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AN

anticipating

ADVENT

FIVE WEEKLY

DEVOTIONS

TO AWAKEN

YOUR HEART

TO IMMANUEL

author

*An Abiding Advent: Five Weekly Devotions to Awaken Your Heart to
Immanuel* by Corella Roberts

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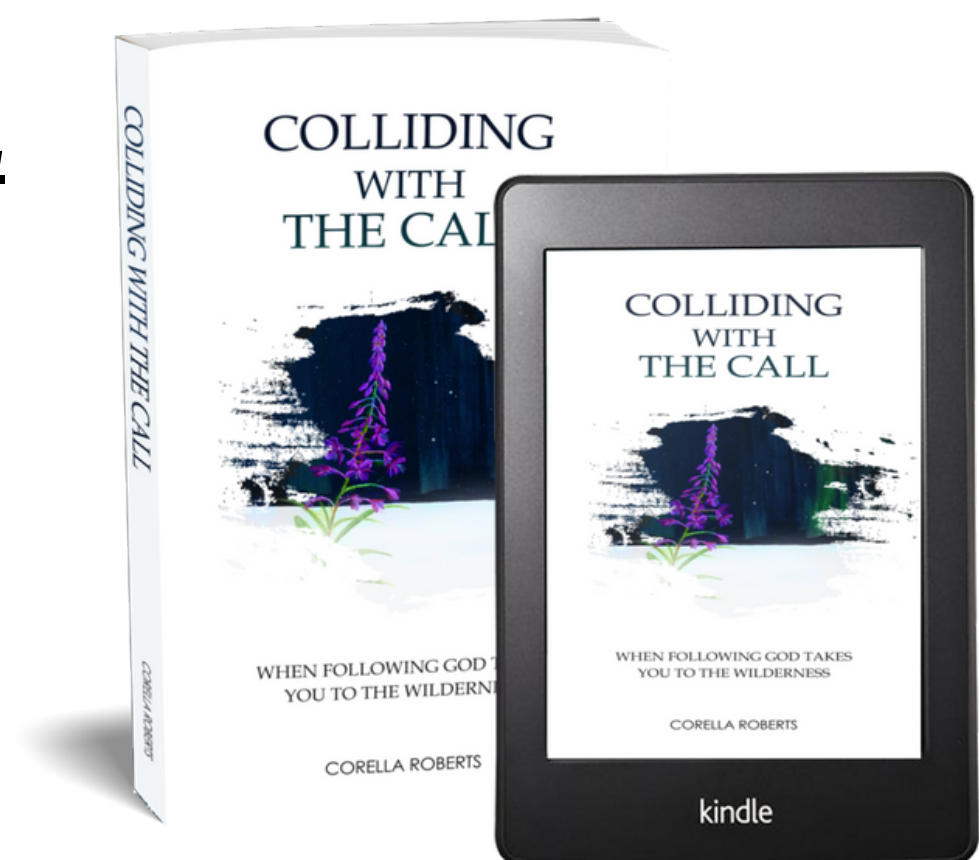
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Read Corella's full-length account of finding God's nearness in her wilderness season as a missionary teacher in remote Alaska, a place of not only testing, but also transformation.

COLLIDING WITH THE CALL
WHEN FOLLOWING GOD
TAKES YOU TO THE WILDERNESS



introduction

I, for one, adore Christmas. I love the music--the jazzy, the cheezy, the carols--the twinkling lights, the togetherness of family, the gifts, and the food. Oh, the food ... but, before I start drooling and daydreaming of that most wonderful time, I want to awaken my heart to what truly matters. Who truly matters.

You do, too. That's why you're here, right? Because you know Christ is more important than the holly jolly, and, in the midst of it all, you want to know him. You want to experience the presence of Immanuel, God with us, in the everyday moments of your life. You want to come and behold Him on more than just a Sunday morning. You want Him to meet you, right where you are, and be absolutely certain that He will never leave.

If you don't have that desire yet, my prayer is that it will be awakened in your heart over the next five weeks.

WHY FIVE WEEKS?

Advent, in the church tradition, is a month-long time to prepare one's heart for the coming, the advent, of Jesus. Call it Catholic or Christian or whatever you want, the point is to give direction and focus to our thoughts as we anticipate the Messiah. This remembering is beautiful and brimming full of meaning, and if you haven't done it before I think you will absolutely love joining hearts with thousands around the globe who are practicing similar acts of remembrance and preparation at the same time.

