



# EVERYDAY GOSPEL

*Christmas Devotional*

PAUL DAVID TRIPP

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“Paul Tripp’s *Everyday Gospel* is a wonder. It’s brilliantly written, clear, concise, Christ-exalting, true to God’s word, enriching to the mind, encouraging to the heart, and overflowing with gospel grace. Every paragraph has the ring of truth. If you want a daily dose of God’s life-giving wisdom and kindness, this book is for you.”

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**Jeremy Treat**, Pastor for Preaching and Vision, Reality LA, Los Angeles, California; Professor of Theology, Biola University; author, *The Crucified King*, *Seek First*, and *The Atonement*



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*Everyday Gospel Christmas Devotional*

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## INTRODUCTION

I love Christmas. You would struggle to find someone as enthusiastic as Paul Tripp about all the festivities that fill a typical December calendar. I love baking Christmas cookies, decorating Christmas trees (we have three!), attending Christmas concerts, and shopping for Christmas gifts for loved ones.

Yet simultaneously this season makes me sad. The chaotic cultural emphasis on Christmas has flipped the true meaning of Advent upside down. What should be a celebratory and reflective season, in which we rejoice in the incarnation of the Creator and surrender worshipfully to his lordship, has become a frenzied pursuit of manufactured delights. We have “exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:25).

Particularly for our children, the lie being actively promoted is how their lives will be made infinitely better by possessing a particular manufactured item. For families seeking to focus the wonder of their kids away from the next trinket or toy and toward the wonder of the coming of our great Lord and Savior, Christmas has become a parent’s nightmare and a retailer’s dream.

So I humbly present to you this resource that may help in the battle for your family’s attention. The *Everyday Gospel Christmas Devotional* is a twenty-five-day Bible reading plan with my commentary that will take you from December 1 through Christmas morning. My prayer is that the glory of the incarnation of the Creator would become far more attractive than the manufactured delights of Christmas so that we truly come and adore Christ the Lord, as the classic hymn we sing declares.

Why don’t you and your family and your church journey with me for the first twenty-five days of December, walking through the garden of wisdom, truth, and grace that God prepared for us when

he guided the recording and preservation of his word? As you read each of these Christmas entries, remember that the Bible is a story with a singular focus: to celebrate Jesus.

Nothing could be more important this December than spending daily time in the word, rejoicing that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14). He is our hope and the reason for this Advent season!

PAUL DAVID TRIPP

## DECEMBER 1

GENESIS 3:14–21

*God doesn't wait too long to reveal the biblical narrative. The whole story is in compressed form in the first three chapters of Genesis.*

Genesis begins with the most brilliant, mind-bending, and heart-engaging introduction to a book ever written. God knows how much we need the creation-to-destiny themes of the biblical narrative in order to make sense of our lives, so he lovingly gives us those dominant themes right up front. The beginning of the Bible is wonderful, awe-inspiring, heartbreaking, cautionary, and hope-instilling all at once. Since God created us to be meaning-makers, he immediately presents us with the wonderful and awful realities that we need to understand in order to make proper sense of who we are and what life is really all about.

The opening chapters of Genesis have three foundational themes.

1. *In the center of all that is, there is a God of incalculable glory.* The first four words of Genesis say it all: “In the beginning, God.” Here is the ultimate fact through which every other fact of life is properly understood. There is a God. He is the Creator of everything that exists. He is glorious in power, authority, wisdom, sovereignty, and love. Since we are his creatures, knowing him, loving him, worshipping him, and obeying him define our identity, meaning, and purpose as human beings.

2. *Sin is the ultimate human tragedy. Its legacy is destruction and death.* Genesis 3 is the most horrible, saddest chapter ever written. In an act of outrageous rebellion, Adam and Eve stepped over God’s wise and holy boundaries, ushering in a horrible plague of iniquity that would infect every human heart. Because sin is a matter of the heart, we are confronted in this narrative with the fact

that our greatest problem in life is us, and because it is, we have no power to escape it on our own.

