DECEMBER
2026
ISSUE #17

UPPER ROOM DELIVERANCE MINISTRIES

FAITH | FAMILY | FREEDOM | PURPOSE

KINGDOM LIVING Digest

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

JOHN 3:16 (NKJV)

A SAVIOR IS BORN

HOPE
PEACE
LOVE
JOY
FOR ALL

LEAD-IN ARTICLES

MAIN ARTICLES

KINGDOM LIVING TIPS

REFLECTION & APPLICATION

THE SPIRITUAL THREAD

FROM THE PASTORS' DESK

CHURCH UPDATES

The Gift That Started Everything

Every good thing the believer has received: every truth explored in these pages over the past year and a half, every breakthrough, every renewed mind, every act of obedience, every season of gratitude, every moment of stability in an unstable world; all of it traces back to a single moment in history. A moment so quiet that most of the world missed it entirely. A teenage girl. A borrowed stable. A newborn child wrapped in strips of cloth and laid in a feeding trough because there was no room anywhere else.



That moment changed everything...

Not because of its grandeur. There was none. Not because of its comfort or its convenience. There was neither. It changed everything because of who that child was and what His arrival meant for every human being who would ever live. God had not simply sent a message or a messenger. He had come Himself. He had taken on flesh, entered the story from the inside, and begun the work that only He could complete. The Incarnation was not a dramatic entrance. It was a deliberate descent. The King of all creation chose the lowest possible point of entry so that no human being would ever be able to say that God did not understand what their life felt like from the inside.

December is the month the world sets aside to acknowledge this gift, often imperfectly and partially, but nonetheless. As believers, we have the privilege of going deeper than the surface of the season. We know not just that a child was born but who that child was. We know not just that something remarkable happened in Bethlehem but why it happened and what it accomplished. And we know that the gift given in that stable was not a seasonal offering. It was an eternal one. Given once, sufficient forever, available to anyone who will receive it.

As we close out this year together, everything leads back here. To the gift that started everything. To the One whose arrival made all other things possible.

365 -Day Bible Ready Plan

DECEMBER

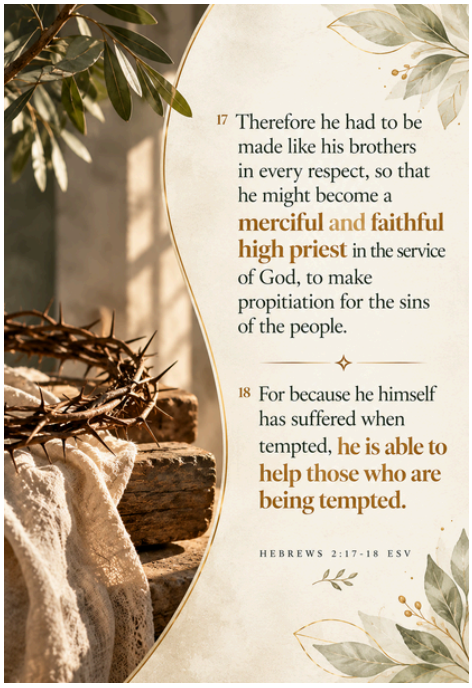
1	DAY 335	☐	EPHESIANS 4:1-16
2	DAY 336	☐	EPHESIANS 6:10-20
3	DAY 337	☐	PHILIPPIANS 2:1-18
4	DAY 338	☐	PHILIPPIANS 3:1-21
5	DAY 339	☐	COLOSSIANS 2:1-15
6	DAY 340	☐	COLOSSIANS 3:1-17
7	DAY 341	☐	1 THESS. 1:1-10
8	DAY 342	☐	1 THESS 4:1-18
9	DAY 343	☐	2 THESS 1:1-12
10	DAY 344	☐	2 THESS 3:1-18
11	DAY 345	☐	1 TIMOTHY 4:1-16
12	DAY 346	☐	1 TIMOTHY 6:3-21
13	DAY 347	☐	2 TIMOTHY 1:1-18
14	DAY 348	☐	2 TIMOTHY 3:1-17
15	DAY 349	☐	TITUS 3:1-11
16	DAY 350	☐	HEBREWS 10:19-39
17	DAY 351	☐	HEBREWS 11:1-40
18	DAY 352	☐	HEBREWS 12:1-13
19	DAY 353	☐	JAMES 1:2-27
20	DAY 354	☐	JAMES 2:1-13
21	DAY 355	☐	JAMES 3:1-12
22	DAY 356	☐	1 PETER 2:1-25
23	DAY 357	☐	1 PETER 3:1-22
24	DAY 358	☐	2 PETER 1:2-21
25	DAY 359	☐	1 JOHN 1:1-10
26	DAY 360	☐	1 JOHN 3:1-24
27	DAY 361	☐	1 JOHN 5:1-21
28	DAY 362	☐	JUDE 1:17-25
29	DAY 363	☐	REV. 1:1-20
30	DAY 364	☐	REV. 21:1-27
31	DAY 365	☐	REV. 22:1-21

