



Do you *see*  
what I  
*see*  
?

WATERMARK FAMILY ADVENT GUIDE







# Do you *see* what I *see*?

## HELLO FRIENDS!

Thank you for joining us on this journey for the next 25 days through God's amazing story of Christmas. As we count down the days to Christmas, our hope is that God would allow you to see the stories of His faithfulness from the Scriptures with fresh eyes, grow your family's faith in the God whose faithfulness continues in our lives today, and ultimately fix your family's eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). This year's theme, *Do You See What I See?*, is a journey of discovery for families to see how every story, from Creation to the manger in Bethlehem, was a witness of our need for a Savior and Jesus' fulfillment of our great need.

A few thoughts on how to use this Family Advent Guide. First, just use it. Our hope is that you would make a commitment to, at the very least, read through the Scripture each day for the next 25 days. Be encouraged from the truths of God's Word because they will never return void. We want this to be easy yet impactful, so do whatever is best for your family, but do something.

Second, depending on the age and maturity of your children, the daily Scripture readings are accompanied by devotions written to help your family see that the Bible is a bunch of smaller stories that point to one big true story, the story of Jesus and God's rescue plan. There are discussion questions intended to help spark conversation around your dinner table, in the car, or at your child's bedside each day. We hope they help you look deeper into the ancient stories of people like Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Joseph and see how God's story continues even today.

Lastly, we have fashioned this in the tradition of "The Jesse Tree." Each day, your family will have an opportunity to draw/color an ornament to hang up that tells a little piece of the Christmas story. A Jesse Tree can be something as simple as a dead branch from your yard or a small Christmas tree you buy. Either way, find a way to display the ornaments for each day for the next 25 days, as you build anticipation leading up to Christmas morning.

We hope that these next 25 days will draw you closer to the Savior we worship, not just at Christmas, but all year long! May the Lord fill your hearts and homes with reminders of His love and faithfulness during Advent this year! We are praying that God would show you more of who He is so you can engage with others and ask, "Do you see what I see?"

Watermark Kids Team

# Do you *see* what I *see*?

## DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 1: Hebrews 11:1-2, 39-40, 12:1-2   | <input type="checkbox"/> December 14: 2 Samuel 5:1-5  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 2: Genesis 1:24-31                 | <input type="checkbox"/> December 15: Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 3: Genesis 3:1-21                  | <input type="checkbox"/> December 16: Isaiah 11:1-10  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 4: Genesis 6:9-22                  | <input type="checkbox"/> December 17: Daniel 3:13-28  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 5: Genesis 12:1-7                  | <input type="checkbox"/> December 18: Micah 5:2-5     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 6: Genesis 21:1-7                  | <input type="checkbox"/> December 19: Esther 4:1-17   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 7: Genesis 22:1-14                 | <input type="checkbox"/> December 20: Luke 1:5-25     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 8: Genesis 28:10-22                | <input type="checkbox"/> December 21: Matthew 3:1-6   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 9: Genesis 37:23-28; 50:15-21      | <input type="checkbox"/> December 22: Luke 1:26-38    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 10: Deuteronomy 5:1-22             | <input type="checkbox"/> December 23: Matthew 1:18-25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 11: Joshua 2:1-24                  | <input type="checkbox"/> December 24: Luke 2:1-5      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 12: Ruth 1:16-2:9; Matthew 1:5, 16 | <input type="checkbox"/> December 25: Luke 2:6-21     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> December 13: 1 Samuel 16:1-13               |   |

# Do You See What I See? – December 1

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 11:1-2, 39-40, 12:1-2

## DEVOTION:

I spy with my little eye... something wonderful! I spy something beautiful! Something amazing! Have you ever played "I Spy"? Let's play right now. Somebody say, "I spy something green!" What did your family spy? Was it a Christmas tree? Do you know what the "I Spy" person is really saying? They are telling you: "I see something that I want you to find. Do you see what I see?"

The Bible is like a giant game of "I Spy." God gave us the story of Christmas in His Word. It isn't just the story of what happened in a manger in Bethlehem. It's the story that begins with God creating the world and includes the stories of people like Noah, Abraham, Rahab, David, and Esther. The Bible is a bunch of smaller stories that point to one big true Story. God gave us these stories to show us how much He loves us and help us see His plan to rescue us. In all of these stories, we see people who obeyed God because they had faith in a promise of a Savior that they would never see here on earth. It was a promise they believed, even though their eyes could not "spy" it. By faith, they obeyed God and trusted Him more than they trusted in what their eyes could see.

