

Advent & Christmas
Devotional Study Notes



Travels

Catherine Hutton

Contents

Page	4	Introduction
	6	Study 1: Route Planning
	8	Study 2: Back on the Road
	10	Study 3: Road Works
	12	Study 4: Driving Home (For Christmas)
	14	Study 5: Speaking Direction
	16	Study 6: Re-Routing
	18	The Traveller's Rest
	22	Tips for Travellers/Local Customs

Introduction

Welcome to this Advent and Christmas Devotional and Study Guide. The intention is that it has plenty of scope to be used to instigate good discussion and conversation in your Small Groups, Bible Studies and Housegroups as well as having sufficient stimuli to foster growth if you are working through this on your own.

The Covenant Call that God makes to the world is often looked on as a series of states that people occupy throughout time. From Yahweh the unknown God committing to Abraham, the relationship develops through the ages as we will see as we progress through Advent and on towards Epiphany. The scope of these travels can be referred to as ‘salvation history’, which is the account of God’s moves towards saving his people.

When we were choosing a theme for this season, ‘Travel’ was suggested, which after prayer, offered the image of how we plan for road trips and holidays, for vacation (and staycation) and even for life. There are often changes to be made, extra costs to pay, problems to overcome and unforeseen issues to be dealt with along the way - it is rarely a smooth road.

Salvation history too is a series of plans being made and revised due to God’s people veering off course or getting caught up with the issues and desires of the people among whom they lived. This booklet explores the travels from the desert to the stable and, still listening to God, onward to the Epiphany. As we travel, we imagine a Sat Nav dealing with the issues encountered from getting way off track to negotiating road-works.

The guiding texts for the series are:

Route Planning

Back on the Road

Road Works

Genesis 12:1-19

Isaiah 7:10-14

Isaiah 40:1-11

Night Hike
Driving Home (For Christmas)
Speaking Direction
Re-Routing

Luke 2:8-20 *
Luke 2:1-11
Matthew 2:1-8
Matthew 2:9-15

**not part of the study guide*

Each week, there will be 3 sections to the devotional:

1. **Ignition**

Here, we will spend some time playing with the theme of the week in an opening thought. Then we will take time to pray and worship God. Prayer pointers and worship suggestions can be found in the section of the booklet marked **Local Customs/Tips for Travellers**.

2. **Setting Out**

This section will provide the bulk of the material for your journey. Packed with information and conversation starters in the form of questions to be pondered, it will allow you to take time to see the views as on a 'scenic route' rather than barrelling through as though taking an expressway.

3. **Travelling On**

I love the stories people tell about their travels, the realisations they have, the souvenirs they select to keep with them.

This section is for you to reflect, commit and pray. What will you keep with you as you travel on?

Everyone gets hungry as they travel. **The Traveller's Rest** is the name of our DIY restaurant/gastro-pub. Here, you can find tasty recipes to either make and share at your Group, make for the family or to share with friends. Every traveller should be well-nourished! Thank you to those who volunteered some of their own favourite festive recipes.

There is a resources section for this devotional. **Local Customs/Tips for Travellers** comprises a prayer-pattern for groups, suggestions for prayer, lists of songs and hymns you might find useful, and the Bibliography.

Travel Safely, and may God's Blessing be upon you.

With love,



Study 1 **Route Planning**

Ignition

What are some of the best things about travelling to new places? What can be scary about travelling?

Take time to pause, worship and pray before moving on.

See pages 22-23

Setting Out

Please read Genesis 12:1-19 from your own Bible.

Abraham's travels begin our route. We notice that the story of Abraham's journey is not linear, the narrative meanders much like when we give accounts of our own journeys. The planned travel takes place due to a Covenantal Agreement between Yahweh and Abram.

Look at verses 1-3. Think about what confidence Abram had to set out on his travels.

What obstacles do you observe?

What hope is Abram walking towards?

