

Family Devotions



*Family
Bible Discovery
for Advent*



Meet The Littlest Watchman

Benjamin is a Watchman. Every day he sits and watches an old tree stump, waiting for the day that a shoot will appear. Benjamin knows that day will come because God has promised that it will. “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit” (Isaiah 11 v 1, ESV).

The Littlest Watchman is a made-up story, written by Scott James, but the imagery and promises in the story are all over God’s word. The Old Testament is filled with promises about the coming Christ/Messiah—the King who would come to rescue his people. And the New Testament shows us how those promises came true in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

This Advent calendar and devotional booklet will help you to explore some of those promises and see for yourself how God kept each one.



The Littlest Watchman Advent Calendar © The Good Book Company 2017. Reprinted 2018.

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This devotional booklet is designed to be used alongside *The Littlest Watchman Advent Calendar*, to help children and adults explore the Bible together during Advent. Each day provides a short family Bible time suitable for ages 4 to 12. It will take about five minutes, maybe at breakfast, or after an evening meal. Choose whatever time and place suits you best as a family.

The Advent Calendar

- Open each day's window before reading the relevant page in the booklet. (The picture hidden behind the window is printed in the booklet as well—and you don't want to spoil the surprise.)
- Read the verse printed behind the window.
- If you are making your own Jesse tree, tear the window carefully from the calendar and hang it on your tree so that each day's symbol can be seen. (There are suggestions for how to make a Jesse tree on the next page.)

The Booklet

- Each page starts with a simple discussion or an optional activity. These sometimes need pencil and paper.
- Then read the day's verses. (The verses printed in the calendar are taken from the International Children's Bible. However, any modern translation will be fine.)
- There are then a few questions based on the passage, followed by a suggestion for prayer.

Who Was Jesse?

Jesse is part of Jesus' family tree. He was the father of King David—the best king the Israelites ever had. Jesse and his family lived in Bethlehem, the same town Jesus would be born in 1000 years later.

What Is a Jesse Tree?

A Jesse tree is a traditional way of celebrating Advent. Each day, a symbol is hung on the tree as a reminder of part of Jesus' family tree. You will find these symbols hiding behind the windows on your Advent calendar. We will meet three kinds of people on our Jesse tree:

- Members of Jesus' family (starting with Adam)
- Old Testament prophets who spoke about Jesus hundreds of years before he was born
- People who met Jesus during the first Christmas

Make Your Own Jesse Tree

The windows on your Advent calendar are designed to tear off once they are open. Make a small hole at the top to help you hang the window from some thread.

Choose what kind of "tree" you want to hang the symbols from:

- A branch with plenty of twigs
- A miniature Christmas tree
- A drawing of a tree on a large sheet of paper (use reusable sticky tack to attach the windows)
- Or, you can make your own tree from thick card stock (see pics). You can download a template for this from www.thegoodbook.com/watchcal





Dec 1st: The Stump of Jesse

Talk

Have any trees been cut down near you? The stump looks dead—but sometimes a shoot starts to grow from it again. It's not dead at all!

Read

Today's verses seem to be about a tree stump—but they're really about a person...

Read Isaiah 11 v 1-2.

Talk

Isaiah was a prophet—one of God's messengers. He said that someone's family was like a tree stump. Whose family was it? (v1) (*Depending on your Bible version, it may say Jesse's family or David's family. They are the same family—Jesse was David's father.*) Someone special would come from this family, and would be given God's Spirit. What would the Spirit give this person? (See v2.)

Think

When Isaiah wrote his book, God's people, the Israelites, were in a mess. Most of them didn't love God or live the way he wanted. They were like a dead stump! But God promised that someone very special would come from that stump. Someone from the family of Jesse and David would be God's wise, powerful King (v2). Your Jesse tree will be all about that person. Who do you think he is? (*Jesus*)

Do

Start your Jesse tree by hanging up today's symbol of a stump. The opposite page tells you more about Jesse and gives ideas for making your tree.

Pray

Ask God to help you to learn more about King Jesus as you read the Bible and make your Jesse tree together this Christmas.



Dec 2nd: The First Family

Talk

What's the difference between you and an elephant? (!)

Read

God created our world and everything in it. He made the first animals and birds. Then he made the first people...

Read Genesis 1 v 26-27.

(If you have older children, read v28-31 as well.)