As we read their stories, we get to see more than what they could see. We get to see Jesus. In every story of the Old Testament, He is the answer to the question: "Do you see what I see?" See the ark that saved Noah? See the ram caught in the bushes that saved Isaac? See the red cord hanging from Rahab's window that saved her family? See the fourth person walking in the fiery furnace? Do you see what I see? All of these stories invite us to see Jesus, the Savior of the world, who came as a baby in that manger in Bethlehem.

Christmas is a time to fix our eyes on Jesus, and look at the wonderful, beautiful, amazing story of His love for us. Do you see what I see?

## QUESTIONS:

1. Play a game of "I Spy" with your family for a few minutes. After you play, talk about it. Who had the hardest "I Spy" object? What made it so hard to "spy" that object?
2. What is your favorite Bible story in the Old Testament and why is it your favorite? How does that story remind you of Jesus and what He has done for you?
3. How could the story of what Jesus has done in your family help other people see Him?

## ACTIVITY:

Look for the ornament pages from the back of this Advent guide and find the one for today. On your ornament draw a pair of eyes to remind you to keep looking for clues to the Christmas story all throughout the Bible. Work together as a family to memorize Hebrews 11:1 and talk about what it means to have faith and trust God, His Word, and His promises.



# Do You See What I See?—December 2

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 1:24-31

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## DEVOTION:

Did you know that the story of Christmas begins on the very first page of the Bible? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." That's the beginning of the story of the whole world, and it's also the beginning of the story of Christmas. Do you see what I see?

God created the sun and the moon and the stars. He created the plants and the animals and the fish in the sea. God spoke the whole world into creation, and then He said, "Let us make man in our image." "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him." God created man to be like Himself in many ways, but one of the most important ways was that He made man to enjoy relationships. God did not need us but He created man so that we could have a relationship with Him. Isn't that cool?

God was pleased with His creation. "God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good." It was only after creating man that God was finished with His work and rested. Throughout the whole Bible you can see story after story of God pursuing a relationship with His people and it began "in the beginning."

God wants us to know Him, and that is the key to Christmas. As you keep reading, remember that God's purpose for us is to bring glory to His name and be in a relationship with Him. God loves the ones He created. He loves us so much that He even came to live with His people in His creation. Wait until you see what happens next!

## QUESTIONS:

1. What is your favorite thing that God created? Why is it your favorite?
2. What do you think it was like to live in a perfect world and have a perfect relationship with God?
3. What are some things that you like to do together as a family? Talk about some favorite moments that you've had with each other over this past year. Parents, use this as an opportunity to mention something specific you enjoy doing with each of your children.

## ACTIVITY:

Today, draw a picture on your ornament showing the world and your favorite part of God's creation. Talk about what it means to have a relationship with someone and ask your kids how they think they can get to know God better. Pray together as a family praising God for being the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-seeing Creator of everything. Thank Him for the relationships He has given you and that He wants to be in a relationship with you Himself!

# Do You See What I See? – December 3

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 3:1-21

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## DEVOTION:

Have you ever created something that you were excited about, maybe a block tower, or a Lego creation, or an art project, and then someone destroyed it? Maybe it was an accident or maybe they did it on purpose. How did you feel? Maybe you were sad or disappointed or frustrated or even angry.

Do you see, in Genesis 3, how God's perfect creation was broken by Adam and Eve's sinful choices? Sin is anything we think, say, or do that does not honor God. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God's command to not eat of a certain tree; they did not trust that God's way was the best way. The result was brokenness.

Remember how we saw, in Genesis 1, that God created man and wants to have a relationship with us? After Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God for the first time – their relationship with Him was broken. They had to leave the garden and be separated from God. Do you see why Adam and Eve had to leave the garden?

Guess what? That's not the end of the story. God had a plan and He made a promise. In verse 15, God promised that the offspring of the woman will someday crush the head of the serpent. God was letting mankind know that He already had a plan to rescue the world from sin.

God's plan was Jesus! Do you see it? Even all the way back in the garden, God knew He would send Jesus so that our relationship with Him could be restored. When we put our faith in Jesus, we can know God and have abundant life. This Christmas season let us rejoice in the One who came to conquer death and make all things right again.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What is sin? Who has sinned?  
(Hint: see Romans 3:23) What happened when Adam and Eve sinned?
2. How did Jesus keep the promise God made in verse 15? How can we ever have a relationship with God again?  
(Hint: see Romans 5:8-11)

## ACTIVITY:

Satan came into the garden as a snake to tempt Adam and Eve into believing God didn't really love them. Draw a picture of a snake on your ornament for today, reminding us of the temptation that we all face to not trust God. Play a game of hide-and-seek with your kids. Adam and Eve tried to hide from God, but He still loved them and came to look for them. God loves you, too, and there's nowhere you can go to hide from Him.