Setting out means trusting God for both inheritance and provision. When Abram leaves, he leaves the familiar in order to go where God will send him and his household. In verses 4-9, we note a shift of these from 'God had said' in verse 1 to 'to your offspring I will give this land' in verse 7.

How much of travelling is looking back and looking forward?
Share your thoughts and stories.

Abram was willing to trust God for his itinerary and route. This was in keeping with the Covenant. The author of Hebrews reminds us in the Great Chapter 11 that it is; *"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where his was going..."* 11:8-19.

Look up Hebrews 11:8-19 and talk about the précis of Abraham's life from a New Testament perspective. Think about a significant time in your own life. How did faith in God guide you?

If you are new to faith, what difference does it make to trust God when you encounter new terrain?

Abram will travel under God's favour when he follows God's route and disaster will strike when he veers off course. This is seen in verses 10-19. Abram trusts in Egypt and Pharaoh for provision during famine - which will sit in stark contrast to Genesis 46 when God provides during the famine in Egypt.

Talk about times you didn't trust the route the Sat Nav or map was giving. Did it go well? What did you learn?

Talk about what it meant for the relationship between Abram and Yahweh that Abram trusted Egypt above the Covenant promises of God.

How can the relationship of trust disintegrate so badly between the closeness of verses 6-8 and the apparent total breakdown in verses 10-19? If you feel able, share your own experiences of this and how you learned to be faithful once more.

Travelling On

As you reflect on Abraham and Sarah's decision to trust God for their life's travels, what fresh understandings might you take onwards with you...

What are your thoughts about God's promises?

How would you approach times of 'famine' in your faith or other personal circumstances?

Thinking about the movability of 'living in tents', does this feel easier or more of a burden than having concrete plans for life?

What will you pray about this week, and who will you pray for?

Who will you get in touch with this week for a chat about life?

Study 2 **Back on the Road**

Ignition

Have you had an experience of having to delay a journey for any reason? What were the circumstances?
How did you get moving again? Did you receive assistance to get back on the road, in the air or to make the journey?

Take time to pause, worship and pray before moving on.

See pages 22-23

Setting Out

Please read Isaiah 7:10-14 from your own Bible.

The prophets play a large part on getting the People of God 'back on the road', offering words from God that repair broken understandings about their relationship with God, or reissue them with a kind of spiritual map with which to continue on their faith journey.

In Isaiah 7 1-9, God asks for complete commitment by King Ahaz, to God alone. There are reminders in verse 9 given that while God is Almighty, 'the head of Samaria is only Remaliah's son.' God is desiring that Ahaz reminds himself that He, Yahweh, is powerful and almighty. Ahaz displays 'fake orthodoxy' in quoting scripture inappropriately back to God in verse 12. God does not ask Ahaz to test him, but to send a sign.

Look at verses 10-12.

Consider times when you have been overwhelmed by your present situation.

How much energy did you spend sorting things out before you turned to God in prayer?

Have you ever asked God for a sign?

Has anyone ever spoken God's words of encouragement or hope to you? How did you know they were from God?

Verse 13 is indeed a sign from God - Webb describes it like this:
In verses 9-10 of chapter 6, Isaiah was told to make the ears of the rebellious people dull and close their eyes,

*"lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts and turn and be healed."*

In chapter 7 we see him doing this to Ahaz. Ahaz has rejected the clear

word of the prophet (7-9) and the offer of a clear sign to confirm it (10-12). Therefore he is given a sign which is veiled and enigmatic, a sign which he cannot understand (13-16).

Getting back on the road is important when we have experienced delay or pause in our faith journey. In Israel and in Judah, the line of Godly kings had failed. In order to bring the people under Godly leadership, the prophecy announces the coming of Immanuel who will be “God with us”. The focus of the nation should be God. The sign points to the new Kingship of David’s line which we find in Isaiah 9.

How do you need to be reminded of God’s power and might today? What areas of your life do you find yourself seeking solutions that are not from God?

How can you truly be a disciple in present times when there are so many difficulties to surmount?

Talk about prayer and practical support.

