



# JESSE TREE ADVENT

## A CHRISTMAS DEVOTIONAL FOR FAMILIES

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No matter your age, Christmas brings a childlike sense of wonder, awe and joy. From ancient prophecy to an angel's announcement to the mysterious visit from royalty in the East, the birth of Jesus is the most marvelous event in history. The Advent season is a special time of anticipation and preparation as we eagerly wait with expectation and hope for the most celebrated day of the year.

The Jesse Tree Advent Devotional is a special devotion designed with your family in mind. It's filled with stimulating questions that move your family to engage in meaningful conversations and enjoyable and memorable experiences. Your whole family will enjoy walking through the Bible from Creation to the Birth of Jesus throughout the advent season. Gather your family and dig into God's word as you explore who Jesus was and is and is to come.

Use this Jesse Tree Advent devotion to settle your hearts and focus your minds on the true meaning of Christmas. We can't wait to celebrate with awe the birth of our Savior and King, Jesus Christ.

CBC is pleased to provide ornaments, specially illustrated for Central Kids and their families. You may also download ornaments to print at [wearecentral.org/jessetree](http://wearecentral.org/jessetree).

A SHOOT WILL COME UP FROM THE STUMP OF JESSE;  
FROM HIS ROOTS A BRANCH WILL BEAR FRUIT. ISAIAH 11:1

## Daily Devotions

### Day 1 - God Creates the World

Symbol: Globe



Scripture: Genesis 1:1-27

- What do you think it was like when all the animals took their first breath?
- How does it feel knowing God loves you and created you in His image?
- How can you be a better steward of the earth God created?

Family Activity: Take a nature walk and talk about what God created each day.

By speaking creation into being, God demonstrated His originality in stunning sunsets, His creativity in striking flowers and His diversity in the animal kingdom. Our Creator's gift gives us something to marvel at daily. Jesus Christ was with God from the beginning. The Light of the world came so that those who believe in Him "will never walk in darkness" (John 8:12).

## Day 2 - The First Sin

Symbol: Apple with Snake



Scripture: Genesis 3:1-10

- What do you think Eve thought when she heard a snake talk?
- Are there times you doubt the word of God?
- How can you know when the enemy is deceiving you?

Family Activity: Cut up an apple and share it with your family; retell this story of “the fall.”

God placed Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden, full of lush plants and trees. They were allowed to enjoy all of God’s creation with one restriction: “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die” (Genesis 2:16-17). Seems like a simple rule to follow, right? Unfortunately, when Adam and Eve broke that rule, they changed the course of humanity! With a simple question from a crafty serpent, “Did God really say...?” and the act of doing what they desired, rather than what God desired, Adam and Eve ushered sin into the world! Man’s perfect relationship with God was broken. None of this came as a surprise to God, however. In His wisdom, graciousness, and love, God already had planned to send Jesus into the world to be our Savior. Jesus’ death and resurrection would overcome sin, once and for all, and would provide a way for us back to a perfect relationship with God!

## Day 3 - Noah's Ark

Symbol: Ark with Rainbow



Scripture: Genesis 6:5-9; 7:17-24; 9:12-16

- What do you think it was like living in a huge boat with so many animals for so many months?
- How does it feel knowing that God made a covenant with us that will last forever?
- What can we do to walk more faithfully with God as Noah did?

Family Activity: Create your own Noah's ark using an empty box and then animals from the toy box.

God wants us to follow Him. God is pleased with our faithfulness. In the end of this story (Genesis 9:12-16), we see the strength of God’s covenant. We can also see God’s patience and grace towards us. It is hard to hear of God’s judgment but reassuring to know His grace. We even have a reminder of His promises when we see a rainbow in the sky!

## Day 4 - God Calls Abram

Symbol: Camel and tent



Scripture: Genesis 12:1-7

- How do you think Abram felt when God told him to pack up and leave everything he had ever known?
- Has God ever asked you to do something hard or that you didn’t want to do? List some things that you know God wants you to do.
- How can we know what God wants us to do?

Family Activity: Play Simon Says where only one person gets to be Simon for several turns. When complete, discuss whether it was easy or hard to always have to listen and obey and never get to be the “boss.”