Talk

Who were the people like? (v26) *(God)*
Human beings are made in God's likeness. That means made like God himself! We are like God. Animals and birds (and elephants!) are not like God. That's why God has put us in charge of his world, to look after it and enjoy it. Who are we to rule over? (v26)
(Fish, birds, and animals)

Think

God created a perfect world. The first people were perfect too. Do you know what the first two people were called? *(Adam and Eve)*
As we will see tomorrow, Adam and Eve didn't stay perfect. But they were the beginning of a family that would one day have God's own, perfect Son born into it. Who was that? *(Jesus)*

Adam was only perfect for a short time. King Jesus will be perfect forever!

Pray

God created a good world for us to live in. Each choose something about God's world that you would like to thank him for. Ask God to help you look after his world.



Dec 3rd: The Wrong Tree

Do (optional)

(You need pencil and paper.) Each draw one or more trees on the paper to make a garden.

Read

God gave Adam and Eve a perfect garden to enjoy. There was just one tree they must not eat from—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they ate from that tree, they would want to decide for themselves what’s good and what’s bad. But that’s **God’s** job!

If you drew a garden, cross out one of the trees in your garden picture.

Sadly, Adam and Eve broke God’s rule. They ate from the tree; and then hid from God...

Read Genesis 3 v 8-15.

Talk

Where did Adam and Eve hide? (v8) (*Among the trees*) God already knew that they had broken his rule. Who did they blame? (v12-13) (v12—*Adam blamed Eve*; v13—*Eve*

blamed the snake/serpent, who was the devil in disguise.)

Think

Adam and Eve had to leave the garden. God’s perfect world was spoiled. But God already had a plan to rescue his world and his people. What was going to happen to the evil snake/serpent? (v15) (*He would be crushed/bruised by one of Eve’s children.*)

Jesus was born into Eve’s family. He would be the one to crush the devil and rescue us from evil.

Pray

It was always God’s plan to send Jesus to be our Rescuer and King. Thank God for his wonderful rescue plan.



Dec 4th: A Floating Box

Do (optional)

You have one minute to each find a box and bring it back. What is inside each box?

Talk

Did you know that “ark” means “box”? In today’s story, Noah builds a floating box!

Read

At the time of Noah, the people were living such wicked lives that God decided to flood the earth clean. But there was one man, called Noah, who did obey God. So God told Noah to build an ark...

Read Genesis 7 v 1-5.

Talk

Why did God tell Noah to take animals and birds into the ark? (v3) *(So that every type of animal and bird would continue living after the flood.)* How well did Noah obey God? (v5) *(He obeyed God completely.)*

When the flood was over, God promised never to destroy the earth like this again.

Read Genesis 9 v 13-15.

What is the sign that God will always keep this promise? (v13) *(A rainbow)*

Think

Boxes are made to keep the things inside them safe. The ark kept Noah and his family safe, so that they were rescued from God’s judgment. The ark was God’s rescue plan for Noah and his family. As you read more about the Jesse tree, you will find out about God’s greatest rescue plan of all.

Pray

Noah did everything God told him. When do you find it hard to obey God? Ask God to help you at those times.



Dec 5th: Promises Promises

Do (optional)

(You will need paper and pencil.) Play a quick game of hangman to guess the phrase: “Land, children, and blessing.”

Read

God made some amazing promises to Abram. Then he told him to go on a long journey...

Read Genesis 12 v 1-5.

Talk

God promised **land, children, and blessing**. Which verse do you find each promise in? (v1—*land*; v2—*children [a great nation]*; v2&3—*blessing*) How old was Abram when he left his home? (v4) (75) What was the name of the country God took him to? (v5) (*Canaan*)

Think

God was going to give Abram a land of his own—but Abram didn’t own it yet. God promised that Abram’s family would become

a huge nation—but Abram didn’t have any children at all! God also promised that someone from Abram’s family would be God’s way of blessing the whole world.

The rest of the Bible shows us how God kept these wonderful promises. We’ll find that out as well, as we keep adding pictures to our Jesse tree.

Do (optional)

Stick your hangman game on the wall, to remind you of God’s three great promises to Abram.

Pray

The Bible tells us that God **always** keeps his promises. How does that make you feel? Talk to God about your answers.



Dec 6th: The Promise-Keeper

Talk

Recap: What were the three promises God made to Abram? (*Land, children, blessing.*) How old was Abram when God made these promises? (75)

Read

In today's story, Abram had been waiting 25 years for God's promises to come true. God had given him a new name—Abraham—which means "Father of many." But he and his wife, Sarah, still didn't have any children!