How do these two elements run together in the Bible? Find some passages to support your thinking. How might you offer help today?

Travelling On

Getting back on the road is just the beginning. We must then learn to trust our ability to read the map, or the car to carry on the journey or that the flight you have boarded will take you at long last to your destination. This can be a big thing.

Isaiah was the prophet who was bringing God’s news and direction to Ahaz. He was speaking God’s truth to the king so that the king might turn to trust God again, motivating his people to do likewise.

As you reflect on getting up and going onwards with your faith, consider the following;

Do you need to ask for help to get your faith back on the road? Maybe there have been issues that have caused you to get knocked off course and need help to find the right road again.

Who can you encourage by reminding them of the time when they helped you get back on track with your faith?

Who can you pray for or help in a practical way this week? - Maybe someone who is currently stuck with a difficulty or situation with no obvious solution.

Study 3

Ignition

Road Works

Maybe you have had some alterations done at home or work - or lived with actual roadworks outside your window or on a journey you have taken.

What are the pros and cons of such works taking place?

Take time to pause, worship and pray before moving on.

See pages 22-23

Setting Out

Please read Isaiah 40:1-11 from your own Bible.

There are 3 commands in verses 1 and 2. Comfort! Speak! Proclaim! The ‘herald’ speaking after the foreboding of chapter 39 takes a new tone. The covenant promise of God is that the people are his own - when they remember him. This remembering often takes place in a landscape of societal or personal disaster.

Consider times when work on your heart has been necessary for you to either find your faith or to find a new depth of faith.

These times of ‘works’ within you are not easy to live through and can lead to some soul searching as you recalibrate under God’s tender care. Note how God is continuing to say “comfort, comfort” in verse 1 and that in verse 2, the speech should be ‘tender’ and the proclamation is that “hard service has been completed”.

Spend some time reflecting on how God has brought you or someone you love through hard times.

Note how tender speech affects your heart.
How has God spoken ‘tenderly’ to you in times of struggle?
How might you have been/be a herald of God’s tenderness to friends or neighbours in their tough times?

There are places in our community that need roadworks for the good of the place, but sometimes the disruption to the routine of the community is deemed too great to warrant the work being carried out.

With this in mind, read verses 3-5 aloud. This picture is of a road on which all the works have been done, ready for God's people to travel along it without problem or incident. As we travel towards Christmas in this Advent devotional, we are reminded that the work is done and that God reaches to us, his people, without blockage, pitfall or incident.

Reflect on your experiences of smooth journeys, maybe on newly surfaced motorways or trains that run easily on well-made tracks. Now reflect on times when faith in God and loving Jesus came easily, with desire to volunteer for service and to pray often.

Ponder the works here in Isaiah 40 and the times of desperation followed by a flow of faith. What makes the difference? What promises does God make?

Travelling On

The purpose of the Lord's Highway is that it conveys his people from a place that is separate from God to the place where God is.

Read verses 6-8 aloud. Consider what this might be saying about the culture of our time.

Where people are unreliable and culture is transient, God is faithful and unchanging. Motyer, in his commentary on Isaiah, helpfully suggests that;

The message about to be declared in the homeland reiterates what has already been said about the Lord's coming and his sovereignty. Verse 10, recalling the theme of verse 7, turns it into a message of comfort, for the ruling arm (10) is the carrying 'arm' (11); the 'strong one' (10) is the shepherd (11). P 301

The Lord's highway is the *route* to God and also the *activity* of God. The people may be far away from God, but he is near to them - near to us, described as 'shepherd', carrying us onwards, close to his heart (11).

The message of Comfort is brought by Jerusalem - the people of God.

What are the 'good tidings' that you have to share (verse 10)? How might you bring these 'good tidings' to people who are struggling in this season?

Pray for those who are hampered by a block in their road of faith and seek ways by which you might help them to press onwards.

Study 4 Driving Home for Christmas

Ignition

Think about films, stories or songs that involve a journey home. Do they tend to be hopeful or miserable? Reflect on some of your own experiences.