# Do You See What I See? – December 4

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 6:9-22

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## **DEVOTION:**

When you look around this time of year you see lots of pictures of the stable in Bethlehem and the shepherds and the star, but do you see many pictures of Noah and the ark? Do you have a Noah's ark Christmas ornament on your tree? Probably not. Did you know that Noah's story is part of the Christmas story? Can you see it?

The story of Noah and the ark began before Noah was even born. Yesterday, we read about how Adam and Eve brought sin into the world when they chose to be disobedient. Sadly, Adam and Eve were not the only people who disobeyed God. In fact, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

As more and more people lived on earth, there was also more and more evil. God's perfect creation was broken and stained by sin. The wickedness in the world made God sad that He had created man, and He planned to destroy life on earth. Not everyone had turned their backs on God, though. Noah had faith in God, so he found favor with Him! God chose Noah to play a very important role in the story, and Noah responded by faith with obedience. It probably seemed silly to other people that Noah was building such a huge ark, but Noah trusted in God's plan. God used Noah's ark to save a small group of people and animals to start the world over.

There is a lot of evil and wickedness in our world today. It can be tempting to choose to not honor God with the things we think, say, or do. In fact, we are all sinners, too. But do you see what I see? Just as there was only one way for Noah and his family to be saved, Jesus is the only way we can be saved from the punishment, power, and presence of our sin. God will rescue us like He rescued Noah when we have faith, trusting in God, His Word, and His promises.

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. How does the story of Noah remind you of the story of Jesus? How are they similar and in what ways are they different?
2. In what ways have you chosen to be faithful and to honor God, maybe even when the people around you were choosing not to?

## **ACTIVITY:**

Draw a picture today of the ark and think about this: God told Noah to use the wood from trees to build a boat that would rescue them from certain death. Did God use the wood of a tree in any other story in the Bible as part of His big rescue plan? (Hint: it was "T" shaped) Read Romans 6:23 with your family and be thankful that although we are all sinners deserving of death, God offers us the free gift of eternal life through Jesus.



# Do You See What I See? – December 5

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 12:1-7

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## DEVOTION:

Abram was an old man living in the city of Haran when God chose him for a very special purpose. God told Abram to pack up and to move to Canaan. God also made Abram a really special promise. God promised Abram that his family would be so big that they would be their own nation and that He would give them land they could call their own. God even promised Abram that the whole world would be blessed through his family.

It was probably really difficult for Abram to leave where he had lived for so long, but Abram had faith in God. Since Abram didn't have any children, it seemed impossible that God was going to grow Abram's family to be as large as a nation, but God always keeps His promises. Abram was already 75 years old when God spoke to him. Abram's wife, Sarai, was also very old. In Abram's eyes, it would be impossible to grow a big family, but God sees far more than we can see and He had a plan.

Do you see how God's promises to Abram connect to Christmas? God knew even before Adam and Eve sinned that we would need someone to rescue us from our sins. Guess who was born through Abram's family? Jesus! God knew, when He made the promise to Abram, that through his family would come Jesus and through Jesus salvation would be offered to the world. This is how God would bless all the families of the earth through Abram!

## QUESTIONS:

1. Can you imagine God asking you to pick up and move to a new place where you knew no one? How would you respond? Would you have faith and trust God's way was best?
2. What promises did God make to Abram and Sarai (also known as Abraham and Sarah)?
3. Have you ever made a promise? Did you keep your promise? What does it mean to you that God always keeps His promises?

## ACTIVITY:

Draw a picture of a tent on today's ornament to remind you how Abram and Sarai lived while they waited on God to fulfill His purpose for them. Part of God's promise to Abram was that His family would bless the whole world. Go to [operationworld.org/countries-alphabetically](http://operationworld.org/countries-alphabetically) and pick a country. Read how God has already kept His promise to that country and pray even more people from that country will hear about the good news of Christmas this year!



# Do You See What I See? – December 6

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 21:1-7

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## DEVOTION:

Have you ever had to wait for something for what seemed like a long time? Like, for your food to cool down so you could take a bite without burning your tongue, or for a friend to come over to play, or for your birthday, or for Christmas?

God had made a pretty amazing promise to Abraham and Sarah about giving them a son even though they were old. Much older, in fact, than when mommies and daddies can usually have babies. It was hard to believe it would be possible, but nothing is too big, wonderful, or impossible for God. So, they trusted God to do what only He could do – a miracle.

But they had to wait, and for quite a long time. God always keeps His promises, though, and like we read in today's text, "The Lord kept His word and did for Sarah exactly what He had promised." Did you catch how old Abraham was when Isaac was born? He was 100 years old, and Sarah was over 90! Sarah gave all the credit to God and said, "God has brought me laughter." What a great way to celebrate God's good gifts!