Read Genesis 21 v 1-7.

Talk

Did Abraham and Sarah have a boy or a girl? (v2) (*A boy*) What did they call him? (v3) (*Isaac*) How old was Abraham when Isaac was born? (v5) (*100!*) "Isaac" means "he laughs." Why was Sarah able to laugh now? (v6-7) (*Because God had kept his promise to give her a son.*)

Do (optional)

On yesterday's hangman sheet, draw a picture of a baby next to the word "children." Isaac was the start of the huge family God had promised to Abraham.

Pray

Sarah laughed with delight because God had kept his promise to her. Are you excited that God is the Promise-Keeper? How can you use your voice to show him your joy? (*Praying, singing, laughing, telling someone else about him...*)

Choose one way to use your voice to thank God for keeping all his promises.



Dec 7th: The Lord Will Provide

Note: Today's devotional includes the explanation of substitutes on page 12.

Talk

What was Abraham's son called? (*Isaac*)
What three promises had God made to Abraham? (*Land, children, blessing*) Isaac was an important part of two of those promises. God's promise of a huge family started with Isaac, and someone from that family would be God's way of blessing the whole world.

Read

God set a test for Abraham...
Read Genesis 22 v 1-2.

Talk

Abraham would be used to making sacrifices. He would kill an animal or bird, burn it, and offer it to God. It was a way of saying sorry or thank you to God. But who did God tell Abraham to sacrifice this time? (v2) (*Isaac!*)

Read

Isaac was now growing up. Abraham loved his son very much. But who did Abraham love **most**? His son? Or God? That was the test. When God told Abraham to take Isaac to a distant mountain, he obeyed right away. Then Abraham took his son, put him on top of the wood and lifted his knife ready to kill Isaac...

Read Genesis 22 v 9-14.

Do

God stopped Abraham, and provided a ram as a substitute. Find out more about **substitutes** on the next page.

Pray

Jesus was God's way of blessing the whole world. That includes you, if you trust in Jesus. Thank God for sending Jesus to be your substitute.



Dec 7th (continued): Substitute

Do (you need pencil & paper)

(Do this activity if possible as it will help your child understand how Jesus acts as our substitute.)

Write the word “Substitute” at the top of the paper. Use the examples below to help your child understand what the Bible says about substitutes.

A Substitute Player

John was in the school football team. (Write “John” on the paper.) But John hurt his ankle and had to stop playing. Phil was the **substitute** that day. He came on in John’s place. (Cross out “John,” and write “Phil” instead.)

A Substitute Sacrifice

Abraham loved God more than anything. He was willing to sacrifice his own son. (Write “Isaac” on the paper.) But God provided a **substitute**. A ram died in Isaac’s place.

(Cross out “Isaac” and write “a ram” instead.)

A Substitute for Us

The Bible tells us that we all sin—we do what **we** want instead of what **God** wants. Our sin must be punished. (Either write “us”—or your own names—on the paper.) But God provided a **substitute**. When Jesus died on the cross, he died in our place, to take the punishment for our sins. (Cross out “us”—or your names—and write “Jesus” instead.)

God had promised Abraham that someone from his family would be God’s way of blessing the whole world. God kept his promise by sending his own Son, Jesus, to be our **substitute**. Jesus died in our place, so that we can be forgiven.

This was **God’s rescue plan** for everyone who believes in Jesus.

Substitute	
John	Phil
Isaac	a ram
us	Jesus



Dec 8th: Dream Ladder

Do (optional)

Compare the skin on your arms. Whose are brownest? softest? hairiest? (!)

Read

Today we're going to read about Isaac's son, Jacob. He once pretended to be his hairy brother, Esau, by covering his arms with goatskin!

When Jacob pretended to be Esau, he lied to his dad and cheated his brother. Esau was so angry that Jacob ran away. While he was on his journey, God gave him a special dream...

Read Genesis 28 v 10-15.

Talk

Jacob's dream came from God. What did Jacob see? (v12) (*A ladder/stairway—see the picture behind today's calendar window.*) Who spoke to Jacob? (v13) (*God*) God gave Jacob the **same three promises** he had given Abraham.

If you made one, look again at your hangman puzzle from Dec 5th on page 9.

Which verse is each promise in? (v13—*land*, v14—*children*, v14—*blessing*.)

