



Advent

Lawndale Presbyterian Church

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Written by Bill Bradford & Jeremy Britt

Book design by Mysie Wurster

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WHAT IS ADVENT?

Advent comes from a Latin word meaning “coming” or “arrival” and has been celebrated within the Church for centuries during the four Sundays leading up to Christmas. During Advent, Christians take time to look back and retrace their spiritual history, to step into the shoes of their spiritual predecessors, the Israelites, as they waited centuries for the promised Messiah.

But Advent is also a chance to pause and reflect on our own sin and shortcomings, the brokenness of the world, to feel the weight of creation’s need for a Savior, and to celebrate that this Savior came in the person of Jesus, born as a baby 2000 years ago.

However, this season does not only cause us to look back but also to look forward to Jesus’ Second Coming. Theologians often describe the time we are in as the Inter-Advent period. We are in between the First Advent when Christ came to us 2000 years ago and the Second Advent when Christ will return. As we enter into the longing of Israel for the Messiah to come we are reminded to look forward and to look and long for Christ to return again to make all things new.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

Whether this is your first time doing family worship or the thousandth time, here are some recommendations to help you make the most of this time. Many of these recommendations are from *A Neglected Grace* by Jason Helopolous.

- Find the best time of the day that works for the rhythm of your family, and keep it at the same time each day. “Don’t be rigid, but do have a consistent and routine time that your family knows they will be gathering for worship.”
- Find ways for everyone to participate. You could have children read, or play music. Ask questions as you go along.
- It’s alright to be brief! We don’t want this to be a burden, but a blessing.
- Model the right attitude. For families with kids, this is hugely important! Talk about looking forward to family devotional time and have joy during it.
- Sing as a family! It may be awkward at first, but persevere. The songs we have provided are merely suggestions. So if it works better to sing something different or more familiar, do so! Three ways that you can sing: A Capella, along with a YouTube video or Spotify song, or if someone can play an instrument that would be excellent!
- Matthew Henry said, “Be persuaded brethren, thus to dedicate your houses to God, and beg him to come and take possession of them. If you never did it, do it tonight with all possible seriousness and sincerity.”



Week 1

***Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.***

***Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns:
let men their songs employ;
while fields and floods,
rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.***

***No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.***

***He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.***



He Will Come From the Seed of the Woman

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Genesis 3:15

Reflect

The story of the Gospel is one of a great reversal, of the lost being found, of light entering into darkness. We see this plan for salvation all the way back to the opening pages of Genesis. After Adam and Eve fell, God was already plotting a way to rescue his people, to buy them back at a great cost, and to restore their relationship with them. God planned to do this by sending his people a Savior. But who would this Savior be? Genesis 3:15 gives us the first hint in that he would be a man, born of Eve. But we also get another promise: he would come to crush the head of the serpent.

Rejoice

Sing *Joy to the World*

Request

Pray that we would enjoy the season, but remember that we have been given the greatest gift in Jesus. Pray that we would anticipate the birth of Jesus as each day gets closer to Christmas Day.

He Will Come From the Line of Abraham

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Genesis 12:2-3

Reflect

After Adam and Eve fell, God set in motion his plan to redeem his people, despite their sin. As a part of his plan, God wanted to bless a people that didn't deserve it. Enter on to the scene Abraham. God chose Abraham to be the recipient of His blessing. It wasn't because of anything Abraham had done, because as we see in Genesis, Abraham had plenty of flaws. But God chose to bless Abraham to show his mighty power to save. This blessing foretells an ever greater blessing, a blessing for all the earth: the Savior of the world would be a descendent of Abraham.

Rejoice

Sing Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

Request

Pray for each member of your immediate family.
Pray for your pastors and other church leaders.

He Will Come From the Line of Jesse

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Isaiah 11:1-5

Reflect

Fast-forward several hundred years, and God has not forgotten about his plan to save his people. In Isaiah 11, we get the promise that he would come from the line of Jesse (who is a descendent of Abraham!). But what is a shoot from a stump? What's a branch from the roots? Picture a green plant sprouting and coming out of a tree stump. This is creating the image of life springing up out of something that is dead. That though mankind is sinful and fallen, Jesus, the Lord of Life will spring up out of it and begin the process of making all things new. Jesus will have the Spirit of the Lord on him!

Rejoice

Sing *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

Alternative for young children: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

Request

Pray that God would continue to spring life from dead things, by calling lost people to him. Pray for our neighbors.

