

# VBCOKC ADVENT 2020:



JESUS: THE WORD BECAME FLESH

## Introduction

Advent refers to the “coming” or “arrival” of Jesus Christ. Within the Church, the term refers to the Advent of the Lord in the flesh at Christmas and the final Advent when our Lord will return bodily in glory. Each meaning stirs the joyful anticipation of what God has accomplished, is doing, and will yet bring to completion.

The purpose of this devotional is to help busy families find special moments during the Christmas season to ponder and celebrate Christ’s Advent. This year it’s a kind of “12 Days before Christmas” edition. I hope you enjoy it as we look at several of the biblical name of Jesus, who is the reason for the season.

The observance of Advent is something of a late addition to history, as is the celebration of Christmas itself. When the Church began to observe Christmas in the fourth century, a period of preparation was added. The length of time varied widely from three to seven weeks. Not until the 10th century was an agreement reached in the western world that Advent should consist of four Sundays.

The first Sunday of Advent occurs near or upon November 30. While always including four Sundays, the season may vary in length from 22 to 28 days, concluding on Christmas Eve.

A custom many Christians find meaningful is the preparation of an Advent Wreath. It contains 5 candles. During each Sunday’s observance of Advent, an additional candle is lit. Then on Christmas Eve, all candles, including the fifth center candle are lit. The light burns brightly, providing a fitting climax to the weeks of preparation and symbolically demonstrating the Light of the world that flashed forth centuries ago with the first cry of the Christ child.

Let me say thank you to all who contributed to this devotional. May God bless your contribution to this Christmas season. Enjoy and celebrate Advent this year! By observing this tradition, the true significance of Christmas will not be missed in your home. May the light of the world shine brightly in your family this Advent season.

- Dwight Magnus

**Sunday, Dec 13, 2020**  
**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent**

**The Word**

**John 1:1-14**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.*

*<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son<sup>[d]</sup> from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John does not give the intimate details of the Bethlehem experience and all that led up to it and followed it. He left that to Matthew and Luke.

Instead, John goes back to the very beginning....creation. The opening of his gospel reminds us that Jesus is God in the flesh...the Word, who has existed from before creation, and came to earth to reveal God and fulfill his plan of salvation.

When John uses the term "Word," it was very familiar to both the Greeks and the Jews. To the Greeks it was a philosophical term, essentially impersonal. It signified the rational principle of divine reason, mind, or wisdom. John makes this impersonal term very personal and human...the person of Jesus, the babe in the manger, the carpenter of Nazareth, the teacher in the synagogue. He then also declares Jesus as God.

To the Jews the term "Word" was God's powerful self-expression in creation, wisdom, revelation, and salvation. He connected the God they worshipped with Jesus the Messiah. The Word was God, The Word became flesh.

So in a sense, "Word" is a bridge term to reach not only Jews, but Greeks. And through it all, give in a new and important meaning. This Advent season pause to reflect on Jesus, the Word....the World that became flesh. *"Veiled in flesh, the godhead see."*

**- Dwight Magnus**

**Monday, December 14, 2020**

**The Branch of the Lord**

**Isaiah 4:2**

*In that day the **Branch of the LORD** will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel.*

The name “Branch” is not limited to just Isaiah 4:2. Throughout other places in the Prophets there are references to this future person who is from the Lord, who is of Israel, and who is of the line of King David. This is important because Jesus is the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant! The people of Israel were constantly waiting for this Branch to come. They were looking at king after king, leader after leader, but each one of them fell short and could not deliver Israel, either from their political adversaries or from their sin.

To know Jesus as the Branch is to know that He is the fulfillment of the promises of God. The deliverer of Israel was not at all what they expected - a carpenter’s son born among animals in the little town of Bethlehem. But only Jesus was worthy of the title of being the Branch of the Lord, because only Jesus is God incarnate, and He is the only one who has lived a sinless life and died and was raised again for the forgiveness of our sins. Not only did he bring salvation to the people of Israel, that salvation has been extended to the world.

Throughout history people have been looking to the next political leader, pastor, etc. to fix their problems and the problems caused by the previous leader. Every time the new person comes along, somewhere along the way, they fail. Whether in big ways or small, each leader in every situation falls short of meeting all the needs of all the people. This was true in Israel, just as it’s true now. For us as Christians, however, we can rest in the knowledge that even though human leaders fail us, we belong to the Kingdom of God, and that we follow a perfect leader who is able to do what man cannot.