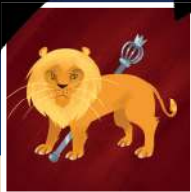
Think

Jacob had lied to his father and cheated his brother. Why didn't God give up on this lying cheat and bless someone else instead? (*Think back to God's promises to Abraham.*)

God had **chosen** Abraham's family. And he had chosen to bless Jacob. It's hard to understand, but it's something to be thankful for. It means that even when we mess up, God is still in control and he will still be faithful to his promises.

Pray

Thank God for being like this.



Dec 9th: The Kingly Line

Talk

In one minute, how many names can you think of that begin with **J**?

Read

Yesterday, we met Isaac's son, **Jacob**. Did you have him on your list? Jacob had thirteen children—twelve boys and one girl. Two of Jacob's sons also had names beginning with **J**. Do you know who they were? (*Judah and Joseph*) Read what Jacob said about Judah in **Genesis 49 v 9-10**.

Talk

What animal did Jacob say Judah was like? (v9) (*A lion*) What is the verse behind today's window on the calendar? ("*Someone from Judah will always be on the throne.*") Some Bible versions use the word "scepter" in v10, which is a kind of stick that kings hold. You can see a lion and a scepter in today's picture.

Think

Judah's family was going to be a family of kings—including David, the best king the Israelites ever had. Can you think of another king whose name begins with **J**, who was born into Judah's family line? (*Matthew 1 v 1-2 tells us that Jesus is from the family line of Judah.*)

Pray

Jacob and Judah are part of the family line that leads to Jesus. Can you think of anything else beginning with **J** to thank God for? (*How about Joy, Jobs, Jokes and Jello?*)



Dec 10th: Ordinary People

Talk

Look at the symbols hanging on your Jesse tree to remind you of the people you've met so far. Today we're going to whizz forward about 700 years to meet someone who was about to join the kingly line of Judah.

Read

Ruth came from the country of Moab, where the people didn't believe in God. But when Ruth's husband died, and his mother Naomi decided to go back to Israel, Ruth chose to go with her...

Read Ruth 1 v 15-16.

Talk

What did Ruth say about Naomi's people and God? (v16) (*From now on they would be Ruth's as well.*) Ruth wasn't an Israelite, but she chose to believe in God. She came to live in Israel, where God made sure that she went to collect barley from a field belonging to a good man called Boaz.

Boaz and Ruth got married, and had a son, called Obed. **Read Ruth 4 v 22** to find out what Obed's son and grandson were called. (*Jesse and David*)

Think

Wow! Ruth was a foreigner from Moab—an ordinary person. But God had a plan for her to become part of the kingly line of Judah. She would be the great-grandmother of King David. And one day, an even greater King would come from her family. Who? (*King Jesus*)

Pray

Thank God that he uses ordinary people—like Ruth, and like you and me!—to work out his plans.



Dec 11th: King of Hearts

Do

(You need pencil & paper.) Draw a row of seven stick men. These men are Jesse's sons and Ruth's great-grandsons.

Read

God had told his messenger, Samuel, that one of Jesse's sons would be the new king. So Samuel went to Bethlehem to see Jesse and his sons. **Read 1 Samuel 16 v 6-10.**

Talk

Did God choose Eliab, the eldest? (v7) (No)
Cross out a stick man. Did God choose Abinadab? (v8) (No) **Cross out a stick man.**
Did God choose Shammah? (v9) (No) **Cross out a stick man.** Did God choose any of the next four sons? (v10) (No) **Cross out four more stick men.**

Read

They had run out of sons!!!
Read 1 Samuel 16 v 11-13.

Talk

The youngest son had been left behind, to look after the sheep. What was his name? (v13) (David) What did God say about David? (v12) ("Appoint him. He's the one!")
Draw another stick man, with a crown above his head.

Think

What did God look at when choosing his new king? (v7) (God looks inside, at the heart.)
God doesn't worry about the **outside** (how tall or good-looking we are). God looks at what we're like **inside** (whether we love God and trust and obey him). How does that make you feel?

Pray

What do you want **your** heart to be like? Talk about it together; then ask God to help you to be like this.



Dec 12th: King Forever

Talk

Do you remember God's three promises to Abraham? (*Land, children, blessing*) Someone from Abraham's family would be God's way of blessing the whole world.

Do (optional)

(You need pencil & paper.) Start a poster about this person by writing "**God promised to send...**" in the middle of the paper and "**God's way of blessing the world**" at the top. (See the picture below.)