He Will Be Born in Bethlehem

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Micah 5:2

Reflect

God often works in ways that we would not expect. He uses the weak things of the world to shame the strong (1 Cor. 1:27). As we saw last night, the True King, the Forever King, the King of all Kings, would come from the line of a lowly shepherd boy, David. And now we see that this promised ruler, the one “whose coming forth is from old,” is not to be from the great city of David Jerusalem, but rather from David’s small, insignificant, little town of Bethlehem. Since God has a tendency to choose the obscure, the lowly, the insignificant, and even common things of the world to display his glory, could he be using even you to proclaim his glory? But Micah 5:2 confirms that the Genesis 3:15 plan is very much still in play, and is magnified even greater this Advent season. As Ralph Davis says, “I have found exactly what I need for Christmas: an ancient, defiant, unbreakable promise.”

Rejoice

Sing *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Request

Pray that God would continue to use seemingly insignificant vessels such as ourselves to shine his glory to the world.

Pray that we would be fixed on the baby that would be born in Bethlehem nearly two thousand years ago, whose birth would change our lives and our world.

He Will Be a Prophet

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Deuteronomy 18:15,18

Reflect

We know that God's promised redeemer would come from the line of Adam, Abraham, Jesse, and David. We know that he would come from Bethlehem. But what would he do? During Old Testament times, God spoke to his people through prophets. You can think of prophets as the mouth-piece for God. Moses was one of the greatest prophets, if not the greatest, of the Old Testament. But yet, he, like everyone before him and after him, was not perfect and sinned. Moses foretold that another prophet would come— a greater prophet than even himself! This greater, forever prophet was none other than Jesus (John 6:14) and he would be the perfect mediator between God and His people (Heb. 3:1-6).

Rejoice

Sing *Once in Royal David's City*

Request

Pray that we would have the ears to listen to Jesus today.
Pray for your church.

He Will Be the Fulfillment of the Promise of God to Save His People

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Reflect

As time rages on, God's promise to save remains ever true. What a timely passage this is! Israel would be exiles, strangers living in a strange land. Has God forgotten about his people? No! He has not forsaken them, but has put a plan in motion (Jeremiah 51:5). His plan to save his people from their sin and from Satan's power would come soon. Through this redeemer, his righteousness would become ours (1 Cor. 1:30). Praise the Lord!

Rejoice

Sing *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*

Request

Pray that God would forgive us of our sins, and thank him that Jesus took our sins to the cross and gave us his righteousness in return.

Pray a prayer of thanks for all the things that you are thankful for.

He Will Be Born of a Virgin and Called Immanuel

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Isaiah 7:14

Reflect

Do you ever look around at the world and think that things aren't perfect here? If we are being honest, we would have to admit that sometimes sad things happen. We've been reading about this promised plan of redemption. But how do we know it is actually happening? If only he would give us a sign! Well, God does indeed give us a sign, and that sign is a child that is born of the virgin, Mary. But how are we to know that God is for us? Well, the name Immanuel means "God with Us." So we know no matter how chaotic or hard life gets, that through his son, Jesus, God is with us.

Rejoice

Sing *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

Request

Pray a praise that God doesn't forget us and that he is with us. He loved us so much that he sent his son to save us.

Pray for your friends.



Week 2

***O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel***

***O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel***

***O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.***



He Will Be Called the Prince of Peace

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Isaiah 9:6-7

Reflect

It's easy for us to think that God sent his son Jesus for the world (John 3:16). But it's actually more focused than that. We are told that the child was born unto you. This means that Jesus was born for you, specifically. But this is no ordinary child. He would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. He will be more powerful than governments and will rule way better than they ever would. And this is good news for us! "Now we hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!"

Rejoice

Sing *Good Christian Men, Rejoice*

Request

Pray for our Nation and its leaders.

He Will Come Into Jerusalem on a Donkey; He Will Come With Humility

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Zechariah 9:9-10

Reflect

Sometimes the best gifts we can receive come in the most unassuming packages. Israel longed for a savior that would come on a war horse, that would empower them to victory, and rule over them in might. But Zechariah promises that the Savior that was to come would come in on a donkey. In these times, rulers would ride into town on a donkey and that would signify peace has been achieved. This was unexpected as Israel thought he was coming to conquer. What they didn't understand is that he was coming to conquer, but not in the way they thought he would. He was coming to conquer our struggle and bondage to sin, in order that we might have peace with God!