Take time to pause, worship and pray before moving on.

See pages 22-23

Setting Out

Please read Luke 2:1-11 from your own Bible.

When there is talk that Christmas was ‘cancelled’ in 2020, it often means that travel plans, meals out and staying with family and friends as well as all the usual partying and celebrations outside the household were forbidden. We had small celebrations that were, for many, unrecognisable as ‘Christmas’. Although we had church services, there was grief as we cancelled carol singing and sat apart from each other in church in limited numbers.

With Luke 2, we are reminded that Christmas begins by making a journey, “and all went to their home towns” v3.

Where does your Christmas journey take you?

Maybe it is to Midnight Communion, a family home, Church on Christmas Morning. It may even be to collect a tree, a turkey, or even visit the supermarket early on Christmas Eve...

Why do these journeys matter to you?

Maybe your Christmas journey is an interior one? What ‘makes Christmas’ for you? (Prayer, carols, specific readings or conversations).

As Luke tells the Christmas story, it reads a little like a newspaper report. It is matter-of-fact and without embellishment. The edict was given, the people travelled, the baby was born in Bethlehem to people of the house and family line of King David. Luke’s craftsmanship in this writing is commented on by Michael Wilcock;

2:1-7 is a little jewel of economical story-telling, each of its many facets beautifully cut and showing brilliant depths. We could linger

over the way Luke brings together the Greco-Roman world of Theophilus (2:1-2) and the Jewish world of 2:4-5, with its religion and supernaturalism; over the sureness with which the histories of these two worlds dovetail on the divine calendar (2:1-6); or over Luke's eye for meaningful detail (e.g. 2:7 –the 'first-born', 'no place ... in the inn'). P 43

Take a look at these beautiful details in the context of what you know about the history and prophecies surrounding Jesus' birth. Why are details important in this storytelling?

Details in simplicity give depth to the account. This journey was the moment of *Immanuel* - God with us - fulfilling the promises of God. They speak of Mary and Joseph's obedience and their place in the history of the People of God. They demonstrate the rejection of splendour by God Incarnate to embrace humility and human frailty.

Consider how the weight of promise and prophecy is told with simplicity. The stoppages and roadworks are done with and the route home is straightforward.

How simply can you tell the story of your own journey to meet Jesus? Who can you share your story with?

Travelling On

Travelling home for Christmas is a place where safe rest may be taken, away from the rigours and stress of normality (even if it has its own unique tensions!) Luke's account in 2:1-11 feels calm and 'right', as though it is a time of resting. It would be good to bring this sense of order into the chaotic and unpredictable world of 2020 and 2021.

Note some of the important things about Jesus that you have learnt this year.

What details 'make Christmas real' for you?

How might you share these with someone else who needs to find their way home to Jesus?

Who will you invite to sing carols with you at a church carol service or event?

What prayer of thanksgiving will you pray as you arrive 'home for Christmas'?

Study 5 Ignition

Speaking Direction

Have you ever been given directions that were inaccurate? When did you realise that they weren't right? Where did you end up?

Take time to pause, worship and pray before moving on.

See pages 22-23

Setting Out

Please read Matthew 2:1-8 from your own Bible.

'Wise' people arrive in Jerusalem, the city of the King, and ask of the ruling body, "where is the baby who was born to be the king of the Jews?" They then give believable evidence that this King is born: "we saw his star in the east" and deliver the final insult to the ruling body; "and [we] have come to worship him" Matthew 2:1-2.

These statements could be considered tactless and improper, given the place in which they were delivered. Where else in the Bible are prophetic words spoken to the King? Note them down. Reflect on the situations and their outcomes.

Asking about a new king in this way is bound to be inflammatory, but it is also necessary as we begin to see the world's poor attempts at kingship in Herod alongside the Majesty of Almighty God. Speaking out their request, the wise men bring to the attention of the rulers and authorities that which is happening in the lowly outlying districts of Judea. Michael Green reminds us in his commentary that; "*Herod died in 4BC and, Jesus was clearly born before that date: the beginning of our era was miscalculated by a monk centuries later.*" P 65

Consider the way people are already dividing over the arrival of Jesus: some want to worship him while others plot to kill him. Why is Jesus' kingship always controversial, especially for rulers and authorities?