3. *A Savior will come, crush the power of evil, and provide redemption for his people.* The first three chapters of the Bible end with glorious hope. We are encouraged to understand that sin is not ultimate—God is. And he had already set a plan in motion to do for us, through the Son to come, what we could not do for ourselves. A second Adam would come, defeat temptation, crush the evil one, and restore us to God. As soon as sin rears its ugly face, redemption is promised. What grace!

It really is true that three themes course through God's amazing word: *creation, fall, and redemption*. They form the lens through which we can look at and understand everything in our lives. What a sweet grace it is that immediately in his word God makes himself known, alerts us to the tragedy of sin, and welcomes us into the hope of the saving grace to be found in the seed of the woman, his Son, the Lord Jesus. We are left with the riches of a single truth that is the core of everything the Bible has to say: Because God is a God of grace, mercy really will triumph over judgment.

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REFLECTION

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*How might reflecting on the three themes of creation, fall, and redemption help to prepare you for the celebration of Christ's first advent and to fill you with anticipation of his second coming?*

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PRAYER

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*Creator God, I praise you for the glory and beauty of this world that you have made. And I praise you for the glory and beauty of your Son, who has come to rescue us from our sin, which has so marred this world. Thank you that he has accomplished all that the first Adam could not. In Jesus's name, amen.*

## DECEMBER 2

GENESIS 21:1–7

*So much of our fear, discouragement, anxiety, and worry is the result of underestimating what God is willing and able to do.*

Rest and patience of heart are not found in figuring out what is going on or conjuring up in our minds how in the world God is going to do what he's promised us that he would do. Rest and patience of heart are found in trusting the one who has it all figured out and knows exactly how he will accomplish what he has promised he will do. We are limited human beings. We all carry spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical limits with us wherever we go. We are all limited in righteousness, wisdom, and strength. Unless we are resting in the presence and power of the Lord, we will evaluate situations from the perspective of our many limits. This means that what appears to us to be completely impossible is quite possible with our Lord. His strength, his understanding, his compassion, and his grace are infinite.

Sometimes we make good-hearted promises that later we realize we are unable to keep. We know things need to get done, but we do not have the power or the wisdom to do them. There is nothing that God has promised to do or that we need him to do that he is unable to do. Nothing. We have every blessing that we have because he has the power to control the forces of nature, the events of history, and the unfolding of situations. Not only has he created everything, but everything he has created does his bidding. He is magnificent, almighty in power and wisdom. He can and will do what he has promised to do.

So God was not limited at all by Abraham or Sarah's age, any more than any other human limit would inhibit his ability to do what he has promised he would do. Genesis 21:1–7 records the

birth of the promised son, Isaac. It also records that Abraham was one hundred. That's right: one hundred years old—and Sarah was in her nineties. The God who is the Lord of heaven and earth is also Lord of the womb of an old woman, and he can do through it what he has promised to do. He is the Lord. He is not limited by our weaknesses.

When I read the story of Abraham and Sarah's long wait for a promised son, I think of another Son that was promised. The hope of the world rested on the shoulders of this promised Son, but as century followed century, it seemed as though this Son would never come. But one night in a stable in Bethlehem, to a lowly carpenter and his wife the promised Messiah came. Nothing in all of those centuries that had passed was able to stop the promise of God. Jesus, Son of Man, Son of God, the Lamb, the Savior was born at just the right time to provide justification, reconciliation, forgiveness, and new life to all who believe. God's promises are not limited by human weakness or the passage of time. Don't give way to fear; God will do what he has promised to do.