- Elisabeth Magnus

**Tuesday, December 15, 2020**

**The Lord Our Righteousness**

*In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Jeremiah 23:6*

Our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ: indeed, our RIGHTEOUSNESS. “There is none righteous, no not one:” not any mere mortal, nay, but only Christ himself: fully God; fully man. Spat on, beaten, scourged, and hung naked on a tree, hated by his own, to suffer in shame; in humility, dying the death we deserve, and put in a grave: but HALLELUJAH! He is risen! His RIGHTEOUSNESS imputed usward through his blood: we that have no other hope for salvation but through Christ alone: he who *is RIGHTEOUSNESS itself* satisfying the wrath of our Father once and for all that we might be saved!

*10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. 12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Luke 2:10–12*

But whence came this Son of God, this Son of man, our RIGHTEOUSNESS? A powerful warrior, riding on a winged steed before a conquering army? Nay, not so! (soon children, very soon!) But a babe, helpless, born of a virgin, lying in a manger, a feeding trough for animals: the humblest of the humble, a minister to all, a servant of servants. From birth to death to resurrection, a true image of RIGHTEOUSNESS, whom we follow, striving, in faith and truth.

**Revelation 19:11**

*11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*

And yet, he shall come again. Yea, verily, the mighty conqueror of all the earth, the Word itself: “out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron.” What glorious word is this! Praise and glory to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our RIGHTEOUSNESS warring and winning all in justice!

**Revelation 21:4–5a**

*4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new...*

Stand fast, dear saints: hold onto the promise! From that wondrous first Christmas long ago, even now in our current tribulation: soon, very soon, to be finished and complete. But a short, expectant breath hence and we shall see all RIGHTEOUSNESS fulfilled! Our sorrows and pain: indeed, all evil, vanquished by Almighty God himself: banished to the pit of hell once and for all!

So fear not, beloved children! All is unfolding according to his plan: God's redemptive purposes conceived in eternity past before all creation, before even time: worked through us and in us, to be fulfilled in the glorious return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! All is well this Christmas season, yea, every Christmas whence and hence, if we but trust in him: sweet Jesus, our beloved Savior: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS!           - **Scott Sanbar**

**Wednesday, Dec 16, 2020**

### **The Light of the World – John 8:12**

The Book of John has seven seminal statements because they are known as the great “I Am” statements of Jesus Christ. They are as follows: “I am the Bread of Life” (John 6:35-48), “I am the Gate” (John 10:7), “I am the Good Shepherd” (John 10:11-14), “I am the Resurrection and the Life” (John 11:25), “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6), “I am the True Vine” (John 15:1-5), and “I am the Light of the world” (John 8:12, 9:5). That last one, “I am the Light of the world” in John 8:12, is perhaps the one that we connect with the most during Christmas Time as light carries such a pivotal role in all things of the holiday season. Think of it this way: Would the Christmas Tree be that beautiful without the canvassing lights? Would the multicolored decorations inside and outside the home be as eye-catching devoid of refracting lights? Would the well-lit stores and shimmering locales hold such an allure during the month of December if not for the adorning lights? My assessment is probably not. The presence of the light makes a big difference.

John 8:12 and following arrests our attention back to Who Jesus is, reminding us that because He is the Light, He makes a big difference. The biggest difference in point of fact. Indeed, the most fundamental investigation for all humans is that we decipher Who Jesus is. Christmas is ultimately a story about identity; and not just any identity---the historical Narrative of the Nativity accurately illuminates the identity of Jesus. He is Lord. He is Creator. He is Savior. He is Warrior. He is King---all the while exhibiting majestic humility on a scale that prideful man could never imagine. And Biblically, we could fill up the page with many more titles and traits that Jesus Christ possesses had we the space.

When Jesus announces that He is the Light of the world, He elucidates two realities: 1) the world, because of sin and moral degradation, is a very dark place *but* 2) the Good News is that Jesus Himself as the Light, has victory over darkness. Earlier in John, the Holy Spirit leads the apostle John to write that the Word (another title for Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity), Who has existed eternally with God the Father, is a Light ever victorious over darkness for “...the Light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not grasp it” (John 1:5). The word translated “grasp” literally means “overwhelm” or “overpower.” Interpretative Translation: No matter how dark this world gets due to our sin and depravity, the Undying Light Jesus Christ will have victory over it. This is the

essence of Good News. This is the basis for our hope. This is the One to Whom we owe allegiance. He is the Light of the world destroying the darkness on all fronts in our lives.