Each week leading up to Christmas, plus Christmas day, will focus on one of the traditional Advent themes: hope, peace, love, joy, and Christ.

how to use this devotional

First, I'd like to suggest that you print this out. Keep it somewhere you'll remember, and start using it on the Sunday that falls four Sundays before Christmas (that's November 29th if you're reading this in 2020). Your final devotional will be on Christmas Day itself.

I love things--real things--that make the spiritual more tangible and understandable. For this reason, I'd recommend that you enrich your experience with the visible symbol of an Advent Wreath. (There are plenty of DIY ideas out there in internet wonderland!) Everyone loves lighting candles, right?

You can do this devotional by yourself or with your family. You can join the Release, Rediscover, Restore Facebook group to do it with an online community. Or you can start your own group, whether in person or online. As long as the purpose is to grow in intimacy and awareness of Immanuel's presence with you, you'll find it enriching.

Each Sunday, you'll awaken your spirit for the day by meditating on the scripture given. And by meditating I don't mean just reading it once. I mean reading it at least three times, listening for the whisper of the Spirit of God behind each word. Which phrase grips your heart more than the rest? Why do you think God is emphasizing that part of the passage to you? Really ruminate on the meaning of the verses, and let them settle deep into your mind and heart.

Next is the breath prayer, a simple way to keep the crux of a scriptural idea before your mind all day. These prayers have their own page at the back so they can be easily printed and stuck onto your fridge, mirror, or dashboard. Every time you see it, pause for at least three deep breaths in God's presence and repeat the prayer as you inhale and exhale. Leave it there all week as a gentle reminder to wait and watch for Immanuel.

Finally, you'll reflect upon your day. A tried and true practice for awakening our hearts to God's nearness is to pause each day and ask some simple questions guided by the idea of searching for both His fingerprints and your own awareness of His touch. Don't skip this part. It will reveal critical aspects in your relationship with God. And actually write down your reflections. The slow, intentional act of writing solidifies ideas in our hearts and deepens our understanding of our own souls.

LET'S ABIDE

No one and nothing can enliven your heart, brighten your days, and nourish your soul like Immanuel. Every moment spent awake to His presence is a moment lived in the fullness of joy and the light of eternity.

Jesus came to be with you. And He is coming again to take you to be with Him. Let's awaken to His nearness and abide in His love as we both celebrate His birth and long for His return this Advent season.

*"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."
All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through
the prophet:*

*"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they
will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

- Matthew 1:21-23

first sunday of advent - hope

MORNING ~

Light the first candle, representing hope, if you're using an Advent Wreath.

*But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord,
I wait for God my Savior;
my God will hear me.
Do not gloat over me, my enemy!
Though I have fallen, I will rise.
Though I sit in darkness,
the Lord will be my light.
Because I have sinned against him,
I will bear the Lord's wrath,
until he pleads my case and upholds my cause.
He will bring me out into the light;
I will see his righteousness.*

- Micah 7:7-9

Meditate on the verses above by reading them aloud two times. Ask the Spirit to open your ears to anything He might be saying to you. Read it aloud one more time, paying careful attention to where your heart says, "Yes!" and to where it pulls back even the slightest bit in doubt. Sit with the phrases or words that stirred you, and let the Lord reveal what He wants to in these next few moments.

AFTERNOON ~

Inhale: I watch in hope

Exhale: for you, Lord

Pause from the scurry of your day to breathe this prayer in and out. Let your breaths come slow and steady as you recite this verse. Put it somewhere visible and breathe it slowly every time you see it.

EVENING ~

Before you go to bed, give yourself ten undistracted minutes to reflect. Put all the screens well out of reach and sit down with your journal or a notebook. Prayerfully reflect on these questions:

- When did I sense Immanuel's presence most clearly today?
- When did I feel the most distant from His love?
- What is God saying to me about hope right now?

hope

second sunday of advent - peace

MORNING ~

Light the second candle, representing peace, if you're using an Advent Wreath.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

- Luke 2:8-14

Meditate on the verses above by reading them aloud two times. Ask the Spirit to open your ears to anything He might be saying to you. Read it aloud one more time, imagining yourself with the shepherds. What do you see, hear, smell, and touch? What emotions do you feel? Which of the angel's words excite you the most?