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REFLECTION

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*Besides the birth of a promised son, what other promises of God do we see fulfilled in the coming and birth of Jesus in Bethlehem?*

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PRAYER

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*Lord, I stand in awe of your almighty power and wisdom. Thank you for using these attributes for your own glory and the good of your people—especially in sending the promised Messiah, your Son, the Lord Jesus. I praise you in his name, amen.*

## DECEMBER 3

EXODUS 4:1-17

*God calls us to represent him in this fallen world  
not because we are able but because he is.*

Moses is living as a fugitive in the wilderness because he had killed an Egyptian taskmaster. But God has plans for Moses. God has chosen Moses to be his tool of redeeming power. He is calling Moses back to Egypt to stand before Pharaoh and demand the release of all the Israelite slaves (Ex. 3). Put yourself in Moses's shoes. Would you be excited about going back to Egypt? Would you feel confident to stand before the most powerful ruler of the world and demand that he free a group of people that was a major element in his nation's economic engine?

In this moment, Moses does what we often do when God calls us. We compare our natural gifts and abilities to the size of the task, to gauge whether we are capable of doing what God has called us to do. God doesn't call us because we have, in ourselves, everything we need to accomplish what he's calling us to do. No, he calls weak and broken people to do huge and important things because he is able. He is with us, and he empowers us to do what he wills for us to do. Every one of God's commands is accompanied by his empowering grace. Exodus 4 records how God demonstrates his power to fearful Moses to assure him that he will go down to Egypt and stand before Pharaoh not in his own power, but in the awesome power of the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

But Moses isn't easy to convince. God says, "I can even turn the waters of the Nile into blood as a demonstration of my power before Pharaoh" (see Ex. 4:9). Moses responds, "I am not eloquent . . . I am slow of speech and of tongue" (4:10). God says, "Moses, I created your mouth. I am the Lord, and I will go with you and

teach you what to say” (see Ex. 4:11–12). I love this picture of the patience of the Lord, working to take Moses’s eyes off himself and onto the majestic power of his God. Sadly, Moses responds, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else” (4:13).

God calls husbands, wives, parents, workers, neighbors, friends, university students, the young, and the old to represent him in this dark world. He calls average people to do things that are anything but average. Is there a place in your life where you are responding, “Oh, Lord, please send someone else”?

Another person was later called to provide redemption from slavery, this time the slavery to sin. His name was Jesus. His call was not just to speak but to die, so that we could know freedom as the children of God. It is in the power of his redeeming grace that we are able to say yes to the call of God, because we know Jesus’s death and resurrection guarantee just the grace we need to do what God has called us to do at just the time we need it. In him weak and fearful people are made able, and that’s very good news.

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REFLECTION

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*How does Jesus free us from our slavery to sin and death? In what ways did the Father prepare and equip Jesus for that task?*

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PRAYER

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*Dear God, help me to represent you well. Allow others to see your love and glory as I serve you. And thank you for sending one to represent me perfectly, my Savior, Jesus, through whom I come to you now. Amen.*



## DECEMBER 4

RUTH 4:13–22

*Often when God seems absent in moments of hardship, he is actually exercising his sovereignty to deliver good gifts of grace to his children.*

We have all been through tough moments of suffering when we wonder where God is and are confused about what he is doing. If you read through the biblical narrative, you will soon have to let go of the conclusion that hardship means God is absent, distant, uninvolved, or uncaring. Behind dark clouds of difficulty is a God who is actively working for the good of his children. God regularly takes his children places they never would have planned to go in order to produce in and through them things they never could have produced on their own. It's important to recognize that the workings of God's grace aren't always predictable or comfortable. Often when we think grace has passed us by, God's grace is at work, just not in the way we expect.

The book of Ruth, one of the greatest biblical stories, contains a compelling and beautiful substory. On the surface Ruth is a beautiful love story, and one of the few biblical stories with women as main characters. But there is a deeper, more significant love story in the book of Ruth. It is the story of God's unshakable, unstoppable love for his children. This story of human hardship and human love is also God's assurance that he will exercise his wisdom and his sovereignty, he will remember his covenant promises, he will be faithful, and, through hardship, he will deliver gifts of kindness and grace to his own. Although the story of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz is compelling, it is the Lord who takes center stage. Through the vehicles of hardship and human love, God establishes the direction of the rest of the redemptive story.