God, the Creator of the universe, who spoke the world into existence, can do anything and everything without our help, yet He chooses to include us in His plans. When God commanded Abram to leave his family, his hometown and everything he had ever known for the 75 years he had been alive, Abram trusted the promises of the Lord and obeyed even though it was probably not what he would have chosen or even wanted to do. And because Abram trusted and obeyed, God blessed him abundantly. When we are obedient to God’s calling in our lives, He personally blesses us, but we also get to be on God’s team as we do His work to accomplish His perfect plans.

## Day 5 - Isaac and the Lamb



Symbol: Lamb

Scripture: Genesis 22:1-14

- How did God provide for Abraham?
- Would you say you trust God to provide like Abraham did? Why or why not?
- What might you need to sacrifice (give up) to serve God better?

Family Activity: Write down several of God's promises and hide them throughout the house (here are a few examples to get you started- Jeremiah 29:13, Deuteronomy 31:6, Isaiah 49:13, Psalm 121:1-2, Nahum 1:7, 1 Peter 5:7). Have kids hunt for God's promises.

We are a people that like to know all the details before we act. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that "...faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see." Abraham was a man of deep faith. I am certain he had no idea how God would work out the details of this situation, but he trusted God's promise to provide descendants as numerous as stars in the sky. Like Abraham, we can trust God's promises today.

## Day 6 - Jacob's Ladder



Symbol: Ladder

Scripture: Genesis 28:10-17

- What do you think Jacob felt after he woke up from seeing God in his dream?
- How do you know that Jesus is always with you, watches over you and always loves you?
- How might you show others that Jesus loves them and wants them to enjoy the freedom He can give?

Family Activity: As a family, build a pillow pillar (ladder) as high as you can.

Jacob deceived his father, Isaac, by pretending to be Esau, his older brother. In doing so, Isaac gave the blessing that was reserved for the firstborn to Jacob. Because Jacob sinned, he ran away from his family. Jacob did a bad thing, but God still loved him and showed him through this dream that He would always be with him even when he messed up. God loves us in spite of who we are. It doesn't matter what you've done, Jesus died on the cross so that you can be saved from your sins.

## Day 7 - Joseph Taken to Egypt



Symbol: Colorful Coat

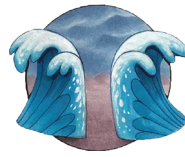
Scripture: Genesis 37; 50:18-21

- Is it always easy to clearly understand God's plan?
- Have you ever needed to forgive someone?
- Why is it important for us to forgive others?

Family Activity: Pray for someone that you need to forgive or friends that you need to ask for forgiveness.

Jacob loved his sons, but Joseph was his favorite one. That didn't make his brothers very happy and it seemed unfair to them especially when Jacob gave Joseph a special colorful coat. One day Joseph had a dream that he would rule over his brothers. That made his siblings mad and they sold him to some travelers going to Egypt. This all sounds pretty bad, but God allowed this to happen to Joseph because He had a beautiful plan prepared. By sending Joseph to Egypt, He made him a great ruler and when Joseph's family needed help, he was able to take care of them. Joseph forgave his brothers and took care of them. God wants all of us to forgive others as well as trust Him in His purpose for our lives.

## Day 8 - God Parts the Red Sea for the Israelites



Symbol: Walls of Parted Sea

Scripture: Exodus 14

- What do you think it sounded like when God parted the Red Sea? What kinds of noises would you have heard?
- What would have happened to the Israelites if they had tried to fight Pharaoh's army on their own?
- How does Jesus help you when you face trouble?

Family Activity: Using an empty water bottle, fill it with equal parts water and oil. Add a few drops of a colored dye and then shake the bottle. Watch how the colored water and the oil separate from one another.

By leading the Israelites to the Red Sea and allowing them to be trapped by Pharaoh's army, God demonstrated His love and power to the world. In the same way, God uses our struggles to show his love and grace to the world through the cross. Without God's miraculous deliverance, the Israelites would have been defeated. We would be defeated by sin if not for the miracle of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

## Day 9 - Moses and the Ten Commandments



Symbol: Tablet with Ten Numbers

Scripture: Deuteronomy 5:1-22

- What does "You shall have no other gods before me," tell you about who God is?
- What is something you try to do to obey God and how does that make you feel?
- How can you show grace to someone when they make a mistake?