The Holy Spirit bookends John 8 in a most fascinating way. As we have seen with John 8:12, Jesus has declared that He Himself is the Light of the world and all who follow Him “will not walk in the darkness but have the Light of life.” At the end of the chapter, Jesus draws the seething gaze and threats of the Pharisees for His compelling statement that “before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58). Jesus quite literally calls Himself the Great “I Am.” With this classification He is placing Himself on par with the unique divine identity reserved for God the Father alone. The Pharisees essentially queried, “Are you saying you’re equal to God the Father?” Jesus’ response is immediate, “Yes. That is precisely it.” Jesus refers to Himself as *YHWH* or more clearly in our transliteration *Yahweh*. Who is Yahweh? He and He alone is the One True God. He is the Reality behind all realities. He is the Creator. He is the Rightful Ruler and Master of all. He is our Lord. And it is precisely because the Omnipotent Ruler, the Great I Am *is* Jesus, He arrives and serves as a dominating Light to whatever the enemy, our flesh, or this dark world can conjure.

My #VillageBereans, as your undershepherd, it is my prayer that this Christmas you will see Jesus for Who He really is. That you will see Him anew--- high, lifted up, exalted as the Shining King and Monarch of all. How extraordinary that such Royalty and Radiance would choose to arrive in such a humble way, the lowliness of a manger. Reflect on these truths and be enamored with Jesus all the greater. He truly is the Light for you, for me, and for all the world. Now, let’s go share the Light and tell everybody else. - **Dr RA Redwine**



**Thursday, December 17, 2020**

**King of Kings**

**Rev 19:16**

*And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."*

Anyone who knows me knows that I love Revelation. My senior year of college I took a class on the book that helped me to understand what the heck it was about and how on earth it can be applied to everyday Christian life. My professor, in essence, boiled it down to this: the message of the book of Revelation is, "God wins." Through all the confusing visions and imagery, this simple fact comes through, that Jesus is victorious over sin, and that he has the ultimate authority.

The title King of Kings reminded the Christians then, as it does now, that Christ is above every earthly ruler, and that everyone on earth, even the Emperor of Rome, would answer to His judgement. Christ as ruler and judge over everyone will ensure that all wrongs are righted, all injustices set right. This was an encouragement to the believers in John's (the author of Revelation) day due to all the persecution they were suffering at the hands of the Roman Empire.

The first time Jesus came to earth, he came as a baby, born to a humble family, and kept the fact that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, under wraps for the majority of his ministry. When Christ comes again, he will come boldly as King to fully establish his Kingdom and rule forever. To know Jesus as King of Kings is to know that no matter what craziness, insanity, hardship, or unpredictable event happens, Christ has already won, and that we can look forward to a day when all the injustices in the world are set right.

- **Elisabeth Magnus**

**Friday, December 18, 2020**

**Morning Star**

**Revelation 22:16**

*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*

Christ himself here refers to himself as the "morning star." The morning star is actually not a star at all, but the planet Venus which often rises visibly in the eastern sky before dawn, the first harbinger of the dawn of a new day. As such, we see Christ here telling us that he is indeed the one who will usher in the new age: an age where his saints dwell eternally with God in bliss, where there is no pain, no sorrow, no evil: all things made brand new.

**Isaiah 9:6–7 (KJV)**

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:*

*And the government shall be upon his shoulder:*

*And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God,*

*The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

*7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end,*

*Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom,*

*To order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice*

*From henceforth even forever.*

*The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

A child has been born indeed, and this Christmas we celebrate the birth of our beloved Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, marking another year as we patiently but expectantly wait for the coming of our Lord once again in power and glory to reign forever in the new Jerusalem, the light and life of a new dawn, where no shadow of evil will ever again cast its malice on us, and where God himself is the light by which we shall see all, to "know even as also [we are] known."

This passage has special significance to me. In my fallen, broken, mortal body, my eyes have grown dim over time. I can see well enough to do many tasks with my very strong prescription glasses, but it takes a lot of accommodation. However, for my condition, the most important accommodation other than my glasses are very bright LED flashlights that one can buy now on Amazon. I have a very bright

headlamp that straps to my head. It is so bright that its light immediately blinds to the point of discomfort anyone whose eyes I shine it at, but it works wonders for me.

This is the perfect metaphor for me here: the light of that headlamp reminds me of the light of Christ which shines in the darkness, and which will illuminate us one day in glory as we worship and praise the light of our lives forever. In my perfect, glorified body, my eyes will once again see like they did when I was young: even better - perfectly seeing all with no blot or stain, illuminated by the pure white light of God himself, of goodness and mercy, forever and always.