A miracle is something wonderful that only God can do. Allowing Abraham and Sarah to have a baby in their old age was definitely a miracle. Do you see what I see in this miraculous birth of their son? A foreshadowing (which is a big word for a clue or hint of something to come) of another promised Son.

Thousands of years later, God would promise a Son to another girl who at first would not understand how it was possible. This Son would also turn tears into laughter. How? By taking away the sins of all who believe in Him and making a way for them be with God. One day, in the future, He will come back and take away tears and pain and sickness forever. Have you figured out who this Son was and is? It is Jesus!

## QUESTIONS:

1. What is something you have had to wait for? Were you patient or impatient? What made it easy or difficult to wait?
2. If Abraham was 75 years old when God first told him to leave his home and move to Canaan and 100 when Isaac was born, how much time passed between God's first promise until Isaac's birth? Even if it takes a really long time, does God always keep His promises?

## ACTIVITY:

Today, draw a picture of a baby on your ornament to show how God kept His promise to Abraham and Sarah to give them a baby even in their old age. Read Hebrews 11:11-12 and, if it's dark enough, go outside with your family and try to count all of the stars in the sky. Pray together as a family, thanking God for reminders from His Word that He sees you and has a good plan. Ask Him for the strength to trust His timing, even when you don't understand.



# Do You See What I See? – December 7

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 22:1-14

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## DEVOTION:

It can be scary to do hard things. Taking off the training wheels and finally asking someone to let go of the bike. Swimming in the deep end of the pool. Sleeping away from home. Moving to a new school or town. Doing something for the first time, or even for the hundredth but knowing how difficult it is, can create some fear or anxiety. But pushing through the fear and doing what is hard anyway? That is very brave.

God asked Abraham to do something really, really, really hard. God did not really want Isaac to die – the Bible says God was testing Abraham – but can you imagine what Abraham was feeling? God had promised Abraham a son, kept that promise, and then asked Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice back to God!

We know the end of the story, so it may not seem so scary to us when we read it today. Abraham, however, could not see how everything would play out. He just trusted that God ultimately had a good plan, and he bravely obeyed. He had faith in the God who had been faithful to provide for him, lead him, and keep all of His promises. We see Abraham demonstrate his faith when he told Isaac that God would provide a lamb for the sacrifice. Sure enough, God did.

Do you see what I see in this story of a father willing to sacrifice his only son? A picture of another loving Father, God, who would willingly sacrifice His only Son, Jesus, as part of His good plan. A Son who would also carry the wood for His own sacrifice on His shoulders up a hill. But this time God would not stop it. Jesus would become the substitute sacrifice, the Lamb of God, sent to rescue those who believe in Him from the punishment, power, and presence of sin. It would be hard, but it would be good. Sin and death would not have the last word, Jesus would. Jesus always wins.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What is something hard or scary that you have had to do? Is there something coming up that is difficult or scary for you?
2. What can you remember about who God is and who God says you are the next time you walk through a hard choice or circumstance?
3. Read John 3:16 together. What is the opposite of death that Jesus says God offers to those who believe in Him? How does that promise give you hope?

## ACTIVITY:

The ram died so that Isaac could live. God provided a sacrifice to take his place! Draw a picture of a ram on today's ornament, showing how God provided for Isaac and gave him life. Read Romans 5:6 & 8. Thank God that, because of His love for us, He sent Jesus at just the right time to die in our place so that we might be saved when we have faith in Him.



# Do You See What I See?—December 8

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 28:10-22

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## DEVOTION:

Have you ever had a dream? Did you remember what happened? Sometimes our dreams are funny or scary. Many times they are based on what happened that day or who you were with. Sometimes our dreams are just crazy and weird, but feel real enough that you wonder, did that just happen or did I dream that?

Think about how Jacob might have felt as he woke up the morning after this dream. He looked at the rock under his head and then quickly looked up to see if there was still a ladder going up to heaven. Jacob probably thought, did I just dream that or was that real? Did the Lord just promise me this land I'm in and promise I would carry on my father's family line? Did He promise that my children's children will be spread like dust throughout the earth and they will be blessed? Did He promise He would be with me wherever I go and would bring me back to this land?

Do you see what God was promising? Jacob's family line would become the nation of Israel and would continue to grow. The land Jacob was lying in was Canaan, the Promised Land, the land that God would give to Israel. Despite Israel's disobedience, God would never leave them, because He had promised to finish what He started.

But what about the ladder? What was this thing that carried angels and served as the bridge between heaven and earth? John 1:51 states, "...truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Do you see what I see? The ladder, the "bridge" connecting heaven and earth, was the Son of Man. The Son of Man, who came down from heaven, lived a perfect life, and died a terrible death but rose again. If we believe in Him we can walk across that bridge from death on earth to eternal life with Him. The bridge, the ladder, is Jesus!