Jesus' arrival in the world is noticed by more than a few shepherds and innkeepers - those in far off places have noticed a difference in the world and they are drawn 'to worship him'.

Green is again helpful to remind us that;

Matthew, of course, has an eye for his own day as he records this story. By the time he wrote, Gentiles were flooding into the church, whereas most of his Jewish compatriots did not want to know. It was mysterious, paradoxical. But had not Isaiah foretold something very similar? P 66

Look up Isaiah 60:1-3. What is the hope for you? For the people of the world?

What might our role as witnesses bearing the light of Jesus look like in our churches, communities and work-places?

Travelling On

The passage is heavy with scriptural and prophetic resonance. Micah 5:2 is quoted by Matthew in 2:6. Notably, this prophecy comes after Matthew notes that the King and his City were ‘troubled’ by the Magi’s question in 2:2. Once God starts moving, not even the most powerful people in the land are able to stop him.

Consider the way that God defies the traditions of the society in order to bring salvation and Godly rule into the world.

We might not be very good at asking for directions, demonstrating an independent spirit working within us so that we don’t follow the instructions in the box or ask a stranger for help in locating a place.

The Magi asked for directions to the King. This did not suit Herod and the rest of Jerusalem, but it did demonstrate that people were and are still seeking the real Jesus.

Are you able to ask for directions when you find yourself in a faith version of a dead end street? Who would you ask? What would you want to know?

Are you able to offer proper direction to someone seeking Jesus - without having your own agenda? Spend some time examining your heart and offering it wholly to God.

Will you commit to constantly seeking to hear God’s direction in your life and to seek to place other people before God in Prayer? Who will you have a Godly conversation with this week?

Study 6 **Re-Routing**

Ignition

When you miss a junction or encounter a lot of traffic, the sat-nav re-routes, finding a new route to avoid mishap. What are some of the detours you've taken and how have they worked out? (Did you arrive safely, avoid a disaster or end up finding new places?)

Take time to pause, worship and pray before moving on.

See pages 22-23

Setting Out

Please read Matthew 2:9-15 from your own Bible.

By the time the Magi reach Jesus, he is a child rather than a baby and they are able to honour him with their kingly gifts.

We place markers along our journey of faith. These may be the stories that we tell of times when God made a significant impact on our life; they may be items collected as an 'Ebenezer' or reminder of God's strength and faithfulness. **Read 1 Samuel 7:2.**

Karen Singleton (2012), writing for Christianitytoday.com explains;

Whenever the Israelites would pass by the stone, they would remember what they were capable of, and how the LORD acted on their behalf.

So when people today refer to setting up an Ebenezer, they are using something physical to remind them of spiritual truth, especially God's faithfulness and goodness. The other person in my household wanted real maple syrup on his pancakes this morning. But that stuff is expensive! ... As I thought about why I set the fake syrup on the table before my husband, it became clear to me why I'd taken such a stand. It doesn't excuse my behaviour, but it helped me see what was going on inside of me. There are very few things in our daily lives we can control. Saying no to using real maple syrup gave me some semblance (albeit false) of being in control, even if it was over something ridiculous. Setting a bottle of the golden liquid on the table will remind me of the battle I fought today, of the false god of stinginess—and that God is my Helper and my Ebenezer. www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/bible-answers/spirituallife/ebenezerwhatmean.html

These are more than 'spiritual souvenirs' although some of our Ebenezers may have been bought from souvenir stands. Ebenezers are visual reminders of battles won, of decisions made and should inspire us to intentionally seek God in Scripture, worship, prayer and wise counsel.

How do you find your way onwards in your faith when you appear to have stalled?

How might remembering times when God has been faithful help you to commit to the new direction?

