

Deeper

12 JOURNAL IDEAS FOR A CHRISTMAS OF THE SOUL

1. Meditate on one name of God from the Christmas story or prophecies, writing and praying about why it's meaningful to you right now: *God with us. Savior. Desire of Nations. Messiah. Jesus (literally, The Lord Saves). Branch; Root of Jesse. King. Wonderful Counselor.*
2. Do I identify more with Mary's faith, or Zechariah's doubt right now? Why?
3. Which character in the Christmas story do I most identify with this year? Why?
4. *A people walking in darkness have seen a great light.* How am I most witnessing God's illuminating light in my life, or how have I seen it this year? Where do I crave it right now?
5. *And the government shall be upon His shoulders.* What do I need to entrust to God's government right now? What about His future government do I look forward to? (Read more in Isaiah 9:1-7.)
6. *And He shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)*

*... And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. (Isaiah 11:2)*

How do I sense—and sense my need for—God in these identities of His right now? (Pick one or two of these names, asking God to show Himself in this way in situations that are sticking in your brain right now.)

7. *Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word. (Luke 1:38)* What emotions do these words of Mary stir in me right now? What

situation does it bring to mind in my own life? Do I need God to create this response in me right now?

8. Acts 10:38: *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.* What areas of my life hunger for God's goodness, healing, and freedom right now? Who do I know that needs those this Christmas? (Spend time praying for them, and for what it would look like to love them well right now.)
9. Micah 5:2: *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.* God seems to love repeating this theme in Scripture over and over—surprising us with the significant emerging from the insignificant, wisdom from what is foolish, strength out of weakness, beauty from ashes, life from death.
 - Where do I see this in the Bible?
 - What does this look like in my life?
 - How does it give me hope?
10. Check out Isaiah 61:1-4.
 - Copy or underline phrases that stick out to you; make a list of characteristics of Jesus you find in this passage.
 - Reflect on how those resonate with you, and what they radiate about God.
 - How do you see these themes in the life of Jesus—and elsewhere in the Bible?
 - How can you live out these elements of God's character?
11. Create a running list of gifts from God to you and those you love this year; of ways He's reminded you you're written on His hands. (This is a great way to reflect in preparation for the New Year, too.)
12. What characteristic do you admire in the characters of the Christmas story? Examples:
 - I love Mary's courage and singularity of heart, bravely choosing God's will despite that it would likely "ruin" her idea of a peaceful marriage and existence in her community, and alter the rest of her life.
 - I love Joseph's quiet perseverance in doing the right thing.
 - I love the Magi's willingness to pursue God over great lengths and extravagant cost, presumably based only on faith in prophecy and a supernatural star.