Remember this Christmas all we have to be thankful for. Take time away from your cares and worries as the craziness, anguish, fear, and trepidations of 2020 end, and celebrate the birth of the greatest gift man has ever known: our Messiah, our Lord, our Savior, our King: our precious and sweet Morning Star Jesus Christ. – **Scott Sanbar**

**Saturday, December 19, 2020**

## **Son of Man**

### **Matt 9:4-6**

*But Jesus, knowing<sup>[a]</sup> their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? <sup>5</sup>For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? <sup>6</sup>But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.” <sup>7</sup>And he rose and went home. <sup>8</sup>When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.*

Jesus used this title, “Son of Man” to describe Himself more than any other title. He does so in this passage from Matthew. Jesus, the Son of Man, had the authority to forgive sin and to heal the paralytic.

This title Jesus’ deity. Stephen, as he was being stoned, said, “ (Acts 7:56). This title is used when he describes His Second Coming in Matthew 16:27.

This title is first mentioned in Daniel 7:13. Jesus quotes this passage during his “trial” before the Sanhedrin in answer to the High Priest.

This title also emphasizes His humanity, his willingness to serve.

*even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” **Matthew 20:28***

This child of Bethlehem came to give His life for us. Give thanks today for Jesus, the Son of Man.

- **Dwight Magnus**

**Sunday, December 20, 2020**  
**The Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**

**Isaiah 9:6**

*For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*

Wonderful Counselor identifies Jesus as the wonderful divine counselor. The only one that is all knowing and full of all wisdom and understanding. Our wonderful divine counselor is the one full of knowledge and reverence for God and the one we are to turn to for wisdom and direction. Jesus is our sweet and faithful counselor. We can pour out our souls to him and know he hears us and loves us and wants what is best for us.

Mighty God identifies God as the God of all creation and glory. The One worthy of our praise and worship. He is the mighty and all-powerful warrior. The Israelites were looking for an immediate remedy to their problems (both physical and political), much like we do today. God's solution was to send his only Son and he will return to reign forever.

Everlasting Father describes a King and Father who provides for and protects his people FOREVER. This can only apply to the one true God. He is our protector and our Savior. He is the creator of the universe and the everlasting King. He is our loving heavenly Father.

Prince of Peace identifies Jesus as a Prince – the son of the one true King, the Almighty God. The Son who gave his very life so that everyone who trusts him as Savior would have peace with God and dwell in eternity with him forever.

This verse identifies Jesus and speaks to the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, all are aspects of God's deity and speak to His humanity. A child is born – signifying Jesus' humanly birth. A Son is given – signifying Jesus' deity and the fact that he was given by God to us as a gift of grace.

The Child, Jesus, is the one true Prince of Peace. The one who will reign forever and ever. A Christmas approaches, we remember the gift so freely given of God and how much he love's us evidenced by sending his only Son to be born of a virgin and ultimately die on a cross for our sin and raised from the dead so that his promise of eternity with him would be fulfilled. Thank you for loving me and for sending your son – for me.

- **Jana Walls**

**Monday, December 21, 2020**

**Jesus as Servant**

**Isaiah 42:1**

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my Spirit upon him;  
he will bring forth justice to the nations.*

The scriptures, Old and New Testaments alike, are replete with examples of and instructions for a servant. We see in Isaiah 42:1 the title “Servant” as given to our Savior Jesus. “Behold My Servant whom I uphold, My chosen one, in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him...”

**Matthew 3:16-17** - <sup>16</sup>*After He was baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and <sup>[a]</sup>he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and <sup>[b]</sup>settling on Him, <sup>17</sup>and behold, a voice from the heavens said, “This is <sup>[c]</sup>My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*

The title “servant” in Is 42:1 is the Hebrew word “’ebed” which goes beyond the common slave who was given tasks at the whim of their master. This was a servant who was given a specific task for a specific time and sent out as a representative of their master. This servant did their work not out of compulsion but, in humility, out of love and honor for their master. This term was often translated as “worshippers of God”.

So, who is Jesus as Servant? Jesus humbled Himself, emptied Himself and came to earth as a child. He took on the form of a bondservant in the likeness of man – Christmas. He began as a humble servant, born in a manger and announced to the world through the most humble of servants, shepherds. Here Jesus began His mission, specific and for a time, as a servant of God His Father and Savior of man.

As God has called me at times to be a servant, and while at times I have not possessed the most humble of hearts or attitude, I remember one of the most humble of servant acts that, in my mind, Jesus performed for the disciples. **John 13:12** - *Then, when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and*

*reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done for you?"* It is here that I am reminded that Jesus washed the feet of Judas Iscariot.