Family Activity: As a family, talk about three ways you can honor God by obeying His rules this week. Write them down and check them off as you complete them.

God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites to teach them about Him and to guide them in His ways. They would quickly learn that they were not able to perfectly obey all of the commands. Just like you and I, they would make many mistakes. Thankfully, the Bible tells us in Matthew 5:17 that Jesus came to fulfill the law for us, which means when we have trusted Jesus as our Savior and Boss of our lives, He covers over all our mistakes. Thank you, Jesus for that amazing gift of love!

## Day 10 - Joshua Explores Canaan



Symbol: Cluster of Grapes

Scripture: Numbers 13:1-14:9

- What did God show His people that awaited them in the land of Canaan? How did Joshua and Caleb's response differ from the rest of the spies?
- Joshua and Caleb knew God would protect them. How has God protected you/your family?
- When you are scared, how can you remind yourself that God is your protector and He keeps His promises?

Family Activity: Eat some yummy grapes with your family and talk about why this would have been important for the people of that time.

God had promised the land of Canaan to His people. It was a rich land, overflowing with the kind of fruits, vegetables, milk, and honey that would have been so important for their daily lives. However, most of the spies were too scared of the gigantic people already living in the land. Joshua and Caleb knew God keeps His promises. God would protect His people if only they would trust His plan.

## Day 11 - Gideon



Symbol: Torch

Scripture: Judges 6:11-7:25

- How did the Lord reveal Himself to Gideon in this story?
- Is it difficult for you to obey God's call in your life?
- How can you use your calling for God's glory?

Family Activity: Gideon had to trust God. Practice trust falls with your family.

God asked Gideon to do something that felt crazy to him. The angel of the Lord came to Gideon and told him that he was to save Israel from the Midianites. Gideon was immediately afraid and asked how on earth he would be able to do that. From there, he required a lot of affirmation from the Lord that this was what he was to do. Have you ever asked something like this of the Lord in a time that felt impossible? Gideon was afraid and he wanted to ensure that God was on his side. The Lord very graciously granted his requests but Gideon was not ready to go attack the Midianites, and what happens? We see at the end of chapter 7 that they defeat Midian! A task that seemed so crazy before came to fruition because the Lord led Gideon to it and was with him the whole time. We can have confidence in where the Lord leads because He will never leave us or forsake us!

## Day 12 - Ruth and Boaz



Symbol: Sheaf of Wheat

Scripture: Ruth 1:6-10, 16-18; 2:5-18; 4:13a

- Do you think Ruth would make a good friend? Why?
- What can we learn from the example of Ruth?
- How can we care for others in need?

Family Activity: Create a simple family tree starting with your great grandparents.

God wrote a beautiful love story when Ruth met Boaz got married. They became the great grandparents of King David and it was from this family that Jesus was born over 1,000 years later! Ruth wasn't an Israelite, but she was allowed to worship our God. In the Bible, Jesus reaches out to all people. He wants us to share the gospel with every nation. Everybody is welcome!

## Day 13 - David and Goliath



Symbol: Slingshot

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:1-12, 20-50

- Why do you think David was able to defeat the giant, Goliath, when all he had was a slingshot and five small rocks?
- What are some situations in your life where you can practice boldness for the Lord when you feel scared?
- What are some "giants" that you see in the world today that could use some boldness to defeat?

Family Activity: As a family, act out of the story of David and Goliath by assigning each family member a different role.

Israel was at war with the Philistines, and the Philistines had their mighty champion (who happened to be a giant) scare all of the Israelites off. Sadly, it was working. All of the Israelite soldiers were too afraid to face the giant Goliath. When David, who was only a young boy, heard Goliath insulting God, he was filled with righteous anger and boldly stepped out to face the giant. He may have only had stones and a slingshot, but God used David to defeat the enemy. God loves to use young people to show how big and mighty He is and He can use you, too!