Read

David was the best king the Israelites ever had. God made some amazing promises to David... **Read 2 Samuel 7 v 12-16.**

Talk

There are some tricky words in these verses. These questions should help explain them:

1. Who will become king after David's death? (v12) (*One of his sons/offspring*)

2. David had wanted to build a temple (or "house") for God. Who would build it instead? (v13) (*His son*)

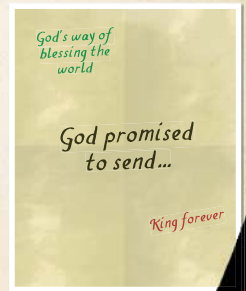
3. How long would David's family serve God as kings? (v13) (*Forever!*)

Do (optional)

God promised David that someone from his family line would be King forever. Write "**King forever**" on your poster.

Pray

After hearing God's promises, David told God how great he was, and thanked God for all he had done for him. Will you do the same?





Dec 13th: Don't Turn Away

Talk

Ask your child if they can name any of the British royal family. When a king or queen dies, who is crowned next? (*The eldest child. At the time of writing, that means Prince Charles will become king when Queen Elizabeth dies.*)

Read

David's son Solomon became king after David. He built the temple for God, just as God had told David he would. God also told David that someone from David's family would be King forever. Would it be Solomon?

Read 1 Kings 11 v 1-6.

Talk

How many wives did Solomon have? (v3) (*700! And 300 girlfriends.*) Where were these women from? (*See list in v1.*) Why had God said **not** to marry people from these places? (v2) (*They believed in pretend gods—so Solomon would start to worship those gods as well.*) Solomon **did** start to worship other

gods. How was he different from his father, David? (v6) (*He didn't follow God completely.*)

Think

If you started a poster yesterday, look again at what it says.

Do you think Solomon is the promised king? Why/why not?

Pray

Solomon started really well. He even built the temple for God. But as he got older, he turned away from God (v4). Sadly, some Christians also turn away from God when they get older. Do **you** want to follow God for all of your life? If so, ask God to help each one of you to keep following him completely, as David did.



Dec 14th: To Us a Child Is Born

Talk

Think of some ways you might get news about a new baby. (*A card, phone call, email, newspaper announcement...*)

There were plenty of messages about the birth of Jesus. Many of them were given long **before** he was born!

Read

Isaiah was a prophet—one of God’s messengers—who lived 200 years after Solomon. Isaiah’s book tells us many things about Jesus, even though Isaiah lived 700 years **before** Jesus was born.

Read Isaiah 9 v 6-7.

(*If you have older children, read the whole passage—Isaiah 9 v 1-7.*)

Talk

Was Isaiah speaking about a man, woman, boy, or girl? (v6) (*A boy*) Who is Isaiah speaking about? (*Jesus*) Find four fantastic

names for Jesus (v6). (*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*)

These names remind us that Jesus shows us the best way to live, and brings us peace with God. Jesus **is** God! He is mighty and everlasting!

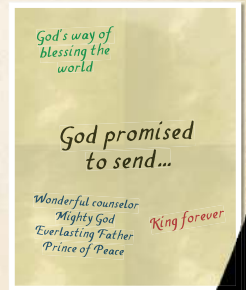
How long will Jesus be King? (v7) (*Forever!*)

Do (optional)

Copy the four names onto your poster.

Pray

Wow! Jesus is our perfect King! He is still alive today—and will rule as King forever! Thank, praise, and obey him now.





Dec 15th: Dancing with Wolves?

Talk

Have you ever played the game “What’s the time, Mr Wolf?” What does the wolf do when it’s “dinner time”? (*Chases the rest of the players.*)

Do (optional)

If you have time and space, you may like to play a quick game, with one of you as the wolf!

Read

Wolves can be dangerous animals—but Isaiah spoke about a time when they won’t be!

Read Isaiah 11 v 6-9.

Talk

What animal will wolves live peacefully with? (v6) (*Lambs*) Spot the other animals in verses 6-8. Isaiah said that all these animals would live peacefully together. What would the world be full of at that time? (v9) (*The knowledge of the Lord God*) This will happen

when Jesus rules as King over everything. Even the animals will live the way he wants!

Think

When God created our world, the animals all lived together peacefully. But that changed when Adam and Eve first sinned. One day, Jesus will come back, and the world we live in will end. Then, everyone who trusts in Jesus will live with him in the new, perfect creation. Living in the new creation will be like returning to the Garden of Eden—but even better!