Rejoice

Sing *The First Noel*

Request

Pray that peace would be had all over the world.

Pray that darkness would be overcome and that all would see the light this Advent season.

He Will Come to Bring Good News to the Poor and Afflicted

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Isaiah 61:1-2

Reflect

A long time ago, before there were telephones, TVs, and computers, towns would employ Town Criers to make announcements to the town. All day they would cry out whatever had to be announced. “Hear ye! Hear ye!” “The War is over!” “The King has returned!” “No more staying up past bedtime!” In our passage we just read we have another announcement, and it proclaimed what the promised Savior was to do. He would bring good news to the poor, help those who are broken-hearted, free those who are enslaved, comfort those who are sad, and proclaim that today is the day of salvation! What good news this is for sinners such as us! Let’s repeat the sounding joy, that the Savior reigns!

Rejoice

Sing *Joy to the World*

Request

Pray the Lord’s Prayer together.

Pray that we would be proclaimers of this Good News.

He Will Come to Bring Forgiveness and Salvation as Our Substitute

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Isaiah 53:4-6

Reflect

We have seen God's plan of redemption unfold, we have seen that plan in action. "Tidings of comfort and joy" have been pronounced to the weary people of the world. We will sing in a moment how Jesus is to "Save us all from Satan's power, when we had gone astray." But wrapped up in this great, joyous news, there is also sad news. In order to save us, Jesus would have to carry our sorrows and our sins to the Cross. He would be punished for our sins. We were healed because he was hurt. So we come now to the ultimate calling of Jesus: he came to be a perfect sacrifice, so that we may have rest and peace with God. What a wonderful Savior we have!

Rejoice

Sing *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*

Request

Pray that as we rejoice in Jesus' coming, that we would also look to the reason why he had to come: to bear our sins on the cross.

Pray that we would treat others with love, out of the love that we have received from Jesus.

He Came From a Great Family

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Matthew 1.1-17

Reflect

Did you enjoy that reading? I don't blame you if your eyes glazed over. But isn't it amazing that Matthew begins his story of Jesus with a family tree? Have you ever talked with your parents about your family tree? Jesus had one too! He was a real person like you. And, don't you think a lot of your family? Yes, your parents and brothers and sisters, but also your grandparents and uncles and aunts and cousins, right? Jesus thought a lot about his family tree too! Who are some of the really important names you heard? Why does Jesus have to come from Abraham? Remember that God said to Abraham: "...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12.3) Why did Jesus have to come from David? Remember that God said to David: "...I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom." (2 Samuel 7.12) Christmas means that Jesus comes from this great family so that he can fulfill these great promises.

Rejoice

Sing *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

Request

Father, thank you that Jesus is the greater Abraham and the greater David. He brings us your blessing, and he establishes your kingdom. Help me to know I'm in this Spiritual family too! In Jesus I have your blessing, and I live in your kingdom. Help more people receive your blessing and enter your kingdom this Christmas season. And, Lord, thank you for my earthly family. Amen.

He Came From a Sinful Family

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Matthew 1.1-17

Reflect

Did you enjoy this reading of Jesus' family tree just as much as the first time? As crazy as it sounds, we could read and study Jesus' family tree a long time. It contains some incredibly precious truths. Yesterday we talked about the two greatest people in Jesus' family tree. And, that's important! But, something just as important for us to see, is that Jesus' family had a lot of problems. Does your family have problems? Do you sometimes do things that are wrong? Jesus' family also did! And, Matthew makes sure we know it! Isn't that surprising? He doesn't just talk about the good things! He also includes the bad. You see, God's grace in Jesus lets us be honest about our shortcomings. Matthew talks about Tamar. The great man Judah lied to her. He also includes the "wife of Uriah." The great man David was mean to her and her husband. He also mentions the "deportation to Babylon." That was due to Israel's constant disobedience to God. And, we could highlight other problems too! Jesus was born into this family! He made their problems his. But does that mean Jesus was a sinner too? No! That's the wonderful mystery of the Gospel. Notice something, all through the family tree it says someone "[was] the father of" someone, but when we finally get down to Jesus, it says, "Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born." The idea is Joseph is not Jesus' biological father but his adoptive father. Jesus' father by nature is God himself; therefore, Jesus doesn't inherit the sin of his family tree. Because of this, he can be the one perfect man to save his family and all of us from our sins. Christmas means Jesus joined himself to our sin without being a sinner in order to save us from our sins.