## Day 14 - Wise King Solomon



Symbol: Seal of Solomon/King's Crown

Scripture: 1 Kings 3:5-15

- Why do you think the Lord was pleased when Solomon asked for wisdom?
- How do you feel knowing that God is big enough for any situation you are facing and that He is personal and hears your prayers?
- What virtues do you need to pray for to better glorify God to the world around you?

Family Activity: Sit in a circle in age order and take turns asking God to help you demonstrate specific virtues that will bring Him glory.

Solomon was given a very big job. He was supposed to lead God's chosen people even though he was young and lacked leadership experience. Solomon showed that he had the heart of a true leader when he asked God to grant him the wisdom and discernment to lead His people. God, being all-powerful and "able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think," (Ephesians 3:20) granted Solomon this and much more. Our God is a God Who loves blessing His people for His glory.

## Day 15 - Elijah Calls for Fire



Symbol: Fireballs

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:18-39

- How do you think Elijah felt when 850 prophets showed up against him? Have you ever felt alone against a crowd?
- If everyone believes something very strongly, does it make it true?
- How do we decide what is true and what is not?

Family Activity: Roast marshmallows and make s'mores around a fire. Talk about how Elijah asked God to rain down fire on the saturated altar.

No one believed Elijah. He first showed them that the prophets followed a lie even though they may have believed whole heartedly that Baal was real. They tried all day to start the fire with no success. Then Elijah proved God was both real and powerful by not only lighting wood on fire, but lighting wood soaked with gallons and gallons of water. God is real and powerful, whether people believe in Him or not. Jesus calls us to follow Him, even when it seems silly to the world.

## Day 16 - Jonah and the Whale



Symbol: Whale

Scripture: Jonah 1:1-2:1; 2:10-3:4

- What was God telling Jonah to do? What happened to Jonah? What happened to the people of Nineveh once Jonah obeyed?
- Is it sometimes hard to obey God?
- How might your obedience to God affect someone else?

Family Activity: Look up some pictures of really cool large fish or whales. Discuss how amazing it is that God used one in the Jonah story to accomplish His purposes.

Jonah did not want to obey God's directions to go to Nineveh and tell the people to repent and turn from their sin back to God. While he was in the belly of the whale, Jonah realized he needed to obey God and go preach in Nineveh. When Jonah obeyed, the people repented of their sin and turned back to God. God decided to spare them His judgment. Jesus provides us the opportunity to repent and turn back to God, much like the Ninevites. God loves people and wants to see them turn to Him.

## Day 17 - Josiah Renews Covenant



Symbol: Scroll/Bible

Scripture: 2 Kings 23:1-3

- How is God glorified in this story?
- Have you made a commitment to follow the Lord with all your heart and soul?
- How can you impact those around you by making this commitment?

Family Activity: Make your own family scroll proclaiming your commitment to the Lord and have the whole family sign it.

Josiah committed to the Lord. What a beautiful story we have here! His priority is what the Lord calls him to, and we see this by his willingness to commit his life, his whole life, to the Lord after he reads all the words in the Book of the Covenant. Josiah's commitment caused all the people to join in this same covenant. Josiah and the others made a commitment to the old covenant. When Jesus came, He told us that His blood, shed on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, marks the start of a new covenant. Our life is a testimony unto the Lord, and as His disciples we are called to share His gospel. The way we live has power and can influence people positively or negatively. Let's commit to the Lord and have our life be something that leads others to Him!

## Day 18 - Prophecy-New Covenant



Symbol: Heart with Writing

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:31-34

- What do we learn about God's character from this passage?
- What does God's forgiveness of our sins mean for us?
- What should we do with this information of the New Covenant?

Family Activity: Create a family covenant. Decide as a family what commitments and rules you will make to one another.

Israel and Judah were given a covenant with God and they broke it. Despite their sin, the Lord invites them into the New Covenant which can never be broken, not even because of sin, because He sent Jesus to cover all sin. Wow! The New Covenant truly changes everything for us, all by God's grace. Because of this New Covenant we have the opportunity to know God intimately. Verse 34 explains that before people could only be told of who God is, now we get to be in relationship with Him. Every single person has the opportunity to join in this covenant, they need to only accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Share your testimony with your family, even if they have heard it before. Recount the Lord's faithfulness in saving you and adding you into His Kingdom through this New Covenant!