AFTERNOON ~

Inhale: Glory to God.

Exhale: Peace on earth.

Pause from the scurry of your day to breathe this prayer in and out. Let your breaths come slow and steady as you recite this verse. Put it somewhere visible and breathe it slowly every time you see it.

EVENING ~

Before you go to bed, give yourself ten undistracted minutes to reflect. Put all the screens well out of reach and sit down with your journal or a notebook. Prayerfully reflect on these questions:

- How did Immanuel pursue my heart today?
- When did I sense His peace?
- What is God saying to me about peace right now?

peace

Third Sunday of Advent - Love

MORNING ~

Light the third candle, representing love, if you're using an Advent Wreath.

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Romans 8:31-39

Meditate on the verses above by reading them aloud two times. Ask the Spirit to open your ears to anything He might be saying to you. Read it aloud one more time, paying attention to the phrases that reassure you the most. Why are these thoughts so comforting? Do they reveal an underlying fear? What is God saying about His love in the face of that fear?

AFTERNOON ~

Inhale: Nothing can separate me

Exhale: from Your love.

Pause from the scurry of your day to breathe this prayer in and out. Let your breaths come slow and steady as you recite this verse. Put it somewhere visible and breathe it slowly every time you see it.

EVENING ~

Before you go to bed, give yourself ten undistracted minutes to reflect. Put all the screens well out of reach and sit down with your journal or a notebook. Prayerfully reflect on these questions:

- What ways did God show me His love most clearly today?
- Were there any times I ignored or resisted His love?
- What is Immanuel saying to me about love right now?

Love

fourth sunday of advent - joy

MORNING ~

Light the fourth candle, representing joy, if you're using an Advent Wreath.

*Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.*

*Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering and come before him.*

Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

Tremble before him, all the earth!

The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved.

*Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;
let them say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!"*

*Let the sea resound, and all that is in it;
let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them!*

*Let the trees of the forest sing,
let them sing for joy before the Lord,
for he comes to judge the earth.*

- 1 Chron. 16:28-33

Meditate on the verses above by reading them aloud two times. Ask the Spirit to open your ears to anything He might be saying to you. Read it aloud one more time, visualizing the literal rejoicing of all creation. What captivates your imagination the most? What other words or phrases is the Lord highlighting?



AFTERNOON ~

Inhale: I will sing for joy

Exhale: with all creation.

Pause from the scurry of your day to breathe this prayer in and out. Let your breaths come slow and steady as you recite this verse. Put it somewhere visible and breathe it slowly every time you see it.

EVENING ~

Before you go to bed, give yourself ten undistracted minutes to reflect. Put all the screens well out of reach and sit down with your journal or a notebook. Prayerfully reflect on these questions:

- What happened in my heart as I meditated on joy throughout the day?
- Do I find it easy or difficult to believe that God also rejoices in *me*?
- How did I experience the joy of Immanuel's presence today?



christmas day - christ

MORNING ~

Light the final candle, representing Christ, if you're using an Advent Wreath.

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.*

*And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.*

*Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be
no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his
kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and
righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the
Lord Almighty will accomplish this.*

- Isaiah 9:6-7

Meditate on the verses above by reading them aloud two times. Ask the Spirit to open your ears to anything He might be saying to you. Read it aloud one more time, listening for the words that feel most meaningful and weighty to you. Which name of the Messiah speaks to you most deeply? What characteristic of Christ do you sense a yearning for in your soul?

AFTERNOON ~

Inhale: To me a child is born.

Exhale: To me a son is given.

Pause from the scurry of your day to breathe this prayer in and out. Let your breaths come slow and steady as you recite this verse. Put it somewhere visible and breathe it slowly every time you see it.

EVENING ~

Before you go to bed, give yourself ten undistracted minutes to reflect. Put all the screens well out of reach and sit down with your journal or a notebook. Prayerfully reflect on these questions:

- What gifts did Immanuel give me today?
- When did I specifically receive the gift of His presence?
- How can I keep my heart awakened to God-with-me in the coming days?

christ

A PRAYER FOR THE HEART LONGING TO ABIDE IN IMMANUEL

My dear Jesus, the one who saves me from my sins, how can it be that you pursue me so tirelessly? How can it be that the Almighty God, whom all creation shouts for in joy, is also the helpless babe in the manger? How could you don the name Immanuel, setting aside the throneroom of heaven in favor of the muck of a stable, the mess of my heart?