- **Tim Eaton**



**Tuesday, December 22, 2020**

**Bread of Life**

**John 6:35**

*I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.*

When Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." Jesus had just fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fishes. They were all excited and thrilled over the great miracle that had occurred, [but] Jesus was talking about something more. Bread in the Scriptures is a symbol of spiritual life. God alone can supply the bread which satisfies the inner longing of your soul and the hunger of your heart. . . . The Bible says that He is the Bread of Life.

Life is not perfect. Some of us may want it to be. Some people may feel it would be great to wake up every morning feeling rejuvenated, having no worries about how the day will turn out and knowing there will be no conflicts. To me, if that were true life would get very boring. There will be no excitement knowing that the day is going to be like the days before. I need the feeling of not knowing what is going to happen, either good or bad. When things are not going my way, I may get discouraged but I remind myself God will help me get through it. When things are going as planned, without any problems, I thank God for what he has done. God is in control and he knows when you need to grow or be encouraged.

God's bread can fulfill us when we need it and it also can encourage us when we want it, especially when it is sweet like Sunday donuts.

- **Grayson Cook**

**Wednesday, December 23, 2020**

**Redeemer**

**Isaiah 59:20**

*“And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares the LORD.*

When I was a teenager in high school, I was a terrible driver. Well, that would be an understatement. I was a menace on the road.

I got a lot of tickets for speeding that I had no way to pay. Each time, my dad would pay off the ticket. The only other option was for me to spend time in jail, which he did not want me to do. He loved me too much. Bad things can happen to young teenagers in jail.

No matter how many times I got a ticket, he was there to pay my ticket. There was zero reason for him to pay off those tickets on my end. I was doing the wrong thing, repeatedly. Quietly, faithfully, he paid off each ticket. He did it out of pure love, showing grace in the face of a wayward teenager who had earned none of his grace or his love.

I learned many hard lessons in life during my adulthood. Maybe my dad had been a little too loving, given a little too much grace? But even in my adulthood, through the decades, my dad was there for me. Eventually, I had to turn to my heavenly father to learn my lessons that my dad, just a man, could not teach me. I was too recalcitrant. God's revelation in the Bible has been revealing to me continually the lessons I need to know that I simply could never get anywhere else.

Much like me, Zion was a recalcitrant child. Time and again, Israel would fall away from loving God, from following the law. They would play the harlot, bowing the knee to worldly idols. And each time God would be there to pick up the pieces and get them back on the right track (even though they did not deserve it). Then the cycle would repeat again.

Looking forward, God promised through Isaiah the prophet a Messiah, who we now know is the Christ, the final ransom who would pay the blood guilt we could never repay ourselves: our once and for all Redeemer. The cycle was broken, the

blood sacrifices never again needed because Jesus' blood on the Cross paid the ransom once and for all for all of us if we but believe. Not only was He the Redeemer of Zion, but, through Zion, all the nations: if we but believe.

No case it too hard, no sin too bad, no heart too black that if we turn to him, repent of our evil ways, and call on the name of Jesus as our Lord and Savior, he will pay that ransom as our Redeemer.

Since the fall of man in Adam, and even before time began, God's entire plan, as laid out in the Bible, can be summarized in one simple word: redemption. And that redemption is through a man, one man, pointed forward to throughout the Old Testament, and, in the New Testament, from a babe in a manger to a miracle worker, teacher, and sacrificial Lamb, to a conquering King returning to make everything right once and for all, pointing to the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

He is our once and for all redeemer, our ransom, our Lord, and our Savior. This Christmas, as we reflect on where our lives should be centered, what our every breath should eagerly await, think on that sweet little babe in swaddling clothes, that little babe in a manger that accomplished what no mere man could: redeem us, underserved, from our manifold sins and conquer sin death once and for all.

– **Scott Sanbar**

**Thursday, December 24, 2020**

**The Deliverer**

**Romans 11:26**

*And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob."*

Today it comforts me to know that God is my deliverer. Sometimes that means completely removing me from pain or a situation. Sometimes that means delivering me in the very midst of what's going on around me...He is the God who delivers, and we can praise Him for being the God who overcomes all things.

What every happens in my life, good or bad, I remind myself God is in control. It is easier to say that when I am discouraged. When I'm in a bad situation and things don't look promising, I try to make myself think what God is trying to teach me and try to look forward to how good I will feel when I overcome it.

When I am praying to God, I always try to remind myself God is in control and while his plans may not be our plans, he is there to help us and encourage us.

- **Grayson Cook**