Rejoice

Sing *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*

Request

Father, thank you that you love sinners like me so much, that you sent your only Son to be born into a sinful family. I praise you that he was without sin, so that he could take my sin from me at the cross. Help more people know such a wonderful Savior for sinners. And, Lord, please forgive me for the ways I sin against my family. Amen.

He Came From the Ultimate Family

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Luke 3.23-38

Reflect

Ok, now you may be thinking: “Really, another family tree? Why are my pastors doing this to me?” Well, this is the last time. But, did you catch that Luke’s family tree is different from Matthew’s? Luke’s family tree starts with Jesus and goes up his family tree, sons to fathers, whereas Matthew starts with the fathers and goes down the family tree, fathers to sons. Luke’s family tree also seems to trace Joseph’s physical line, whereas Matthew’s traces his legal line—the actual kings. That’s why Luke’s family tree includes a number of nobodies, unknowns, whereas Matthew’s is a “who’s who” of important people. This says something beautiful about the Gospel too, right? Well, a few things I most want you to appreciate: First, see that Luke says: “Jesus...[was] the son (as was supposed) of Joseph...” Why does Luke say: “As was supposed”? I think Luke means people thought Joseph was Jesus’ natural father, but he really wasn’t. Who was then? Second, notice Luke goes up the family tree all the way to Adam. Why would he want to make that point? I think Luke wants to highlight the fact Jesus is the Savior for all men, not just Israelites. And, third, think about how Luke describes Adam as “the son of God.” On the one hand, he’s saying all humans have their origin in God, not in chance. But even more, he’s wanting to say that Jesus is the unique Son of God. God the Father is his natural father. Jesus has come as the true Son of God to be the New Adam, to start a whole new humanity, that he redeems by his grace through his suffering on the cross. Christmas means Jesus is God’s Son come to make us a new people by his grace.

Rejoice

Sing *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates!*

Request

Father, thank you for sending your only Son to be the Savior of the world, of all kinds of people. Thank you that he makes us new. I pray that in my family this Christmas season I would live in a new way, like the kind of person Jesus has made me to be. And, Lord, bless all our missionaries as they tell people all over the world about our gracious Savior. Amen.



Week 3

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!

Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

God of God, Light of Light

Lo! he abhors not the Virgin's womb;

Very God, begotten, not created,

O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above:

“Glory to God, in the highest!”

O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,

born this happy morning;

Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n;

Word of the Father, late in flesh appearing

O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him,

O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!



He Came Through the Holy Spirit

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Luke 1.26-38

Reflect

Christianity is not about man trying to reach God; it's about God coming down to man. God sends his angel, Gabriel, down to announce the Savior's birth to Mary. Gabriel says to her: "Greetings, O favored one..." Both these words come from the word "grace." So, God sends his messenger to Mary not because she's better than others but because of his grace, his unearned favor. And, Gabriel says that Mary will conceive and give birth to a son, whom she will call Jesus. And, he says her son will be great, he'll be called "the Son of the Most High," he'll be given the throne of David, and he'll reign over God's people forever. And, Mary asks: "How can this be, since I'm not married?" And, Gabriel says something astonishing: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God." This is the Grand Miracle of the Gospel. "Overshadow" is an Old Testament way of speaking of God's Glory Cloud. Think of the Holy Spirit hovering over the chaotic waters of creation or the thunder-lightning cloud over Sinai. It's God's glorious Presence! Gabriel speaks of an incredible mystery. Just like God breathed life into Adam to make him a living creature, even so God the Holy Spirit will directly fashion a living being from Mary. So, this living being will be "the Son of God" by nature. God the Holy Spirit joins the eternal Son of God with a real human nature within the womb of Mary. So, Christmas means Jesus is both God and man, the only Savior, God to be capable of saving and man to be qualified to save.

Rejoice

Sing *Let Heaven and Earth Combine*

Request

I praise you Father for the mystery of God become man. It's more staggering than all of creation! It's also overwhelming, that you would do that to save a self-satisfied sinner like myself. Thank you for your abounding grace! I praise you for the role of the Holy Spirit in my life, to make Jesus real to me, to give me faith and repentance, to empower me to become more like Jesus. May your Spirit move in my family during this Christmas season. Amen.