I won't ever fully understand, but I'm so grateful. Thank you for your ever-present companionship; thank you for leaving the ninety-nine for me. Thank you for giving me spiritual eyes and a heart wide awake to your nearness. Keep me here, Jesus. Keep me attentive to your goodness, shown to me a thousand different ways every day. I want to live wrapped up in your love like never before.

Turn my heart from the false pleasures and myriad distractions of the world. In all circumstances, good and bad, just give me Jesus, and I'll be satisfied.

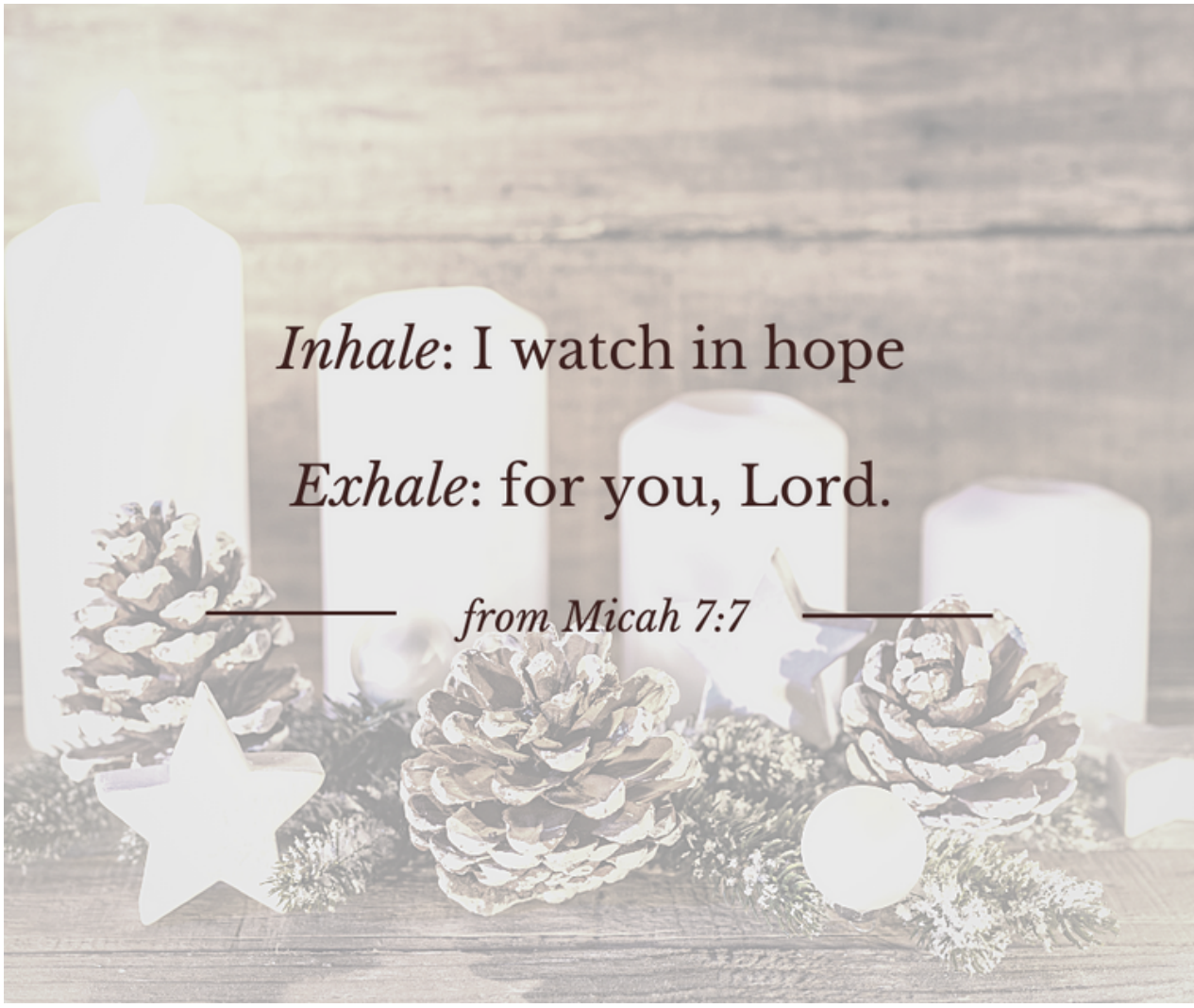
You came to abide with me--now I just want to abide with you. Please, Lord, grant me the fullness of joy in your presence that you promised, and "bind my wandering heart to thee".