GOD WITH US: What the Incarnation Really Means

Of all the names given to the coming Messiah in the pages of Scripture, perhaps none is more breathtaking in its simplicity than the one given in Isaiah 7:14 and fulfilled in Matthew 1:23. Immanuel. God with us. Not God above us, though He is. Not God beyond us, though He transcends everything we can comprehend. Not God watching us from a safe and comfortable distance. But God with us. Present. Near. Inside the human experience.



The theological term for what happened in Bethlehem is the Incarnation, from the Latin meaning in the flesh. It describes the moment when the eternal Son of God took on human nature without surrendering His divine nature, becoming fully God and fully man simultaneously. This is not a concept the human mind can fully contain. It was not meant to be. It was meant to be received in faith and lived in gratitude, because what it means for the believer is staggering.



John 1:1-14 opens with the grandest possible frame of reference. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made. And then, after establishing that this Word is the eternal Creator of everything that exists, John delivers what may be the most remarkable sentence in all of Scripture. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. The One who spoke galaxies into existence chose to enter the world He created through the same process every human being enters it. Completely vulnerable. Entirely dependent. Wrapped in the fragility of human skin.

Why did it have to happen this way? Hebrews 2:17-18 gives us part of the answer. He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted. The Incarnation was not simply a theological statement about who God is. It was a practical act of solidarity. Jesus entered our world so that He could represent us before God and represent God to us, having experienced from the inside everything that makes human life both beautiful and devastating.

This means that when we bring our fears, our grief, our confusion, and our weakness to God, we are not bringing them to someone who manages them from the outside with clinical detachment. We are bringing them to One who has felt the weight of a human body growing tired, who has experienced the sting of betrayal by someone He loved, who has wept at a graveside, who has known hunger and thirst and the particular loneliness of being misunderstood by the people closest to Him.



Hebrews 4:15 assures us that we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.

Immanuel. God with us. Not as a temporary visitor who passed through and returned to comfort. But as a Savior who entered, accomplished, and opened the way for every human being to be permanently reconciled to the God who made them. The Incarnation is not simply the beginning of the Christmas story. It is the foundation of everything the Gospel promises and everything the believer's life is built upon.



RECEIVING THE GIFT: What It Means to Accept What God Offers



The most extraordinary gift in human history was received by very few people on the night it was given. The angels announced it to shepherds, the lowest of the low in their society. A small group of foreign astronomers followed a star across an enormous distance to find it. An elderly man and woman in the temple recognized it immediately when the child was brought before them. And that was largely it. The rest of the world went about its business entirely unaware that everything had changed.

This pattern has continued ever since. The gift is still being offered. It is still available, still sufficient, still carrying the same power it carried on the night it was first given. And still, many people move through life entirely unaware of what is being held out to them, or aware of it but unwilling to do the one thing required to receive it: open their hands.