He Came to Bring Us New Birth

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Luke 1.39-45

Reflect

This is such a sweet passage! Mary needs some encouragement, so she goes to visit her older cousin Elizabeth, whom Gabriel told her was also pregnant. And, when Mary enters Elizabeth's home and greets her, Elizabeth's baby leaps in her womb. And, the Holy Spirit fills Elizabeth with joy and she, speaking as a prophetess, exclaims: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." Doesn't Elizabeth have an exalted view of Jesus? She says Mary is the mother of the Lord, and the Lord is the very one who spoke to Mary of this fulfillment of his saving plan. Elizabeth speaks like David in Psalm 110.1: "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" She's confessing the baby in Mary's womb to be God himself! Furthermore, she views the leaping of her baby, John, as a sign of who Jesus really is! It indicates that God's grace can be at work in the lives of unborn babies. In fact, this seems to mean that God gave John new birth, a new heart in the womb. It's like what God said to the prophet Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you..." (Jeremiah 1.5) Christmas tells us that God's Son comes into our world to give us new birth, so that we can believe on him. Isn't that what Jeremiah 31.31-34 foretold?

Rejoice

Sing *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing* or *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

Request

Father, thank you for the new birth. I praise you that the Holy Spirit uses the Gospel of Jesus Christ to give me a new heart to believe on Jesus and to turn from my sin. Your grace is so amazing! You not only accomplish my salvation, you also enable me to accept it by giving me a new heart. Please work in the lives of all the children of our church to help them believe in the Gospel. Amen.

He Came to Lift Up the Humble

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Luke 1.46-56

Reflect

Elizabeth's marvelous words prompt Mary to erupt in praise to God: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior..." God the Son becoming a little baby in Mary's womb causes us to be overcome with wonder and thanks! The way Mary praises God for the baby in her womb shows that she is a young lady who has meditated a lot on the promises of God. Her song of praise sounds a whole lot like Miriam's victory song (Exodus 15.1-18) and Hannah's prayer of gratitude (1 Samuel 2.1-11). She's a great model of a young person reading and praying through God's Word. How about you? And, just notice how Mary praises God in a variety of ways that in this baby in her womb, God is coming to lift up the lowly and weak and coming to put down the prideful and strong. Jesus came to conquer our worst enemies—sin and the devil. Remember, he's the serpent-crusher! These enemies had us in a miserable and helpless condition. But, when Jesus goes down to the lowest spot, to the cross, to God's Judgment, he conquers these enemies by paying for our sins. So, as we depend upon Jesus in faith, God shows us his mercy by lifting us up and making us his children. Such wonderful grace fills us with the joy that Mary expresses in her song. Christmas tells us we're not saved by being strong, we're saved by Jesus' strength.

Rejoice

Sing *Go Tell It on the Mountain*

Request

Father, thank you that our Savior, the Lord Jesus, is strong and mighty. Nothing in my life is too much for him! I pray that he will extend his powerful Kingdom in our hurting world, "far as the curse is found." Help my family and my church rely upon his strength as we seek to love those around us. Help me to grow stronger in him as I read and reflect on you in your Word. Amen.

He Came as God With Us

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Matthew 1.18-25

Reflect

Now we get to hear a story from Joseph! Joseph is engaged to be married to Mary. But all of a sudden, he finds out she's pregnant. So, he's shocked! "What's going on? We're not even married!" So, God sends his angel to Joseph too. It's most likely Gabriel again. And, Gabriel appears to him in a dream and says: "Joseph, the Holy Spirit has created a living being from Mary similar to how he created Adam from the dust. The son she will bear will be called Jesus—which means, "The Lord saves"—because "...he will save his people from their sins." That's the main point of Jesus' mission! But, how can a human being save many sinful human beings? Who's capable of doing this? The angel goes on to quote the famous prophecy from Isaiah: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)." Jesus must be a human being to be qualified to save sinners, but Jesus must be God himself to be capable of saving sinners. Jesus is God in flesh to satisfy God's law for us and to suffer the penalty we deserve for our sins. Christmas is God the Son himself becoming man to take all the sins of his people onto himself and take all God's righteous punishment into himself. How gracious! The God we offended by our sin, himself comes to take the offense.