Immanuel. I breathe in your nearness.

God with me. I breathe out your love.

Amen ... let it be so.

immanuel



Inhale: I watch in hope

Exhale: for you, Lord.

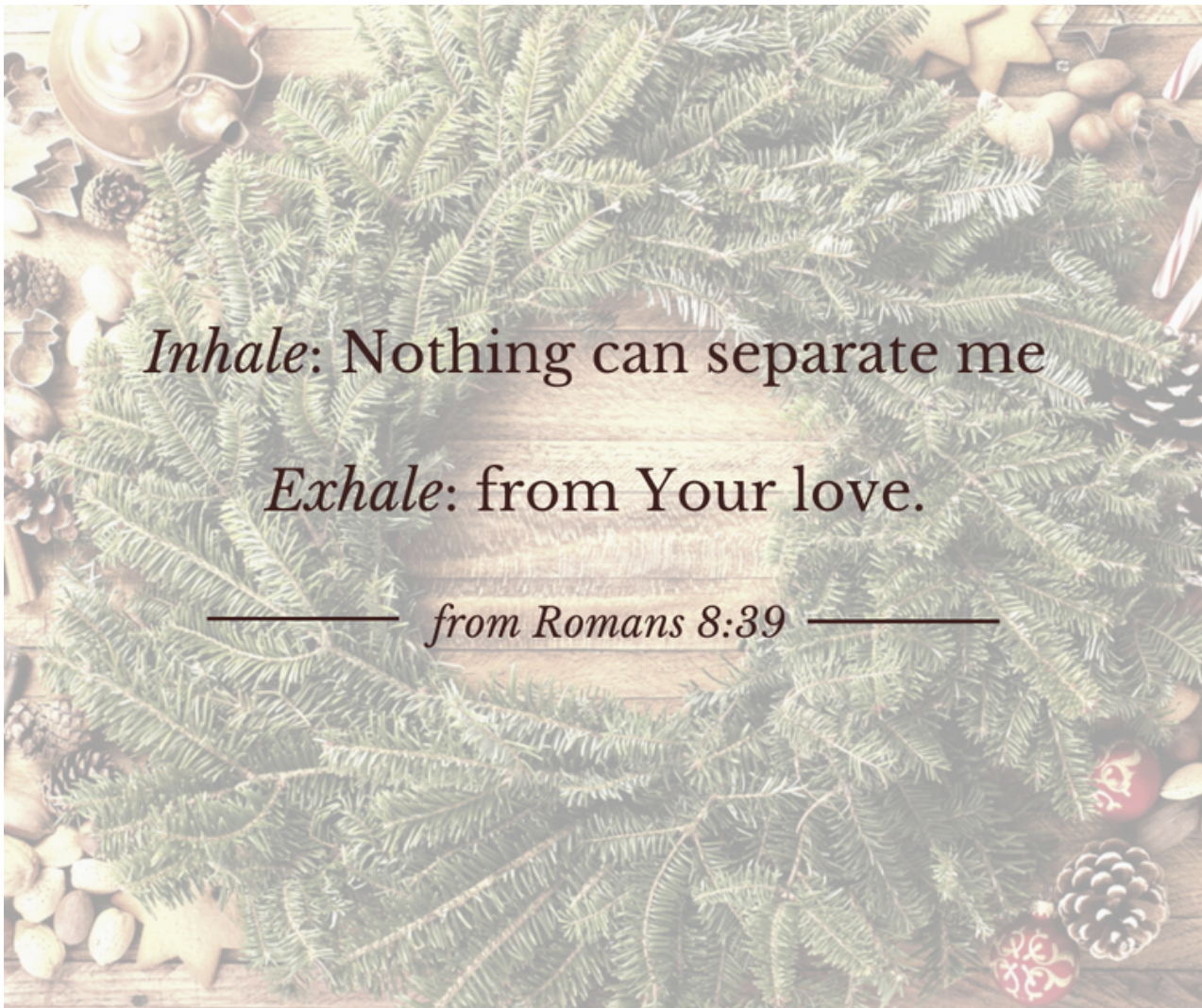
————— *from Micah 7:7* —————



Inhale: Glory to God

Exhale: Peace on earth.