## QUESTIONS:

1. What is the craziest dream that you can remember having? What happened? Who was in it with you?
2. What promises did God make to Jacob in the dream? What did God say He would do with Jacob's family?
3. How is Jesus the ladder, or bridge, between us and God? How can we have life and a relationship with God because of Jesus? (Hint: see Titus 3:4-6)

## ACTIVITY:

Draw a ladder on today's ornament to represent Jacob's dream. Talk about how it shows God's plan to make a way for all people to return to Him. Do you know how to share the Gospel using the bridge illustration? If so, practice sharing it with each other. If not, google it or have someone show it to you. Pray for someone by name that you know who does not know the way to God and ask God to give you an opportunity to share the good news with them.

# Do You See What I See? – December 9

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 37:23-28; 50:15-21

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## DEVOTION:

Can you remember a time in your life when it seemed like nothing could go right for you? You try to do the right thing but everything seems to go wrong. You can't understand why things just are not going the way you planned.

Joseph had several of those times in his life. He sat in a deep dark pit after his brothers had beat him up and thrown him in. He may have regretted telling them about his dream where they bowed down to him. They were going to sell him to some people for silver, send him to Egypt, then tear up his coat, dip it in blood, and tell his dad he had been killed by a wild animal. Why was this happening?

Was Egypt part of God's plan? Everything had gone well while he worked for Potiphar, but then he was falsely accused of something he didn't do. As he sat there alone in a dark prison cell, he couldn't understand what was happening, but he continued to trust the Lord. God still had a plan, right? But what was it?

God did have a plan for Joseph. God used him to interpret Pharaoh's dreams and help Egypt prepare for a famine. Joseph was brought out of prison and put in charge of all of Egypt! But what about his family? God had a plan for them as well. God brought his family to Egypt so that Joseph could save them, give them food, and provide them a place to live. He used Joseph to keep His promises. See, God was always in control. And as Joseph told his brothers, "What you meant for evil, God meant for good."

Do you see what I see? Many years later, someone was going to come from that family to keep all God's promises. He would be sold for silver, betrayed by those closest to Him. He would be arrested even though He hadn't done anything wrong. He would actually die, but then come out of the darkness back to life to save His people! His name was Jesus.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Do you remember a time when you were having a really bad day? What can you remember is true about God even on your really bad days?
2. How do you see the story of Joseph point to the story of Jesus? How are their stories the same and how are they different?
3. Can you think of other stories in the Bible where you see God make a promise to someone and then keep it?

## ACTIVITY:

Jacob gave Joseph a beautiful coat of many colors which, along with his dreams, made his brothers jealous and angry. Draw a picture of Joseph's coat on your ornament today to remind you that God always has a good plan. Pray for the hard things you have in your life right now. Read Romans 8:28 and thank God that He still takes hard and painful things in our lives and uses them for His glory and our good.



# Do You See What I See?—December 10

**SCRIPTURE:** Deuteronomy 5:1-22

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## DEVOTION:

God continued to show His power and love towards the Israelites when He rescued them out of slavery in Egypt. God miraculously split the Red Sea so that His people could go to the land that He had promised to give them. Even though there were challenges, the Israelites knew that because God is faithful, which means He always keeps His promises, these promises would come true.

When the Israelites were in the wilderness, God led them to Mt. Sinai. Moses went up the mountain to learn how to teach the Israelites to live as God's people. The people were nervous to hear from God, so God spoke to Moses and then Moses passed God's words to the Israelites. When Moses came down, he gathered the people of Israel together to tell them what the Lord had told him. God continued to guide and care for His people by giving them the Law so that they could live in a way that honored Him. These ten Laws included not stealing, not lying, honoring parents, and loving God more than anything else. Why did God give His people these rules? He did it because He loved them and wanted to teach them how to make wise choices so they could honor Him and care for others.

God wanted the Israelites to know and love Him. He wanted a relationship with them. God had chosen the Israelites to be His people so they could show the world who He is. He wanted other people to see why following His way is always best.

Do you see that though the Israelites were to be God's chosen people, the Law showed they were still imperfect and needed God's help and rescue? It was impossible for them to keep those commands perfectly. But one day, God was going to send His Son to come and be the one who perfectly kept all of them, making a way for us to draw near to God.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Why do people who love us give us rules? What are some rules you have to follow?
2. Who is the only one who perfectly kept all ten of the commandments? Why is it important that He kept all of them?
3. The people of God were afraid to talk to God, so He used Moses to be a messenger. We no longer have to wait for a messenger to know God and talk with Him. What are some ways we can know God today?