## Day 19 - The Fiery Furnace



Symbol: Fiery Furnace

Scripture: Daniel 3

- What do you think Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego felt when they were called before King Nebuchadnezzar for not worshiping his statue?
- When do you tend to compromise your obedience to God in order to fit into the world?
- Do you have a fiery furnace faith? How can you do the right thing when everyone around you is not?

Family Activity: Make and decorate Christmas cookies. Talk about how the furnace was way, way, way hotter than the oven is when making the cookies and that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out without a hair on their head burned.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were faced with a terrible choice—turn away from God and worship a false idol or face a horrific death in a blazing furnace. The prospect of being burned alive might tempt some to simply bow down and worship the golden statue. But these three teenage boys did no such thing. They were prepared to obey God, even unto death. They had unwavering confidence that God would rescue them from the fire. Their faith in God and His plan for their lives was so strong, they were even willing to die rather than compromise their relationship with Him. Focus on God and not the flames around you. The Lord will keep you from all harm—He will watch over your life (Psalm 121:7).

## Day 20 - Daniel and the Lion's Den



Symbol: Lions

Scripture: Daniel 6

- How did God rescue Daniel?
- Why do you think Daniel was filled with such integrity?
- How did Daniel's decision to worship only the One True God affect the entire kingdom?

Family Activity: Sit in a circle and play Lion, Lion, Daniel (like Duck, Duck, Goose). Have one person be the Angel and walk around tapping each person on the head saying, "Lion, Lion, Lion...". When they shout Daniel, that person will jump up and chase the Angel back to their seat.

It's no easy task to stand strong and firm in your faith in an unbelieving world. Daniel was an amazing example of trusting in the Lord despite overwhelming circumstances. Daniel must have felt frightened and alone, but God was faithful to send an angel to care for him while in the lion's den. Angels are at work today ministering to those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14). What's more, believers today can rely on the Holy Spirit as a source of power and wisdom and truth. We can stand firm in our faith today!

## Day 21 - Esther Trusts God



Symbol: Queen's Crown

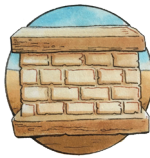
Scripture: Esther 2:1-18; 3:1-10; 4:1-14; 5:1-7; 7:1-8:17

- What was the King's edict?
- What tough choice did Esther have to make?
- What would you risk to save God's people?

Family Activity: Using posterboard and markers, make placemats with crowns on them. Have each child write a simple version of the story of Esther in their own words.

Esther was a confident and courageous woman who boldly risked her own life for the sake of God's chosen people. God placed her in the right place at the right time so she could be a champion for her fellow Israelites. Though the name of God is never mentioned in the story, His care and concern for His chosen people, the Israelites, is evident. Jesus' care and concern for all the people in the world is demonstrated at His work on the cross.

## Day 22 - Nehemiah Rebuilds Wall



Symbol: Brick wall

Scripture: Nehemiah 1:3-4; 2:17-18; 6:15-16

- Do you think the news that Nehemiah heard about the state of Jerusalem and the Jewish people was also news to God?
- When you are faced with a situation that seems overwhelming, how can we be more like Nehemiah?
- When has God used a difficult time in your life to teach you something?

Family Activity: Gather blocks or plastic cups and build a wall like Nehemiah did. Time each other and see who can build it the fastest.

During this time, Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes in the Persian palace following the Babylonian exile. Upon hearing the news about the terrible state of Jerusalem and God's remnant of people, his own people, Nehemiah wept. As he shed tears of deep sorrow, he likely felt powerless in his situation. Yet even though he was so broken-hearted that he mourned and fasted for days, we can learn a valuable lesson from Nehemiah. He remembered that he served a mighty God who loves and hears our prayers. With God's favor, Nehemiah earns the King's blessing, and even provisions, to travel back to Jerusalem and oversee the restoration of Jerusalem's walls. It is only by the grace of God that Nehemiah leads the people to rebuild the wall in only 52 days! God shows His grace to us through Jesus. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross allows us



to rebuild our lives from ones forever stained by sin to those cleansed of sin and confident in our salvation.