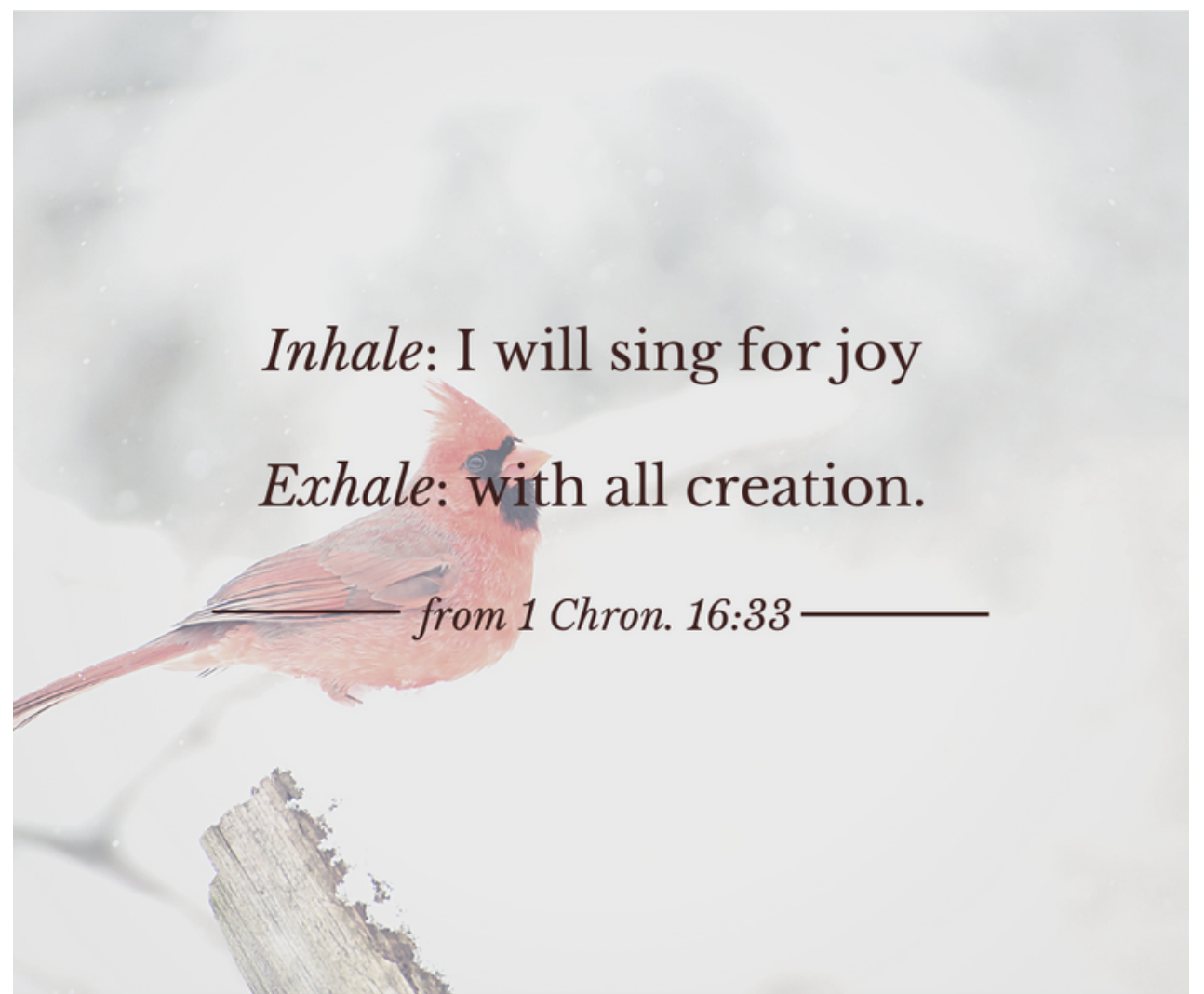
————— *from Luke 2:14* —————



Inhale: Nothing can separate me

Exhale: from Your love.