## ACTIVITY:

Because of His love for His people, God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments. Draw a picture of the stone tablets on today's ornament. Talk about some of the rules each person has to follow, whether at home, school, work, or on the road. Read Deuteronomy 6:5 and pray that God would help your family follow God's greatest command to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

# Do You See What I See?—December 11

**SCRIPTURE:** Joshua 2:1-24

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## DEVOTION:

Have you ever had to wait for something big to happen? Maybe you were told that a surprise party is happening at the end of the school day and you tried to get your friends ready. For some reason those days seem to be the longest days! Well today, we read about a lady named Rahab who found herself in a place of waiting in faith, not for a surprise party, but for the Lord's rescue.

For a little backstory, we need to remember that Joshua was leading the people of Israel towards the Promise Land. Before they entered in, he sent two spies to go check out the city of Jericho. This could have been a dangerous task, but the Lord kept them safe. He led them to Rahab's house where they were able to hide from the enemy king.

Now you might think that God would use a powerful leader to rescue the spies, but God used an unlikely person to help. Rahab had heard stories of the miracles God had done and believed them to be true. God had split the Red Sea for the Israelites to walk through and defeated powerful enemies. Rahab had faith and believed in the God of Israel. She declared, "For the Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below." Because of her faith, God saved her and her family when she asked for protection.

Rahab couldn't see it at the time, but God not only used her to help rescue the spies and her family, He also allowed her to be a special part of His family. Many years later, the people of Israel were in another time of waiting in faith on the Lord. They were also waiting to be rescued, waiting for God's greatest rescue plan to be fulfilled. Do you see how God used Rahab? One of her great, great, great (many more greats) grandsons would come to this earth, live a perfect life, and provide a rescue from the punishment, power, and presence of sin for anyone who would believe.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the stories Rahab had heard that told her about God's power? What other stories do you know where God showed His power?
2. Rahab was not an Israelite but God included her in His family. Check out Matthew 1:5. Who was her great, great, great (many more greats) grandson that is our perfect rescuer?

## ACTIVITY:

Draw a rope on your ornament today as a reminder of how God, through Christ, provides a way of rescue for us from our sins, just like He rescued Rahab. To remind your kids that they can never hide from God's amazing love, play a game of sardines where one person hides and everyone else tries to find them. When someone finds the one hiding, they must join them in their hiding spot. The game is over when everyone has found the hiding spot.



# Do You See What I See?—December 12

**SCRIPTURE:** Ruth 1:16-2:9; Matthew 1:5, 16

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## DEVOTION:

Have you ever been in a situation that was really difficult and you couldn't see how it could possibly get better? From our reading today, you can see that Naomi was experiencing something like that. In her despair, Naomi told Ruth and Orpah that "the hand of the Lord had gone out against her" for she believed God had punished her.

It all started with a great famine in Israel. Hungry and hoping to find food and a better life, Naomi and her family left their home in Bethlehem and traveled to the foreign land of Moab. Once there, Naomi's situation got even more difficult. Her husband died, and then her only two sons died. Now she was left alone, far from home, and hopeless.

However, Ruth loved her mother-in-law Naomi very much, and she chose to go with Naomi to Bethlehem to care for her. Ruth also chose to love and serve Naomi's God. Though being two unmarried women during Old Testament times was scary, Ruth trusted that God had a plan to protect and provide for them.

Once they arrived in Bethlehem, Boaz, Naomi's relative, had compassion on Naomi and Ruth. He protected them, made sure they had food, and was obedient to God's plan and married Ruth. They had a son which brought great joy to Naomi. Naomi's situation seemed hopeless, but God used Boaz and Ruth's love, compassion, and obedience to provide hope, a new family, and a future for her.

But that is not all. Did you see it in Matthew 1? God provided hope for all of us! Ruth and Boaz are the great grandparents of King David and the great, great, great (a lot more greats) grandparents of Jesus! Do you see what else I see? The town Naomi and Boaz were from was Bethlehem, the same town Jesus would be born in years later!

Just like God redeemed Naomi, He had a plan to redeem the whole world through His Son, Jesus. God is always working and always has a plan.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What clues about the Christmas story do you see in the story of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz?
2. How does this story remind you that God has a plan and purpose for everything, even when it may seem hopeless?
3. Share about a time when you had to trust God, not knowing what might happen. How did God remind you that He is faithful?

## ACTIVITY:

Draw a picture of wheat on your ornament to remind you that God sees our needs and always provides for us, just like Boaz did for Ruth and Naomi. Talk about ways God has provided for your family in both big and little ways. Brainstorm ways you can share God's provision with others so you can show them what it looks like to be part of God's family!