## Day 23 - Angel Appears to Mary and Joseph



Symbol: Angel

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25

- Why do you think God chose to come to earth through Mary, a very young woman that some might have thought to be ordinary or unimportant?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus was called Emmanuel "God With Us?"
- How might God want to use you in your everyday life to share His love with others?

Family Activity: Try to lick your elbow. Now lay your hand on the table with your middle finger tucked under, then try to lift your ring finger off the table. You may not be able to do those unimportant things, but you CAN do something else really important. Make some cookies or a card for a neighbor or friend and add a note reminding them that God loves them.

Why me? This was most likely one of Mary's first thoughts when she found out God would use her to bring Jesus into the world. Both Joseph and Mary didn't know what to think at first when they were visited by the angel, but they trusted God had a plan and they obeyed His words. If you ever feel unimportant or ordinary, remember that if you have trusted Jesus as your Savior and boss, He is always with you (Emmanuel). He wants to work through your life to love those around you.

## Day 24 - Mary and Joseph Travel to Bethlehem



Symbol: Bethlehem Town with Star

Scripture: Micah 5:2; Luke 2:4-7

- How do we see God's hand in this story?
- How has the birth of Jesus changed your life?
- Does your life look different from those who do not follow Jesus? Why or why not?

Family Activity: Google a map of Israel and follow along the path that Joseph traveled until they ended up in Bethlehem where Jesus was born. Can you imagine traveling that great distance, very pregnant and on a donkey?

Joseph and Mary needed to make their way to Bethlehem, but Mary was very pregnant with Jesus when they made the journey. I wonder what this looked like for them. I am sure Mary was swollen and in discomfort, and then she had to sit on a donkey for days to make it to Bethlehem only to get there and have nowhere to go. Having nowhere to rest after an incredibly long journey sounds terrible. But this is the situation they were in. Finally, the time came for Mary to deliver baby Jesus. Remember that there was not a doctor to help Mary and Joseph, and they were not in a place that was very helpful in giving birth. This was probably a very difficult time, but in the end our King Jesus is born! The Savior of the world has entered the world as a babe and because of this we as sinners have hope. Hallelujah!

## Day 25 - Birth of Jesus



Symbol: Baby in a Manger

Scripture: Luke 2:1-7; John 3:16-17

- Why did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?
- Describe how Mary and Joseph might have felt as they traveled to Bethlehem only to find no place to stay.
- How do you feel about the Messiah being born in essentially a stable?

Family Activity: Have each member of the family draw one picture of a storyboard of Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus. Put them all together to tell the story of Jesus' birth.

From ancient prophecy to an angel's announcement to traveling to Bethlehem, the birth of the Messiah is the most marvelous event in history. Each year, the birth of our Savior creates a new sense of wonder and awe. Born of humble beginnings, our gentle and lowly King rises and out of compassion and humility offers Himself as a sacrifice to save the world from sin.

Celebrate today, "For unto us a child is born, unto 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" (Isaiah 9:6).

## Day 26 - Angels Appeared to Shepherds

Symbol: Shepherd's Staff



Scripture: Luke 2:8-20; Hebrews 1:14

- What do you think the shepherds were thinking and feeling when the angels appeared?
- How does it feel knowing Jesus came to earth to save you?
- How might you take the good news to your friends and family?

Family Activity: Reenact this passage with pieces from a nativity scene or ornaments from the Christmas tree.

Imagine what the shepherds experienced that night as the angels appeared! The Savior that had been prophesied was here! This is the reason we celebrate Christmas. God came to earth in the form of a man to save us. He would teach and heal and train His disciples to spread the gospel. His life, death and resurrection would be full of more wonders that could only be explained by the fact that He was God.

## Day 27 - Magi Follow Star

Symbol: Star



Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12; Revelation 22:16

- What do you think it was like for the wise men to follow a star? Do you think Jesus was what they expected?
- What were the three gifts given by the wise men and why were they important?
- How can you stand against a world that would have you betray King Jesus?

Family Activity: Sit outside tonight and look at the stars. Take turns sharing what images you see in them.

God sent the wise men a sign that their King, Jesus, would be born. They truly were wise men because they did not just sit idly by with this information. They began to follow the star and seek out Jesus. They went first to a place where you might expect to find a king, but discerning King Herod's intent they quickly left and continued their journey following the star that God placed in the sky to lead them to their Savior King. And so, they found Him, the King of the Jews, not in a palace, but in a normal family house in a normal village. There He came into this world, the King of Kings.