Rejoice

Sing *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

Request

Father, I praise you that Jesus is "God with us," come to save us from our sins. This is how bad my sin is: Only God can save me from it! And, this is how great your love for me is: God really came to save me from it! I'm so thankful to you! Help me and my family know that you know us to the depths and love us to the heights in the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

He Came to Deliver Us From Our Enemies

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Luke 1.67-80

Reflect

We also get to hear from Zechariah! He's Elizabeth's husband, John the Baptist's father. He sings an exuberant song of praise for what God is doing through Jesus. He says the baby in Mary's womb means that God is "visiting and redeeming his people." Zechariah's thinking of God "visiting and redeeming" Israel when they were in slavery in Egypt. So, he sees in this little baby the greater Exodus! God is redeeming, rescuing at great cost to himself, his people from our chief enemies of hell, death and sin. He does this because he promised to do this, and he always keeps his promises. (vv. 72-73) He promised to do this because he is a God of great mercy. Mercy is his kindness toward us when we are hurting. It's so deep that one of the words used comes from the word for "intestines." (vv. 72, 78) To accomplish this amazing redeeming work, God sends his "sunrise from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death...." Jesus is described as a "sunrise." Just like the beautiful sunrise turns the night to day, even so Jesus is God's light that turns the darkness of our sin to the light of God forgiveness. How did Jesus do this? On the cross Jesus fell into the darkness of God's Judgment, but three days later, at sunrise on the first day of God's New Creation, Jesus resurrected from the dead. Christmas means that God has visited us to redeem us from all our enemies.

Rejoice

Sing *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*

Request

Father, thank you for sunrises! I praise you that Jesus is the light of the new day of salvation. When I see a sunrise, let me be full of gratitude for him. Please let Jesus' light shine on people I love that are still in darkness. May I live as a member of your glorious New Creation. Amen.

He Came to Heal the Real World

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Luke 2.1-7

Reflect

Isn't it interesting that Luke includes all this detail about who the Caesar and the governor were when Jesus was born? Why does he do this? He wants us to take to heart that Jesus came for this real world, the world of nations and rulers and wars. The rulers Luke mentions represent Rome, a nation that treated Israel very cruelly! Jesus came for the harsh and painful realities of this fallen world. It's the world in which a conquering King can require his conquered subjects to travel to their hometowns in order to pay him taxes. Caesar thought that he was the savior of the world. He established a kind of peace for the Roman Empire. But it was a peace built on violence and oppression. But, right into this world, Jesus is born. God comes into this world that values might and power, in a weak way, as a little baby wrapped in "swaddling cloths and laid ... in a manger, because there was no place for him in the inn." This world didn't have room for him. But, he's the true Savior of this miserable world. God moves the most powerful man in the world, Caesar Augustus, to order people to go to their hometowns, so that Joseph and Mary would travel to Bethlehem, so that Jesus could fulfill prophecy and be born there (Micah 5.2). God's in control, not Caesar! God sends the true Savior, his own Son, into this world in weakness, to make the peace by going to the cross to pay for our sins. Christmas means that Jesus accomplishes the peace we most long for, peace with God.

Rejoice

Sing *O Little Town of Bethlehem* or *Away in a Manger*

Request

Father, thank you that you are in control of all things. Sometimes things are hard, but I see in the story of Jesus, that hard things become gracious things. I praise you that I can trust your will. And, I praise you that Jesus is the real Savior for this real world. Please move in the lives of those all over the world that live in very hard situations. May their need move them to depend on Jesus. Amen.

He Came to Bring Us Joy

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Luke 2.8-20

Reflect

God does things in ways that surprise us! God the Son leaves his throne of glory and is born in a cattle trough. God sends his army of angels to announce his Son's birth not to the rulers and governors of the world but to lowly shepherds. People looked down on them! But God didn't! He shows the outcast and the poor greater attention and favor. It's a picture to us that Jesus came for sinners! An angel appears and announces to the shepherds: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." He announces joy in a world of sadness! What's the cause of this joy? "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." The true King, the true Savior, is born! How will the shepherds know this to be true? "...you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." The true King, the true Savior, is born in a manger? Surely this boggled their minds! Yet, whatever confusion they felt was suddenly overcome with awe, for an army of angels joins the lone angel, lights up the night sky in Glory, and utters a deafening battle cry: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" They announce God's invasion of grace into this fallen, broken world. God is bringing his peace to those who are the objects of his favor, his grace. Christmas is all about the true joy brought by the true King, the true Savior, who secures our peace by taking our sins for us.