# Do You See What I See? – December 13

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Samuel 16:1-13

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## DEVOTION:

God's people, the Israelites, saw that all of the other nations around them had kings, and they wanted one too. Many times, what we think we want doesn't turn out to be good for us. So it was with the Israelites. Saul seemed like a good king at first, but soon he became proud, selfish, and wouldn't listen to God. God determined it was time to select a new king for His people.

God sent His prophet Samuel to Bethlehem to meet with a man named Jesse. (Do you see what I see? Jesse is Boaz and Ruth's grandson from yesterday.) God promised to tell Samuel which of Jesse's eight sons would be the future king of Israel. Samuel, much like us, looked at the outer appearance of each of Jesse's sons and thought the biggest and the strongest would be the new king. However, God doesn't see things the same way we do. God told Samuel that He doesn't value the outside of the person, but He looks at the inside – the heart. God wants a heart that loves Him, will follow His plan, and is completely His. Much to Samuel's surprise, God picked David, the youngest and smallest of Jesse's sons. Though David wasn't perfect, he loved and trusted God completely.

Do you see how God has an amazing way of using unlikely people for His plan and purposes? He uses the weak to show His strength. Though David was just a boy when Samuel anointed him, God's Spirit was with David to lead him. God used David in many wonderful ways. One of the ways God used David was that from his family a new King was born. This baby didn't look much like a king either. In fact, Isaiah 53:2 says, "There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him." However, God's plan is always perfect, and He sent a perfect King from David's family who would rescue everyone who trusted Him with their hearts.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever received a gift or some food that didn't look good on the outside, but turned out to be really awesome? Have you ever gotten something that looked amazing, but turned out to be terrible?
2. What do you do to try to make yourself look good on the outside? What are some ways that you try to make yourself look good on the inside? Does God care more about your outside or your inside? How do you know?

## ACTIVITY:

Draw a jar of oil to remind you of the oil Samuel used to anoint David as king. God does not look at a person's outward appearance, but rather at their heart. Take time to encourage one another today by sharing at least one thing you're thankful for about each of them. Pray that God would strengthen your family's faith in the Lord so what you believe is true about God on the inside would show in your actions on the outside.



# Do You See What I See?—December 14

SCRIPTURE: 2 Samuel 5:1-5

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## DEVOTION:

God had always been the ruler of His people, Israel, but they did not like just having God in charge. They wanted to look like the other nations, so they demanded a king. Saul was chosen by God, but Saul did not want to follow God. God then chose another man, David, to take over the throne. David mostly walked in step with God, and he set the example of how God's king was to rule.

Though David was considered to be "a man after God's own heart," God promised David that an even greater King would come from his family and that King would rule forever. Do you see what I see? This moment in 2 Samuel is the beginning of the line of kings from which Jesus would eventually come.

As great of a king as David was, Jesus is even better than David. Jesus is the perfection of a godly king because He is God in flesh. David served and took care of his people like a shepherd, but Jesus will shepherd the people perfectly. David ruled as a fair and mighty warrior, but Jesus will rule as a just, wise, and gracious King. He is the conquering King. David was king for forty years, but Jesus' rule will last for eternity when He comes back again.

As we gather this Christmas to celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus, we also look forward to His return and perfect kingdom. Like the people of Israel who excitedly celebrated their new king, everyone who has accepted God's free gift of salvation will one day worship around the throne of Jesus who conquered death and sin and will make all things new again.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Who are some people in your life that are great leaders? What makes him or her a great leader? Why was David a good leader?
2. What promises did God make to David? How did Jesus fulfill these promises?
3. What are some character traits of Jesus? What makes Him the perfect leader?

## ACTIVITY:

Today, draw a picture of a crown to put on your ornament to remind you of God's promise to David that his throne would last forever. Just like sheep, we need a Good Shepherd to follow. Pray for all of the leaders in your life and thank God that He is your perfect leader. Play Follow the Leader with your family to remind yourselves that, although we are all imperfect, we have the perfect Shepherd King to lead us.

# Do You See What I See? – December 15

**SCRIPTURE:** Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

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## DEVOTION:

Can you think of a time when the power went out and it was really dark? You probably felt a little anxious and uneasy. You might have looked for a flashlight or a candle, or you might have hidden under the covers hoping the lights would come back on. The darkness can be scary, especially if you don't know when you'll see the light again! When Isaiah spoke these words to the Israelites, they had been forced out of their country and were being threatened by their enemies. They were living in darkness, hoping for light to come.

Light is exactly what God was promising to send! Not just any light – the Light. Do you know who calls Himself the Light of the world? John 8:12 tells us the answer. "Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, 'I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.'" Do you see what I see? Through Isaiah, God was promising the Israelites that Jesus was coming!

