

A PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS

REST

Oh Lord, You know me so well.

You know I'm worried and bothered about so many things. Teach me again the meaning of Christmas. Show me how to celebrate the birth of our Savior. Tune my heart to wonder at Your beauty and sing Your praise.

You, Emmanuel, God with us, all glory and power and authority contained within a little child clinging to His mother for milk, for cuddling, and for soothing.

You, the Word of God who spoke the world into existence... became as One without words; You cooed and gurgled as we all once did, learned to sound out syllables one by one.

You, the Holy One of God, brilliant in Your majesty and commanding in authority... lowered Yourself to walk our dusty streets, chew food at our tables, and nap in uncomfortable wooden quarters.

You, the Alpha and Omega, the One who has no beginning and no end... You pierced through time and space to take on flesh and be bound by the same laws of physics as us--to age, to wrinkle, to hurt, to groan as the crown of thorns was shoved onto Your forehead.

You, the Lion of Judah, fierce and feared by angels and demons, commanding angel armies with one glance... You became the Lamb of God, meek and mild, led to an unjust death by the very ones You came to save, slaughtered like a sacrifice to cover us with Your holy blood.

You, the Prince of Peace... endured the violent oppression of evil men so that You could bring Your Kingdom here among us, a Kingdom of peace and righteousness, a Kingdom where all are welcomed to sit at Your table, a Kingdom where there is no more strife, no more malice, no more hatred, no more envy, no more comparison, no more worry, no more stress.

You, precious Jesus... You are the One we celebrate. Forgive me for ever making it about the cookies and the ornaments and the gifts and the holiday hub-bub. This season is for You.

You know that all I really want for Christmas is a wonderful time with my family, but I overcommit, overreach, and overreact, and in the end, there's just too much stress and hurt going around. All my best efforts collapse on themselves and I tell myself I'll do better next year, only to repeat the same cycle again.

I don't want that this year.

So I'm coming to You with open arms and an open heart. Here I am, in all my mess, with all the urgent things to do screaming at me from my life, and all my dreams of a magical Christmas dangling just out of reach. I can't do this on my own, Lord. I need You.

Quiet my heart with Your love, Lord. Speak Your peace over my life as You spoke stillness over the storming waters.

Bring healing and restoration to the parts of my heart that writhe in pain of losing a loved one, of saying good-bye too soon, of hopes dashed and dreams destroyed.

You, the Resurrection and Life, breathe new life in these deadened parts of my soul. Pulse new hope in the parts of me that I thought would never live again.

Fill me with the joy of Your presence, Master. Help me order my day so that I always find time to dwell in Your courts and dance with thanksgiving for all You have done. Teach me that strength and power belong to You alone, and You give abundantly more than we can ask for or imagine when we bring our requests before You. Give me energy to faithfully steward the responsibilities You've entrusted to me. Show me what things on my list need done and what I can leave undone. And give me Your heart for those around me; let me hear Your whispered reminders to stop DO-ing and enjoy BE-ing.

Yours, o Lord, are the heavens and earth and everything in them, even this tiny corner of the universe that I call my own. I give it to You this Christmas season, with open arms and an open heart. Be magnified in me, and may Your favor rest on all those who seek Your face.

In Jesus' Name.

Amen