

Devotions for the week of December 2

Anxiety (Luke 12:22-34)

- Read Luke 12:22-34 for a sneak peek at this Wednesday's Advent readings

Have you ever heard the phrase, "that sinking feeling"? I get that sinking feeling thinking about everything I have to do in the next thirty days—there are presents to purchase and wrap (and probably some returns), menus to plan and endless things to fill the calendar and all my best intentions to get those Christmas cards in the mail! What are some things that are creating "anxiety" in your household this month?

Talk together about some of the things that might be causing "anxiety" in your household this month...

Littles: the change in the schedule? Taking a picture with that big, scary guy at the mall? Too much activity?

Elementary: the anticipation of that most hoped for gift? The classroom "winter party"? Another Christmas craft session with those aggravating glue dots?

Jr. High/High school: Finals week? The project you've procrastinated all semester? Getting serious about that college application? Getting invited to "that" party?

Young adults: Going home for the holidays—back under house rules? Finals? Working in retail? Wanting to give gifts but being broke?

Adults: the Calendar? the shopping list? the demands at work? the demands at home?

Try this experiment:

Gather:

a clear 8 oz glass

raisins

water

1 Tablespoon baking soda

2 Tablespoons vinegar

Fill a clear glass $\frac{3}{4}$ full with water. Drop five or six raisins in the glass. Add the baking soda and stir until it dissolves. Stir in the vinegar and watch the raisins. If, after a minute, the raisins have not started to rise, add more vinegar. (NOTE: This will also work with a clear, carbonated beverage—no vinegar or baking soda will be necessary)

The results: The raisins sink to the bottom of the glass because they are heavier than water. The baking soda and vinegar combine to make a gas called carbon dioxide. The gas bubbles attach themselves to the raisins and float to the top, bringing the raisins along for the ride. When the gas bubbles reach the surface of the water, they pop and go into the air. The raisins no longer have their carbon dioxide life jackets and sink once again.

I wonder how Mary and Joseph felt as they traveled to Bethlehem anticipating the birth of Jesus. Were they anxious about whether they had everything packed? Were they anxious over what they would eat and where they would sleep? Were there moments when they could breathe and just hand it over to God and then sink again when all those anxious thoughts returned? Were they anxious about whether they were worthy of the task they had been called to?

The raisins sink to the bottom of the glass. They are too heavy to float to the top of the water alone. The gas bubbles surround the raisins and lift them up. God forgives your sins because of what Jesus did for you. God's grace lifts you up to serve Him. When we feel bad about ourselves, we don't feel as if we can do anything good. The apostle Paul did many bad things before God chose him to serve. Paul hunted Christians, jailed them and even watched them die, and when he learned the truth about Jesus, Paul felt very guilty. The same grace that forgave Paul and made him God's servant is given to you. Don't just feel bad or anxious—know that God is faithful and just and forgives all who ask Him to. Every day He lifts you up and enables you to be His servant.

Go and Do

Looking for a little more? Try the Go and Do ideas to take your family devotions into the community!

What is a need you see in your neighborhood or community? Can you do something to help meet that need and reduce anxiety for someone else? Think of a way you can bless someone else by helping with a need they have. Make a plan to meet this need together.