Pray

We don’t live in this new creation yet. At the moment, sin still spoils our world. But if you’re a Christian (a follower of Jesus), then you can look forward to living in God’s new, perfect creation! Talk to him about how that makes you feel.



Dec 16th: O Little Town Of...

Talk

Either: See how many Christmas carols you can think of.

Or: Sing a verse together from a carol you all know.

Read

What is the missing word from today's heading? (*Bethlehem*) Micah was a prophet—one of God's messengers—who lived at the same time as Isaiah. Like Isaiah, Micah wrote about Jesus hundreds of years before he was born... **Read Micah 5 v 2.**

Talk

Which town did Micah write about? (v2) (*Bethlehem*) We've already met a family who lived in Bethlehem. Can you remember who they were? (*Ruth's grandson Jesse, and his sons, including David.*) But Micah was writing about someone else who would come from Bethlehem. What did Micah say this person would do? (v2) (*Rule over Israel*)

Do (optional)

If you have been making a poster, add "**From Bethlehem**" to it (see below).

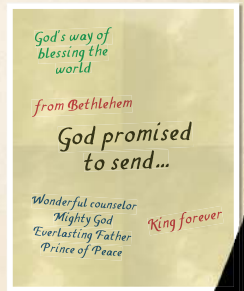
Read (for older children)

When the wise men came to visit the young Jesus, they didn't know where he was.

Read Matthew 2 v 4-6 to see how King Herod's advisers knew where to send the wise men. (*They read Micah's prophecy from Micah 5 v 2.*)

Pray

Every promise God made about the new King came true. Thank God that **nothing** can stop his plans.





Dec 17th: Party Time!

Talk

Talk about any parties you've really enjoyed. Have you ever had such a good time that you wanted to have the party again? Today we'll meet a king who did just that!

Read

When Hezekiah became king, he cleaned and rededicated God's temple, which had become a mess. Then he called the people together to celebrate Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread—a special kind of party to remember how God had rescued his people hundreds of years before.

Read 2 Chronicles 30 v 21-23.

Talk

How long did the people celebrate for? (v21) (*7 days*) How did they feel? (v21) (*Very happy/rejoicing*) The people celebrated and praised God for a week. What did they then decide to do? (v23) (*Do it again for another week!*)

Think

Look at the verse behind today's window. What does it say about Hezekiah? (*He did what was good, right, and obedient.*)

If you have been making a poster, look again at what it says.

Do you think Hezekiah was the King God had promised to send? (*No. He was a good king—but the promised King hadn't come yet.*)

Pray

How can **you** celebrate God's goodness? (*Pray, sing, have a party. . .*) If possible, do this now—and then do it again tomorrow!



Dec 18th: A Very Young King

Talk

Pretend to crown the youngest person in the room. What would they choose to do first as king or queen?

Read

Josiah was Hezekiah's great-grandson. He was only eight when he became king! The temple was in a mess again, so Josiah had it repaired. During the work, the book of God's law was found.

Read 2 Kings 22 v 11-13.

Talk

What did Josiah do when he heard God's words in the book? (v11) *(He tore his clothes, to show he was upset.)* What did Josiah ask his helpers to do? (v13) *(To find out more from God about the words in God's book.)*

Read

Later, Josiah read God's book to the people... **Read 2 Kings 23 v 1-3.**

What did Josiah and the people promise to do? (v3) *(To follow God and to keep all of his commands.)*

Think

Read the verse behind today's window. Like his great-grandfather Hezekiah, Josiah was a good king. But was he the King people were waiting for? *(No, they had to keep waiting.)*

Pray

From a young age, Josiah chose to **love** God and **obey** him. And he lived that way all his life. What about you? How do you want to live your life? (Whatever age you are!) Talk about this; then pray together about your answers.



Dec 19th: Donkey Riding

Talk

Imagine a proud king, riding into battle. What would he look like? What would he be riding?

Read

Zechariah was a prophet—one of God’s messengers—who lived about 100 years after Josiah. He spoke about a great king riding into a welcoming city.

Read Zechariah 9 v 9.

Talk

Which city was this king going to ride into? (*Jerusalem, also called Zion*) How is this king described? (*Depending on your Bible version, you may find words like righteous, having salvation, gentle, triumphant, victorious, humble.*) You’d expect a great, victorious king to ride a powerful war-horse. But what would he be riding on? (*A young donkey!*) This young donkey was a sign of peace, not

war. Zechariah describes this king as “having salvation” (someone who saves). He would be a Rescuing King, who would bring peace.