## Day 28 - Prophecy

Symbol: Stump with fresh shoot or leaf



Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-3a; 11:10

- This prophecy was made 700 years before the birth of Jesus. Do you think it was hard for generations of people to wait on the promised Savior?
- How does it feel to know that God has always had a plan to send Jesus to save us from our sin make you trust Him more?
- What characteristic of Jesus as the Branch mentioned in this passage makes you love God more? How can you use this attribute to encourage someone?

Family Activity: Draw a picture of a tree. Talk with your family about how the tree grows from the stump out to the branches just like Jesus descended from the stump of Jesse.

We live in a sinful world full of sinful people. It would be easy to get overwhelmed by this, but we don't have to be. Through the prophet Isaiah, God revealed His great plan to save the world from sin. But God doesn't just give a simple promise; He helps us in our unbelief by giving details of what family He will descend from, as well as how He will be anointed with the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would come from the family of Jesse, the father of King David. As believers in Christ, we get to live with the hope that comes from a God that loves us so deeply that He had a plan all along to send His own Son to pay the penalty for our sin. When we trust in God's plan and in Jesus, we can live trusting in God's promises and His never-ending love for us.

## Day 29 - Jesus is the Light of the World



Symbol: Light

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2; John 8:12

- What are things that make our world dark?
- Why do we need Jesus to guide us with His light?
- How can we walk in the light of Jesus every day?

Family Activity: Play a game of flashlight tag (hide-and-seek in the dark). One person is "it" and tries to spot his or her friends hiding in the dark by using the flashlight.

Have you ever been in a room so dark you can't even see your hand in front of your face? When it's that dark, it's impossible to see where you're going and there's a very good chance you'll bump into something and get hurt. What do you need to see and get around safely? Light! The same is true with spiritual darkness. Because of sin, our world is spiritually dark. Sin separates us from God. Moses says this state of sin is like "a blind person in the dark" (Deuteronomy 28:29). When we live in sin, we don't have a clear path and we are definitely living dangerously! But we don't have to stay in spiritual darkness. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world! Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). When we follow Jesus, His light of truth shines brightly in our lives; our paths are clearly visible, we know right from wrong and we move from death into eternal life!

## Day 30 - Jesus is the Prince of Peace



Symbol: Dove and Crown

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6-7; John 14:27

- What names and attributes does the prophet Isaiah give Jesus?
- What is the difference between Jesus' peace and the world's?
- How should we act when we have Jesus' peace?

Family Activity: Sit in a circle and pass a ball to each other. The person with the ball will call out a name of Jesus or one of His attributes and toss the ball to someone else in the circle.

The world's false sense of peace is an empty promise, fleeting and changing based on the happenings of the day. Hardships and trials in life are inevitable. Though our hearts may be troubled, we are no longer slaves to fear. Because of the birth of the Prince of Peace, God's people can rely on His peace that surpasses all understanding. This is true peace that is a gift from the Lord and a blessing that strengthens and upholds us through all circumstances. Thank you, Jesus!

## Day 31 - Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life



Symbol: Cross

Scripture: John 3:16; 14:6

- When you are lost, what do you need to find your way back?
- How can you find your way back to God?
- With whom can you share the Good News of Jesus?

Family Activity: When you are out and about, look for crosses. When you see one, say, "Jesus answered, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

God is holy. He can't tolerate sin, and our sin keeps us eternally separated from Him. No matter how hard we try not to sin, we still do it (James 2:10). Nothing we can do ourselves can right our wrongs. Sin leaves us lost in this world and it feels hopeless. Yet, it's not! God is loving. He loves us so much He wants us back. But God is just. He can't ignore our sins and leave them unpunished. God is gracious. His plan has always been to send Jesus to take our place and pay the penalty for all of our sins. We don't need to do anything but accept this free gift from God and believe in Jesus! Our faith in Jesus is the only way back to God. No good deeds we could ever do will result in winning God's forgiveness. It's only the good deed Jesus did on the cross that will save us!



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