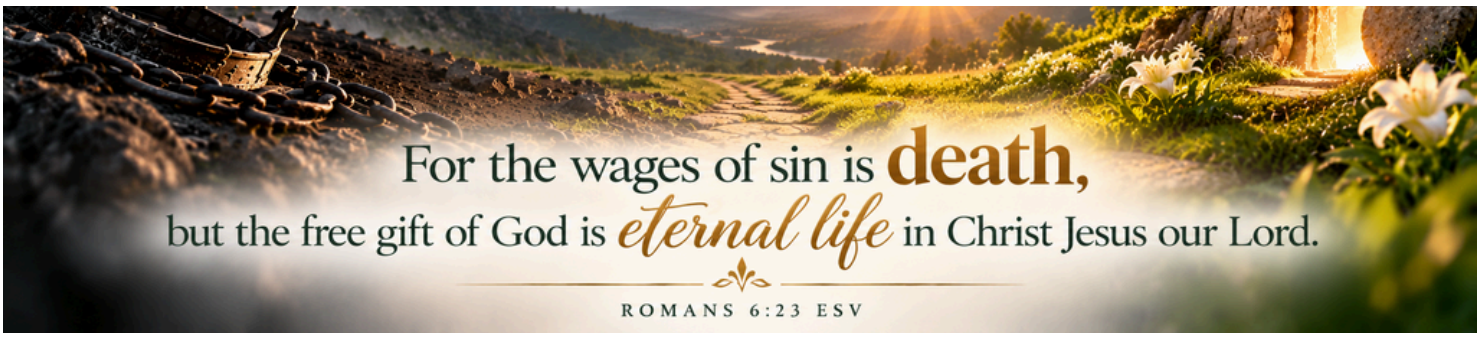
John 1:12 captures this with beautiful clarity. To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. The receiving described here is not passive. It is an active, deliberate acceptance of who Jesus is and what He has done. It is the moment a person stops treating the Gospel as interesting information and begins treating it as the truth their life depends on. It is the shift from knowing about the gift to actually taking it into their hands and allowing it to change everything.



What does receiving this gift actually produce? Second Corinthians 5:17 tells us that anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come. This is the same metamorphosis language we explored in July, applied now to the ultimate transformation that makes all other transformation possible. The renewed mind, the aligned words, the obedient life, the stable faith, the grateful heart; none of these are truly attainable in their fullest expression apart from the gift of new life that only comes through Christ. Everything else this newsletter has explored this year flows from this. The Incarnation is not simply a beautiful story to revisit in December. It is the source from which every dimension of Kingdom living draws its power.

Romans 6:23 frames the gift in its starkest and most glorious terms. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is not a gift that can be earned, deserved, or negotiated. It is given freely to those who receive it. And what it offers is not simply a better version of the life we already had. It is a life of an entirely different quality. Life connected to the source of all life, sustained by the One who created it, and oriented toward an eternity that nothing in this present world can touch or take away.

As this year comes to a close, the most important question any reader of this newsletter can sit with is not which article spoke to them most or which theme resonated most deeply. The most important question is this: have you received the gift? Not have you heard about it, not do you appreciate it theologically, but have you personally, genuinely, and completely opened your hands and received what God has been holding out to you since a night in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago? If the answer is yes, then everything else this year has been building on the right foundation. If the answer is uncertain, then December is a beautiful month to settle it once and for all.



Kingdom Living Tips

CARRYING THE GIFT INTO EVERY DAY

- ✓ Do not let December be the only month you sit with the wonder of the Incarnation. Return to it throughout the year as the foundation of everything you believe.
- ✓ Share the story of what receiving Christ has meant in your life this season. Testimony is one of the most powerful tools of the Gospel.
- ✓ Use the busyness of December deliberately. Let every decoration, every carol, and every gathering be a prompt to return your attention to the One the season is truly about.
- ✓ Give generously this month, not out of obligation but out of overflow. We give because He gave first.
- ✓ As the year ends, take time to review how your faith has grown and deepened. Gratitude for what God has done in you is itself an act of worship.