Think

Zechariah was writing about Jesus. 500 years later, King Jesus was going to rescue his people and bring peace with God.

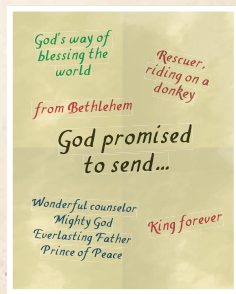
If you are making a poster, add “Rescuer, riding on a donkey” to it.

Do (optional)

Read about Jesus riding a donkey into Jerusalem in **Matthew 21 v 1-9.**

Pray

If you trust in Jesus, you have peace with God. Thank him for this.





Dec 20th: God Saves

Talk

Two of the Gospels—Matthew and Luke—tell us the Christmas story. Matthew starts his book with Jesus’ family tree. Skim through **Matthew 1 v 1-11** to see how many people you can spot from your Jesse tree. (Can you find 12?)

Read

Matthew starts the Christmas story by telling us about Joseph, a carpenter from Nazareth. **Read Matthew 1 v 18-21.**

Talk

Who was Joseph going to marry? (v18) (*Mary*) But then Joseph found out that Mary was going to have a baby. What did he decide to do? (v19) (*Call off the wedding quietly*) An angel told Joseph not to worry. Who did he say had given Mary her baby? (v20) (*God’s Holy Spirit*) **Wow!** Mary’s baby was also God’s baby! What was the baby to be called? (v21) (*Jesus*)

Think

The name Jesus means “God saves.” Why is this a great name for Jesus? (v21) (*Because he will save his people from their sins.*) Look back at page 12 to see how Jesus saves us from our sins. Read the second half of the page, starting at **“A substitute for us.”**

Pray

Have you been saved from your sins by Jesus? If you have, thank God for this now. If you’re not sure, ask God to help you to find out more about Jesus.



Dec 21st: Amazing News

Talk

Imagine that someone has important news for you. Can you think of any unusual ways they might tell you? (*E.g. drop a card from a hot-air balloon, send a messenger on a horse...*)

Read

When God had important news for Mary, he sent an angel! **Read Luke 1 v 26-33.**

Talk

What was the angel called? (v26) (*Gabriel*)
Find three things Gabriel told Mary in verses 30-31. (*God was pleased with her. She would have a baby boy. She was to call him Jesus.*)

That was amazing news! But Gabriel still had more to tell Mary...

Whose son was her child going to be? (v32) (*The Son of the Most High God*) **Wow!** Mary's baby was going to be God's own Son!

Think

1000 years before this, God had made a promise to King David. What did God say about someone from David's family?

If you've made a poster, check it out to see what that promise was. (Someone from David's family line would be King forever.)

If you haven't made a poster, you can find the answer from the title at the top of page 17 of this booklet. (King forever)

How did Gabriel's words to Mary match that promise? (v32-33) (*Mary's son would be a king like his ancestor David. But his kingdom will never end.*)

Pray

1000 years seems a l-o-n-g time to wait—but God kept his promise to David at exactly the right time. Thank God that he is the Promise-Maker and Promise-Keeper.



Dec 22nd: The King Is Here!

Do (optional)

(You need pencil and paper.) Take a quick census (a survey) of each person—list their full name (including middle names), age, eye colour, and how clean their fingernails are!

Read

The Roman emperor ordered a census of his whole empire. Everyone had to go to the town their family came from to register for the census... **Read Luke 2 v 1-7.**

Talk

Why did Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem? (v4) *(They were from King David's family line, which came from Bethlehem.)* What happened while they were in Bethlehem? (v6) *(Jesus was born.)* How did Mary look after her son? *(She wrapped him in strips of cloth—which was the usual way to clothe babies—and laid him in a manger, an animal's food box, which wasn't usual!)*

Do (optional)

If you have been making a poster, look at it again. At last, the person God had promised to send had come!

Write "JESUS" after the words "God promised to send..."

Pray

Yesterday we saw that Jesus is God's Son, who will be King forever. BUT instead of being born in a palace, surrounded by rich things, he slept in an animal's food box full of hay!

What does that tell you about King Jesus? Talk to God about your answers.



Dec 23rd: Shepherds See Scary Sight

Talk

Look around the room. How many things can you see that begin with **S**?