What do you have that serves as an ebenezer, reminding you of God's activity and power to save you?

God re-routes his faithful ones away from danger. In separate dreams, verses 13 and 14, God warns both the Magi and Joseph about the coming danger and sends them in new directions.

Have you had experiences of God speaking to you in a dream? How does God prompt you to head in a different direction, re-routing your life's path?

Travelling On

Epiphanies are revelations; specifically revelations of Jesus to all manner of people who are seeking him. These revelations typically then cause us to pause where we are and for God to press his re-route button. He re-routes the Magi away from Herod in Jerusalem and Joseph, Mary and Jesus away from Herod's wrath. God re-routes us away from danger, bad habits, ungodly activities and so forth.

Are you in need of an encounter with Jesus? Where are you seeking him?

Jesus challenges and changes our lives when we discover the truth of who he is. Over 2000 years after his birth, Jesus is known about and heard of. When we see him and our eyes are opened to who he is, we see the difference he can make to who we are.

How will you offer help to someone who is searching to find and see Jesus?

Who will you be praying for this week?

Where might God's re-routing direct you?

As you see the reality of Jesus, be prepared for him to shift the direction of your travel.

The Traveller's Rest

Traditional Baked and Glazed Ham

Always a favourite with the Brogan household at Christmas (and at many other times!) Baked ham is a great one for those 'extra' meals at Christmas - even if a lot of it is not eaten on Christmas Day it keeps for about 4 or 5 days in the fridge or, of course, can be frozen.

This recipe is from my Mum's old favourite 'Delia Smith's Christmas'.

Ingredients (to serve 20 -25 people)

1 whole ham - weighing 5.5 - 6.5 kilos
3 heaped tablespoons prepared English mustard 3 heaped tablespoons demerara sugar
24 whole cloves

2 pieces of extra width foil and a large roasting tin.
Preheat the oven to Gas mark 3, 325 degrees F, 160 degrees C.

Note: If you want to cook a smaller piece you can use half a ham or a large piece of boned gammon. Cook the same way but use less foil, half the glazing ingredients and calculate the cooking time at 30 minutes per 450kg.

Before you embark on cooking of any type of whole ham you must check with the butcher what soaking is required. Soaking ham in cold water for 4 -8 hours will take the edge off the salty taste and make it more palatable. Your butcher will guide you on this.

Cooking instructions

Place 1 piece of foil lengthways and the other on top, widthways in the roasting tin. Place the ham in the middle of the foil and bring up the edges of foil to form a sealed tent over the foil. It is important that air circulates around the ham so try not to touch the ham with the foil.

Place the tin in the oven. Bake for 20 minutes per 450kg.
30 minutes before the end of the cooking time, remove the ham from the oven.
Turn the oven heat up to Gas mark 7, 425 degrees F, 220 degrees C.

Open the foil - the ham will be HOT!

Take a sharp knife and make 3 horizontal incisions in the skin. Carefully remove the brown skin from the ham leaving as much fat as you can behind.

Score the fat making horizontal cuts crossways and lengthways forming a diamond pattern. Stud a clove into the centre of each diamond.

Spread the mustard all over and then press the sugar all over, using your hands.

Discard the cooking foil and pour the juices into a bowl. The juices can be saved in the fridge and used for soups. Place the ham back into the roasting tin and place it in the hot oven for a further 30 mins until the surface has a golden crust. Be careful - the sugar has a habit of 'catching' so keep an eye on it!

To serve, let it rest for 45 minutes. This will make it easier to carve. ENJOY!

Pam Brogan

Festive Vegetarian Savoury

4 - 5 servings

This recipe is very adaptable to personal taste and store cupboard availability!
Ingredients can be substituted - elevating it with nuts / spices / festive fruit etc.