Reflection & Application

As we close out this year, take time this month for a reflection that spans the full journey. Look back at where you began 2026 and consider what God has been doing in you across these months.

Where has your faith deepened?

Where has your thinking been renewed?

Where have you been challenged to obey, to speak differently, to give thanks in a hard season, or to remain stable when everything around you was shifting?

None of that growth happened by accident. It happened because God is faithful to complete what He begins, and because you chose, month after month, to stay engaged with what He was doing.

As you move into the new year, carry the gift with you. Not just as a memory of what happened in Bethlehem but as the living, active, sustaining power of a Savior who is still Immanuel. Still God with us. Still present. Still enough.

The Spiritual Thread

THE GIFT THAT KEEPS GIVING:

Understanding the Grace of God

PART 1

WHAT GRACE ACTUALLY IS

Last month we concluded our six-part series on Spiritual Stability. Over those months, we traced the journey of a believer learning to remain rooted and anchored in God through every kind of season life presents. As we begin this new series in December, we do so in a month that is entirely fitting for its subject. Because the series we are launching is about the one thing that makes everything else in the Christian life possible: grace.

The word grace is among the most frequently used words in Christian vocabulary. It appears on church signs, in song lyrics, in sermon titles, and in everyday conversation among believers. And yet for a word so commonly used, it is remarkably commonly misunderstood. Many believers have a general sense that grace means God is kind and forgiving, and that is true as far as it goes. But the biblical concept of grace is far richer, far more comprehensive, and far more personally transformative than a general sense of divine kindness.

This series will explore grace from multiple angles across several months. We will look at what it is, what it does, how it is received, how it is sustained, and how it reshapes every dimension of the believer's life. We begin in December, the month of the greatest gift ever given, with the most foundational question of all: what is grace, actually?

DEFINING GRACE

The Greek word most commonly translated as grace in the New Testament is "**CHARIS**". It carries the meaning of gift, favor, or goodwill freely given without expectation of return. In its biblical usage, it describes something given entirely on the basis of the giver's character and generosity rather than the recipient's merit or worthiness. This is the critical distinction that separates grace from every other framework for relating to God that human religion has ever produced.

Every human religious system, apart from biblical Christianity, operates on some version of merit. Do enough good things, and God will favor you. Perform the right rituals with sufficient sincerity, and you will earn divine acceptance. Outweigh your bad deeds with good ones and the scales will tip in your favor. These systems are intuitive because they mirror the way many human relationships work. We earn trust. We receive rewards for performance. We expect to get what we deserve.



Grace does not operate this way. Ephesians 2:8-9 is among the clearest statements of it in Scripture. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Grace is a gift. Not a reward. Not a wage. Not something unlocked by sufficient religious performance. A gift, freely given by a God whose motivation is entirely His own love and generosity rather than anything the recipient has done to deserve it.

This means that grace begins not with us but with God. It originates in His nature. 1 Peter 5:10 describes Him as the God of all grace. Grace is not simply something God dispenses. It is an expression of who He is. And because God does not change, His grace does not run out, does not diminish with our failures, and is not withdrawn when we prove ourselves unworthy of it. Which, left to ourselves, we always are.

GRACE BEYOND SALVATION



One of the most significant misunderstandings of grace among believers is the idea that it applies primarily to the moment of salvation and recedes somewhat after that. As if God's grace carried us across the threshold of new life and then largely handed responsibility back to us. This misreading produces a Christianity that begins in freedom and gradually settles into exhausting self-effort.

But Scripture presents grace as far more comprehensive than a one-time entry point. Romans 5:2 tells us that through Christ we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. The tense is present and ongoing. We stand in grace. We live in it. We are sustained by it daily. The same grace that initiated our salvation is the grace that empowers our growth, sustains our obedience, restores us after failure, and will ultimately carry us to completion.

