayers for believing friends (Ephesians 1)
Following Paul's outline here, what are some things we may pray for on behalf of our brothers and sisters in Christ?

Prayers for those on the other side (Luke 6)
Are there those who oppose your faith for whom you should be praying? What might make you hesitant to do this?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International.

Give the Gift of *Prayer*

		Friday 1	Saturday 2				
Sunday 3	Monday 4	Tuesday 5	Wednesday 6	Thursday 7	Friday 8	Saturday 9	
Sunday 10	Monday 11	Tuesday 12	Wednesday 13	Thursday 14	Friday 15	Saturday 16	
Sunday 17	Monday 18	Tuesday 19	Wednesday 20	Thursday 21	Friday 22	Saturday 23	
Sunday 24	Monday 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill each date with the name of the person (or family) you want to pray for and maybe a note about why you are praying: salvation, mercy, healing, contentment, peace in the home, etc. • No matter what other gifts you may be giving these people, if you have opportunity, be sure to make mention (perhaps in a Christmas card) that you are praying for them. • Look for the work of the Lord in answering your prayers. You might place a star around each date where you see the prayer answered. 					