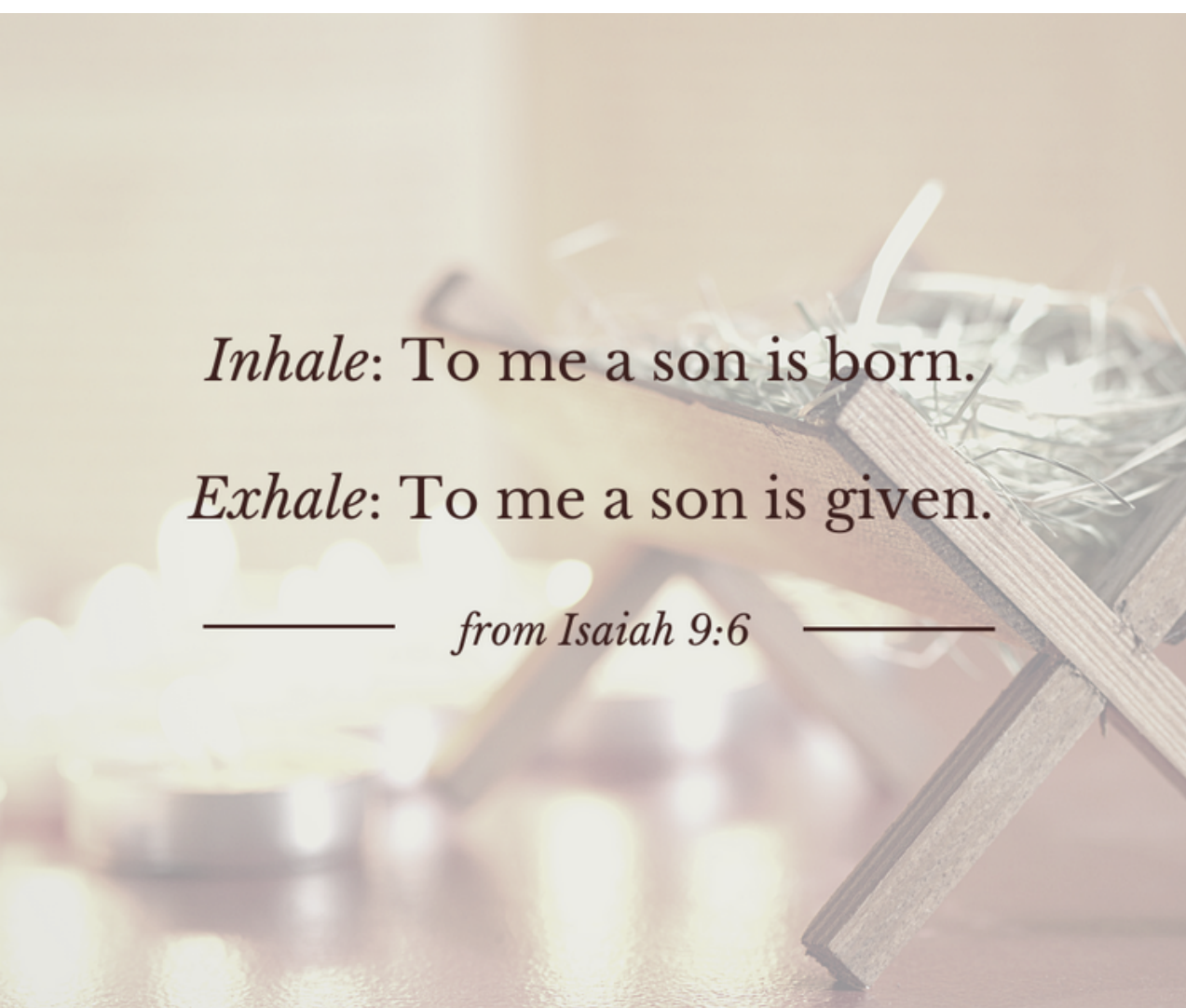
————— *from Romans 8:39* —————



Inhale: I will sing for joy

Exhale: with all creation.