Hebrews 4:16 gives us one of the most practical pictures of ongoing grace available in Scripture. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Grace is available not just at the beginning of the Christian life but in every moment of need within it. Grace for the temptation you are currently facing. Grace for the relationship that is currently broken. Grace for the obedience that currently feels beyond your strength. Grace for the season of suffering that currently makes no sense. The throne of grace is not a destination we visit once. It is a resource we draw from continually.



2 Corinthians 12:9 records one of the most personal and intimate statements about grace in all of Paul's writing. My grace is sufficient for you, God tells him, for My power is made perfect in weakness.



Grace is not simply a theological concept. It is a living, active, sustaining power that shows up most clearly precisely where human ability runs out. The believer who has learned to live in dependence on grace rather than in reliance on their own strength has discovered one of the most liberating truths available in the Christian life.

In the months ahead, we will explore how grace operates in specific areas of life. How it reshapes our identity, our relationship with failure, our approach to growth, and our posture toward others. But it begins here, in December, with this foundation: grace is not a seasonal gift. It is the permanent atmosphere of the Kingdom life. And the God who gave it first in Bethlehem has never stopped giving it since.

NEXT MONTH: THE GIFT THAT KEEPS GIVING, PART 2 — GRACE AND IDENTITY: WHO YOU ARE WHEN GRACE DEFINES YOU

From the Pastor's Desk

THE WONDER WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE

PASTOR LILLIE P. POWELL



There is a particular kind of wonder that belongs to the Christmas season. Children feel it most easily, that breathless sense that something extraordinary is happening, that the world is somehow more alive and more full of possibility than it was before. As we grow older, the wonder can fade, replaced by familiarity, by busyness, by the accumulated weight of too many Decembers that looked more like obligations than celebrations.

But the story of the Incarnation was never meant to become familiar. It was always meant to stop us in our tracks. God became a man. The Creator entered His creation. The One who holds the universe together allowed Himself to be held in the arms of a teenage girl in a borrowed stable in a small town that most people had never heard of. If we have heard that story enough times that it no longer moves us, we have not understood it more deeply. We have simply stopped paying attention.

My prayer for every reader this December is a return to wonder. Not the manufactured sentimentality of the season, but the genuine, theological, life-altering wonder of what actually happened in Bethlehem and what it means for every one of us. Let it hit you fresh this year. God came for you. That is not a small thing. It never was.

THE GIFT THAT HAS NO EXPIRATION

PASTOR JONNIE M. KING



We live in a world of things that expire. Opportunities close. Seasons end. Offers run out. The culture we live in has trained us to move quickly because good things do not last, and the window to receive them is always narrower than we think.

The gift of Christ operates on an entirely different timeline. It has no expiration date. It was offered freely two thousand years ago, and it is being offered just as freely today, with the same power, the same sufficiency, and the same transforming effect on every life that genuinely receives it. The cross did not accomplish something that fades. It accomplished something eternal. And the life it makes available is not a limited-time offer but an open invitation that stands until the last possible moment for every last person.

As we close out this year, I want to remind every reader of something simple but profound: what God gave in Bethlehem was not just for the first century or for people who feel they have their lives together or for those who came to faith early and have walked faithfully ever since. It was for you. Right now. In exactly the season you are in and with every complication your life currently carries. The gift is still available. And if you have already received it, then this December is your invitation to receive it more deeply, more gratefully, and more fully than ever before.



Heavenly Father,

We thank You for the gift that changed everything.

For the moment You stepped out of eternity and into time, out of glory and into a stable, out of heaven and into our story.

We thank You that You did not send a message when what we needed was Your presence, that You did not offer a system when what we needed was a Savior.

As we close out this year, we receive again the gift You have been giving since Bethlehem.

Let the wonder of it never grow ordinary in our hearts.

Let the power of it never stop transforming our lives.

And let the joy of it overflow from us into every person around us who has not yet received it for themselves.

You are Immanuel. God with us. And that changes everything.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

CHURCH UPDATES





CONNECT WITH US!

www.upperroomdeliverance.com
info@upperroomdeliverance.com
229.723.9161