Ingredients:

6 oz brown rice
2tbs oil
1 oz sun dried tomatoes
1 red onion
1 leek
½ colourful pepper
1 tomato
1 celery stick
1 small pk chestnut mushrooms
1 oz sage & onion stuffing mix reconstituted in 100 mls water (or breadcrumbs / nuts)
dried herbs / tbsps. fresh herb of choice
1 tsp tomato purée
3 oz Cheese - grated - 1/3 for topping
1 egg -beaten
Seasoning to taste - pepper / soy sauce / marmite / mustard

Method:

Wash rice - cook in boiling water for 20 mins
Soak s/d tomatoes for 20 mins
Chop onions & leek in oil on low heat for 10 mins until soft
Chop and add celery, pepper, s/d tomato, mushrooms, tomato for 5-10 mins Add
tomato purée, herbs, seasoning to sautéed mix
Add drained rice, stuffing and 2 oz cheese
Bind with egg to a moist (not firm) consistency adding additional egg if required Place
in greased ovenproof dish
Sprinkle remaining cheese on top
Decorate with tomatoes / leaf herbs / other of choice
Cook in pre-heated oven at 180c for 40 mins

Eat hot with festive vegetables & vegetarian gravy

Or with salad

Also, tasty accompanied with a homemade sauce - e.g. tomato / cheese/ onion/ herb

ENJOY!

Janet Brogan

Mincemeat Cake Triangles

Prepare an oblong 7" x 11" tin, greased and base lined, (or Swiss roll tin)

Ingredients

6 oz self-raising flour
4 oz soft margarine
2 oz castor sugar
2 large eggs
4 level tablespoons of mincemeat
¼ tsp vanilla essence

Method

Put all ingredients into a large bowl and using beaters, beat for 1-2 minutes until well blended, spread mixture into the prepared tin.

Bake for 30 minutes in centre of oven or until springy to the touch

When cool, drizzle with glacé icing and cut into triangles

Pauline Jackson

Frozen Christmas Pudding

Ingredients

1 pint double cream;
6 ozs icing sugar;
2 ozs chopped almonds;
2 ozs chopped cherries;
2 ozs candied peel;
half cup raisins;
half cup sultanas;
4 egg whites;
1 dessert spoon of rum or brandy;
1 dessertspoon mixed spice;
1 teaspoon cinnamon;
1 teaspoon nutmeg;
1 dessertspoon water;
1 dessertspoon cocoa.

Method

Slice almonds, chop fruit and mix with spice, pour rum or brandy over fruit and allow to soak overnight.

Whip cream stiffly, add half the sugar in one basin and in another basin beat egg whites stiffly and add rest of the sugar; gently fold in fruit, nuts, cream and dissolved cocoa. Line an aluminium loaf tin with foil and fold in the mixture. Leave in fridge overnight.

Love, Libby Fairweather

Australian Christmas Nut Cake

Ingredients

150g shelled whole Brazil nuts
150g cups walnut halves
225g stoned dates
85g chopped candied peel
50g red maraschino cherries (drained free of syrup)
50g green maraschino cherries (drained free of syrup)
50g seeded raisins
50g flour
½ tsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
100g sugar
3 eggs
1 tsp vanilla

Method

Grease sides and base of round baking tin (preferably 8 inch but 7 or 9 will do) and line with greased paper, ie baking paper lightly wiped all over with butter.

Place un-chopped Brazil nuts, walnuts, dates peel, cherries and raisins into a large bowl.

Sift flour, baking powder and salt together 2 or 3 times, then mix with sugar. Make into a stiff mixture with beaten eggs and vanilla.

Spoon into prepared baking tin, pressing and flattening with the back of a spoon. Bake in a slow oven, 150C or 300F for 2-2 1/2 hours.

Test regularly from 2 hours whether it is cooked by using skewer, metal or bamboo, and see if skewer comes out clean. If so it is ready.

Take baking tin out of oven. Leave in tin for 10 minutes. Carefully Loosen it around the edges, then turn cake on to cake rack and remove paper.

When completely cold, wrap in cling film and store in refrigerator.

Andrew and Jenny Jennings

Tips for Travellers & Local Customs

Please use these resources to help you on your travels.

There are prayers; song suggestions for worship to accompany you on your journey, and also further reading in the Bibliography.