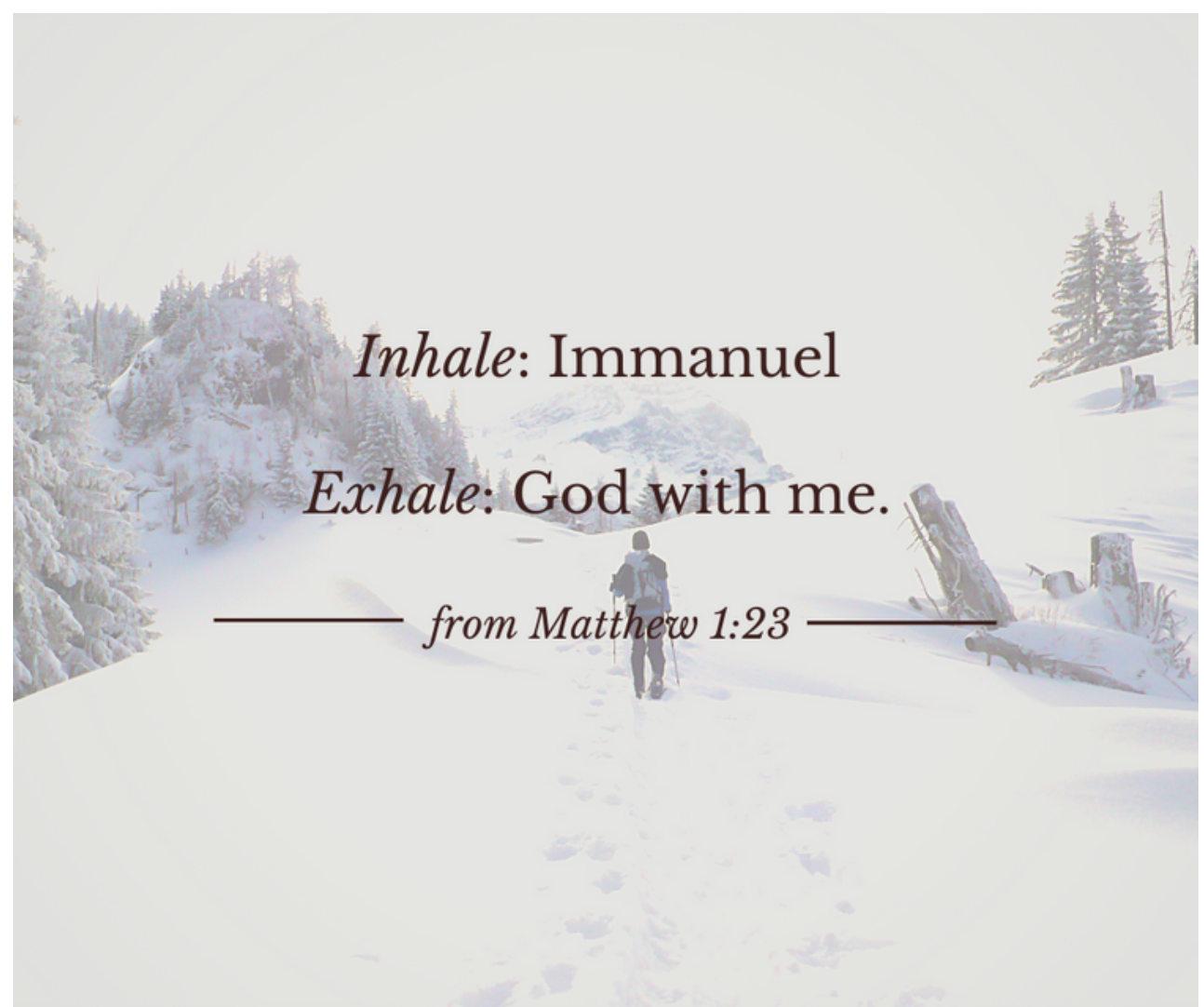
————— *from 1 Chron. 16:33* —————



Inhale: To me a son is born.

Exhale: To me a son is given.

————— *from Isaiah 9:6* —————



Inhale: Immanuel

Exhale: God with me.

————— *from Matthew 1:23* —————