Rejoice

Sing Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come or Angels We Have Heard on High

Request

Father, thank you for the gracious way you do things. I praise you that you look with favor on those the world overlooks or looks down on. Thank you for looking with favor on me! Help me to be watchful of those who need special attention this Christmas. I praise you that you invaded our world with grace. Amen.



Week 4

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.*

*While shepherds kept their watching
Over silent flocks by night
Behold throughout the heavens
There shone a holy light.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.*

*The shepherds feared and trembled
When lo! above the earth
Rang out the angel chorus
That hailed our Savior's birth.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.*

*Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born
And God sent us salvation
That blessed Christmas morn.*

*Go, tell it on the mountain,
Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Jesus Christ is born.*



He Came to Redo Our Histories

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Matthew 2.13-15

Reflect

After the wise men leave, an angel again appears to Joseph. This time it's to warn him that he, Mary and Jesus need to flee to Egypt because Herod's going to hunt Jesus down to kill him. So, Joseph promptly gets up, gathers what they need, and leads them away. And, they stay in Egypt until Herod dies. Then Luke explains the significance of this: "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called my son'" (Hosea 11.1). The interesting thing is that Hosea doesn't say this as a prophecy about what God will do but rather records what God already did, when he called Israel out of Egypt at the Exodus. Therefore, Luke's not using it as a fulfillment of prophecy but rather showing that Jesus repeats the history of God's people. Israel had to flee to Egypt, so Jesus has to flee to Egypt. Israel came out of Egypt at the Exodus, so Jesus must return from Egypt to go on a New Exodus. Jesus is walking Israel's path. He has to do that to redo or re-write Israel's history. You see, God called Israel to be his obedient son, but Israel kept sinning and disobeying God. So, God had to judge Israel. Therefore, to redeem disobedient Israel, Jesus has to repeat her history as the obedient Son, the true Israel. He has to succeed where Israel failed. And, he does that for all his people! We all mess up. There are some things we'd like to redo. Have you ever felt that way? "I wish I didn't do that! I wish I didn't say that!" Christmas means Jesus came to redo our histories. He came to obey where we disobeyed, so that when God sees us, he sees Jesus' record not ours.

Rejoice

Sing *What Child Is This*

Request

Thank you, Father, that you take up my little story—even my failings—and make it a part of Jesus' big Story. I praise you that he redeemed me; he redeemed my life. I praise you that when you see me, you see me through the perfect life and obedient death of your Son. Thank you that because Jesus has recovered Adam's and Israel's failed mission, he will finally restore all things to your good purpose. Everything sad will finally become untrue! Help me to live in light of that. Amen.

He Came to Suffer for Us and With Us

Regroup

Play some Christmas music, or ring a bell, or whatever you want to do to signal family devotional time is about to begin.

Read

Matthew 2.16-23

Reflect

We close our devotions this Christmas noting two events where Jesus has to suffer. When the wise men leave without informing Herod where they found “the king of the Jews,” Herod gets irate, furious and orders the killing of all the male babies in Bethlehem two years old or under. Thankfully, the angel had warned Joseph this would happen, so just in time, he had fled with Mary and Jesus to Egypt. But Jesus knows the terror of having to escape from an evil, powerful man. Then, after Herod dies, an angel appears again to Joseph in a dream to tell him it’s time to return to Israel. So, Joseph promptly gets up, gathers their belongings, and leads Mary and Jesus back to Israel. But, as they get closer, he learns that Archelaus is reigning in place of his father, so he gets afraid, since Archelaus is an evil man too. An angel warns him of this also, so he, Mary and Joseph return to Galilee, to a small town called Nazareth. John 1.46 indicates that Nazareth was a despised area of Israel. So, Jesus grows up a Nazarene, a man from a place everyone looked down on. So, these two events show Jesus identifying with those who suffer violence and with those who suffer from exclusion and rejection. And, these are just preparations for Jesus’ worst exclusion at the cross, where he violently suffers for our sins. Christmas means the Son of God comes to suffer for us and with us. He suffers for us to take away our sins. He suffers with us to sympathize and strengthen us.

Rejoice

Sing *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*

Request

Father, thank you that Jesus is a living Savior who sympathizes with our struggles. Please care for those who are sad and lonely during this Christmas season. Let them know their Savior identifies with them and loves them. Lord Jesus, thank you that you constantly intercede for me at the throne of grace. Amen.

Reflections