Read

As you read today's story, watch out for things beginning with **S**...

Read Luke 2 v 8-20.

Talk

What did the shepherds see while supervising their sheep? (v9) (*A scary angel*)
What shone around them? (v9) (*The glory of the Lord*)
How did they feel? (v9) (*Scared*)
The angel had such good news. Who did he say had been born? (v11) (*A Savior—Christ the Lord*)
What did the shepherds say they would do? (v15) (*Go to Bethlehem to see for themselves.*)

What did the shepherds see? (v16) (*Mary, Joseph and the baby, just as the angel had said.*)
The shepherds spread the news

about this Savior, and all that the angel had told them. What were they saying on the way back to their sheep? (v20) (*They were praising and thanking God for everything they had seen and heard.*)

Pray

Can you think of some **S** words to describe Jesus? (*E.g. Savior, Son of God, super, special, sovereign...*)

Use these words to thank and praise him.



Dec 24th: Simeon Sees Savior

Talk

It's nearly Christmas! Has it felt like a long wait? What are you particularly looking forward to?

Read

Today we will meet an old man who had been waiting to see his Savior. His name was Simeon. **Read Luke 2 v 25-32.**

Talk

What had God's Holy Spirit told Simeon? (v26) (*He wouldn't die until he had seen the promised Christ/Messiah.*) "Christ" is a Greek word that means "God's chosen King." "Messiah" is the same word in Hebrew. Where did the Holy Spirit tell Simeon to go? (v27) (*To the temple*) In the temple, how did God keep his promise to Simeon? (v27-28) (*Simeon met the baby Jesus.*)

Think

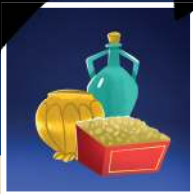
What did Simeon say he had seen? (v30) (*God's salvation*) Simeon was talking about **Jesus** when he said this. Do you remember what the name "Jesus" means? (Clue—it's the title for Dec 20th on page 25!)

Simeon was waiting for God to help Israel (v25)—but who else was Jesus going to be a light for? (v32) (*Non-Jewish people, known as Gentiles.*)

Pray

Jesus came to save both Jews and non-Jews. That means **everyone!**

Pray for someone you know who isn't a follower of Jesus. Ask God to help this person learn something about Jesus this Christmas. Pray that they will believe that Jesus is their Savior, as Simeon did.



Dec 25th: Wise Men Worship Jesus

Today's activities are deliberately short, to help you fit them into your busy day. Merry Christmas!

Talk

What is the symbol on today's window of your Advent calendar? (*Three gifts*)

Read

These gifts were presents brought by some wise men who had traveled a very long way to see Jesus. **Read Matthew 2 v 9-11.**

Talk

How did the wise men find the house Jesus was in? (v9) (*They followed a special star.*)
What did they do when they saw Jesus? (v11) (*They bowed down and worshiped him, and then gave him their gifts.*)

Think

The wise men were thrilled to find Jesus (v10)! They knew he was the King God had promised to send.

If you made a poster, check it out to see what else we have discovered about King Jesus this Christmastime.

Pray

Thank God for his gift of King Jesus, who came as our Rescuer so that we can have our sins forgiven, and can know and love him as our King.

The Littlest Watchman

WRITTEN BY
Scott James

ILLUSTRATED BY
Geraldine Rodriguez

Watching and Waiting for the Very First Christmas

What Next?

Follow the adventures of Benjamin, the littlest Watchman, who waits for, and then witnesses, the first Christmas, in this beautiful hardback storybook. Can be read to children aged 3-5, or read by children aged 6-7. A perfect gift.

Benjamin's father taught him that their Maker had promised to send someone to undo the curse.

He promised to send them a King who would rescue them and restore the whole world. Instead of leaving them being like a useless stump, the Maker promised that a new branch—one that would grow His people into a fruitful tree. This man would come from the family of a man named Jesse.

The Maker told people to wait for his King and to trust in his promise.





This booklet is designed to help families have daily Bible times together during Advent, each lasting about five minutes.

Every day there is a simple discussion starter or activity that leads into a short Bible reading from the Christmas story. This is followed by a few questions and a suggestion for prayer.

The booklet is designed to be used alongside the matching Advent calendar. Open a new window each day to discover that day's Bible verse—and a beautiful, rich picture to hang on your Jesse tree. Then use this booklet to help you discover the true meaning of Christmas.