At the end of the story, Ruth and Boaz have a son. We read, “Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, ‘A son has been born to Naomi.’ They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David” (Ruth 4:16–17). These words give us a sense of what this story has been about all along. God doesn’t just deliver Ruth and unite her to Boaz, but he delivers to this family a son. This son, Obed, will have a son, Jesse, and Jesse will have a son, David, and ultimately out of David will come a son, the Son of David, Jesus. Through this little story of hardship and love, God sets things in place to deliver something that is anything but little: the ultimate promise, the gift of gifts, the Savior, Jesus Christ, through whom God’s redeeming love will flow.

God will work and continue to work his redeeming plan until that plan is complete; this is the ultimate story behind every other story. Remember that it is at the intersection of God’s sovereignty and his grace that life and hope are to be found.

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REFLECTION

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*In what ways does God work through the lives of Mary and Joseph to bring his redemptive plan to fruition in the birth and life of Jesus?*

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PRAYER

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*Lord of Heaven, your love is unshakable, unstoppable. I praise you that you have injected daily reminders of this great truth into my life. Keep me from ever losing sight of your covenant commitment to your people—rooted in your faithful and eternal love for your Son, through whom I pray, amen.*

## DECEMBER 5

2 KINGS 23:1–14

*No matter how bad and spiritually dark things may seem,  
don't ever stop praying for moral and spiritual revival.*

Just when you get to the point where you want to stop reading the Old Testament because it has become so dark and discouraging, out of the darkness rises young King Josiah. Rather than reading about more idolatry, infanticide, desecration of the house of the Lord, or consultations with fortune tellers and necromancers, you find real spiritual revival. In the darkness a bright light shines through the moral commitments of a young and godly king. One of the first things this king does is to lead the children of Judah in a revival service. He leads the people in a covenant-renewing ceremony, in which they again vow their allegiance to the covenant of the Lord. Josiah then leads his people in a wholesale destruction of idol high places and idol practices. Out of utter spiritual darkness comes this moment of spiritual revival. God's law is observed and his covenant renewed. It had not seemed that this would be the next chapter for the people of Israel; and, yes, God would later raise up Babylon to purge his people and call them back to himself. But the beauty of this moment of revival should not be diminished.

A rallying cry for the Protestant Reformers was the Latin phrase *post tenebras lux* ("after darkness, light"). Spiritual darkness had blanketed Europe, and the light and glory of the grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ seemed like a tiny flickering flame. But out of the darkness God raised up Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other gospel lights. The flames of the gospel burned bright in Europe, spread throughout the world, and burn brightly still today.

Between the "already" and the "not yet," *post tenebras lux* is and has always been the hope of God's people. This hope is rooted in

the goodness, holiness, power, promises, and grace of God. It is about holding on to the belief that God will not let his grace die, that he will not let his plan fade away, and that he will keep every one of the promises he has made.

The birth of Jesus was a monumental *post tenebras lux* moment. He came into this dark world as the light shining in darkness (John 1:5). Jesus is the eternal light, the eternal torch that nothing or no one could ever extinguish. He shines into the hearts of all who put their trust in him.

The world might seem dark to you today, but another *post tenebras lux* moment is coming, when the light will come for his own, ushering them into his final kingdom of light, life, peace, and righteousness forever. Darkness will not ultimately defeat the light, and so, with the same hope as the Reformers, we say *post tenebras lux*.

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REFLECTION

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*How has Jesus brought light into this world? How has he brought light into your life specifically?*

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PRAYER

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*Heavenly Father, I rest in the fact that your grace is everlasting. You are the sovereign King of this universe who will not let his plan fade away, who will always be faithful to his promises. Help me to rest in these truths. May I grow in patience, not in anxiety. Cause me to rest in Jesus, my shepherd and King. In his name I pray, amen.*