

Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

The beauty of Christmas is not in the presents, but in the Presence. —Anon.

A popular Christmas song you may hear on the radio, or piped into the halls where you are living, or through the ubiquitous speakers of the Target or Walmart store where you're shopping is "We Need a Little Christmas." The tune comes from the Broadway musical *Mame* and was first performed by Angela Lansbury (also famous for her role as a detective in *Murder, She Wrote*) in a 1966 production.

According to one source, "the song is performed after Mame has lost her fortune in the Wall Street Crash of 1929, and she decides that she, her young nephew Patrick, and her two household servants 'need a little Christmas now' to cheer them up."

*For we need a little Christmas, / Right this very minute,
Candles in the window, / Carols at the spinet.
Yes, we need a little Christmas, / Right this very minute,
Need a little Christmas now!*

Today is the beginning of Advent. The journey toward Christmas begins. And there's nothing wrong with needing a little Christmas, is there? It's what so many are searching for on their expeditions through the wilds of the shopping mall. Armed with checklists and coupons, supplied with sensible shoes and plenteous plastic charge cards, these latter-day explorers are vigilant and wise in the ways of merchandising.

They're looking for the perfect gift: an expression of love (or, at the very least, high regard). Christmas shopping is a wonderful, caring thing to do. It's fun, most of the time. That is, until you encounter one too many surly clerks, or discover that the perfect sweater you've chosen is excluded from the sale prices, or realize to your dismay that this shopping trip has gone on too long, and you're footsore, hungry and weary.

Is a little Christmas really what we're looking for?

Or, might we be looking for a really Great Christmas? Not the coming of the beautifully wrapped gift under the tree, but the coming of our savior Jesus Christ into the world?

Yes, we need a little Christmas, and even more: We need a lot of the Christ of Christmas!

—Carlos Wilton and Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I am ready to turn my thoughts toward the meaning of this season. Help me to see beyond the bright lights and to hear more than the joyful carols. Help me to also understand the depth of the sacrifice you made to join us in our humanity. Amen.



Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** 1 John 3-5
- Monday:** 2 John, 3 John, Jude
- Tuesday:** Revelation 1-3
- Wednesday:** Revelation 4-6
- Thursday:** Revelation 7-9
- Friday:** Revelation 10-12
- Saturday:** Psalms 139-141



MAY I HAVE A VOWEL PLEASE?

The answers to these clues all contain the vowel A and only A. There are no other vowels in the answers except A. Use the clues to fill in the blanks.

1. This man was Jacob’s grandfather, but the father of Ishmael (Genesis 18:1). _____
2. By the way, his wife sometimes laughed inappropriately (Genesis 18:12). _____
3. This little bird is both a color and species. Did it come from the Islands? _____
4. This word might signify a hat, canal, country or an isthmus. _____
5. A popular song a few years ago advised us: “Don’t worry, be (this).” _____
6. This is the country with the largest area in the Western Hemisphere. _____
7. Look in a dictionary under A. This animal is likely to be the first animal mentioned. _____
8. Mom said, “Go to the basement and get one of jelly, but don’t leave the door in this condition.” _____
9. A tree with compound leaves whose pliable but strong wood makes good canoe paddles, or basket splints. If you burn it up you will still have it. _____
10. To get results, a magician might say this. _____
11. The mountain where Noah’s Ark rested, according to Genesis 8:4. _____
12. Check out the man in Numbers 22 who had a talking donkey. _____
13. This brand name might mean you own a motorcycle or a piano. _____
14. A U.S. state with eight letters. _____

- Answers:**
1. Abraham,
 2. Sarah,
 3. canary,
 4. Panama,
 5. happy,
 6. Canada,
 7. aardvark,
 8. ajar, ajar,
 9. ash,
 10. abracadabra,
 11. Ararat,
 12. Balaam,
 13. Yamaha,
 14. Arkansas.