Pray some or all of these prayers, developing them according to your need or inspiration

- That God will be present with you in your thinking and reflecting.
- That God will help you discover or rediscover his paths of righteousness.
- For those we love to be safe and secure in the knowledge of Jesus' love.
- For those who have become lost as they travelled on a journey of faith
- For those who have been wounded during their travelling -
in faith or in the world.
- For those who are pioneers, making paths for others to travel on in order that they might see and know Jesus.
- That we might trust God to set our paths and the path of your local church; that we might keep our eyes on you as we travel onwards into a new era.
- For our ministers and church leaders as they seek to lead well.

Songs & Hymns to accompany your travels:

- *Long Ago, Prophets Knew.* F. Pratt Green
- *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah.* William Williams (1717-91)
- *So Will I.* Houston, Fatkins, Hastings; Hillsong Music 2017
- *Thou Shepherd of Israel and Mine.* Charles Wesley
- *From the Squalor of a Borrowed Stable.* Stuart Townend 2007
- *Light of the World, You Stepped Down into Darkness.* Tim Hughes 2004
- *Joy to the World, the Lord is Come!* Isaac Watts
- *Angels from the Realms of Glory.* James Montgomery
- *Come & Join the Celebration.* Valerie Collison
- *Cradled in a Manger.* George Stringer Rowe
- *Little Donkey.* Eric Boswell
- *God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen...* Traditional
- *See Him Lying on a Bed of Straw.* Michael Perry
- *The First Nowell.* Anonymous
- *As With Gladness, Men of Old.* William Chatterton Dix
- *O Come, all ye Faithful.* Tr. Frederick Oakeley

Christmas Blessings - A couple of poems for you:

Star's Bright Light

It was the coldest night of December:
Jagged icicles lined every roof-top ledge
Whilst up above in the evening light
A Star was shining with all its might.

Under the star, the angels sang their song
 And the Shepherds danced
 among their flocks with joy,
 Laughed with delight and ran the whole way
 To bless Jesus in his bed of hay.
 In the east, Wise Men saw a new star rise,
 Took gold and spices and with no route planned,
 Saddled their camels, followed the star
 Guiding them west, they travelled so far.
 Joseph had shovelled dirt from the stable
 That sheltered his family from the night's cold chill;
 Saw Mary's child born by star's bright light
 Bring joy to the world that Christmas night.

Catherine Hutton

The Angel Stepped Down ...

The Angel stepped down to walk alongside her:
 Just Mary, Only Nazareth
 And she continued on her way,
 unfazed by the might of Holy Presence.
 "Greetings from God Most High, Favoured One!"
 He declared, like a prayer turned inside-out.
 A weight upon her soul as they walked along the road.
 "Don't be Afraid, Mary - but hear these words from God"
 The Angel spoke, stooping to step down into her home.
 Blinking in the darkness of the room-
 God's glory all around -
 Mary looked into his face.
 Holy Awe wrapped around her
 As he spoke the promise of God:
 Her child - Jesus - His Son - The King.
 His message delivered and received;
 The Angel stepped away
 While Mary, her hands held up to heaven
 repeated words of worship and adoration;
 "May it be so, may it be."

Catherine Hutton

Bibliography

Green, M. (2000) *BST: The Message of Matthew*. Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 2nd Ed
 Motyer, J. A. (1993). *The Prophecy of Isaiah*. Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester.
 Singleton, K. (2012) [Online]. "I sometimes hear people refer to setting up an Ebenezer - what does that mean?" Available at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/bible-answers/spirituallife/ebenezerwhatmean.html>
 (Accessed 7th November 2021).
 Walton, J. H. (2001). *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis*. Zondervan, Michigan.
 Webb, B. (1996). *BST: The Message of Isaiah*. Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester.
 Wilcock, M. (1979). *BST: The Message of Luke*. Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 2nd edition.



© Catherine Hutton 2021, All Rights Reserved.
Published by Epiphany Publishing, UK