Isaiah knew that the coming Savior wasn't just the Light; He had other names like Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. These names helped the Israelites understand that the coming Savior would know everything that they were going through and would be able to guide them in the right direction in every situation. This Savior would have all the power of God to protect them, and His kingdom would last forever. He would bring peace and restoration to the world.

Do you see what I see? This child wasn't just coming for the Israelites that Isaiah was talking to, He was also coming to be the Light for you and me. We are walking in the darkness of our sin, but Jesus came to bring peace and light through His death on the cross and resurrection three days later.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Take a minute to look up the meaning of your name and talk about what it means.  
What are some other names of Jesus? What do they mean?  
What is your favorite name of God? Why?
2. Who do you know that hasn't heard about the peace and forgiveness that Jesus offers? How can you share the good news of the Gospel with them and shine light in the darkness?

## ACTIVITY:

For today's ornament, draw a picture of the sun, reminding your family how God promised the light would shine in the darkness once again. To help you remember that light chases out darkness, grab enough flashlights for everyone in your family and play Flashlight Tag in your house or backyard. Afterwards pray and thank God that we don't need to be afraid because nothing can turn off His light.



# Do You See What I See?—December 16

**SCRIPTURE:** Isaiah 11:1-10

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## DEVOTION:

Have you ever seen an autostereogram? Maybe you know it by another name: a magic eye illusion. At first glance, it just looks like a pattern, but when you defocus your eyes you can see a hidden image. This happens because your eyes work together to form one image, but when you defocus you require your brain to see the image a different way. It takes time for your eyes and brain to adjust to looking at the image in a new way, but eventually you see a deeper image within the pattern you saw at first.

Every December 25th Christmas comes around again. We put lights on our houses, trees in our living rooms. We read the Christmas story and remind ourselves that Christmas isn't about getting stuff. We worship with the church, sing songs together, and light candles while we sing Silent Night to celebrate Jesus' birth. This is the pattern for Christmas that everyone sees on the surface.

But, let's look deeper and see what we can find, because while Christmas is the celebration of Jesus' birth, there's more!

Many passages throughout the Bible are written so that what's in the very middle of the passage is the key point God wants us to understand... almost like a magic eye illusion encouraging us to focus and see something deeper. Isaiah was a prophet who made several statements about who Jesus would be almost 700 years before Jesus was born. In verses 1 through 3, Isaiah says Jesus will be related to Jesse, King David's father, and the Spirit of the LORD will be with Him. And in verses 6 through 9, Isaiah describes an unusual scene where animals and people who normally wound or eat each other are in total peace together because of who Jesus is and what He brings.

Here's the great part! In verses 4 and 5, God reveals the deeper image He wants us to see—a righteous and faithful judge who cares for the needy and punishes evil. This is the full image of Christmas: not just that Jesus was born, but that He is the promised righteous and faithful King!

## QUESTIONS:

1. What are the patterns you follow this time of year or family Christmas traditions that could cause you to miss what God really wants you to see? How do you sometimes get distracted from Jesus?
2. What are your favorite ways of worshiping God? How can you focus more of your time on worshiping Jesus for who He is during this season and all year round?

## ACTIVITY:

God promises that Jesus will make all things new when He returns again, even creation itself. Draw a picture of a lion and a lamb together showing how Jesus will bring peace to the whole world and all of creation. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 together. Pray that your family will be made new day by day through your faith in Jesus and His Spirit that works in your hearts.

# Do You See What I See?—December 17

**SCRIPTURE:** Daniel 3:13-28

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## DEVOTION:

Christmas trees come in all shapes, sizes, and smells. Some do a good job of holding heavy ornaments, others keep their needles longer, and some even look blue or white instead of green. Regardless of what kind of tree you have—Douglas Fir, White Pine, or Blue Spruce—when you look closely, you can always tell if it is real or fake.

In the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, King Nebuchadnezzar tried to convince them his god was a real god worthy of worship. He was angry because the men refused to give in. They even said they were willing to die before they would reject their God. The king's god was just a large golden statue he made for himself. So, while it was foolish for anyone to bow down and worship a big statue, no one wanted to die over it even if it was fake. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew their God was the living God and put their faith in Him. It's one thing to follow a fake god when you don't know the real one. It's a whole other thing to leave the living God for a fake one.

Every year, millions of people across the world celebrate Christmas, and it's easy to exchange the real reason we celebrate for something that serves our own desires. Just like King Nebuchadnezzar, we are prone to put fake gods in place of the true, living God. But when the king saw the men were unharmed, he praised God and the men for their courage and began telling others of how the Most High God had performed miraculous signs and wonders. It's almost like he was saying, "Did you see what I saw?"

Christmas is not just an opportunity for us to celebrate Jesus' birth. We also get to share how God came to save us through Jesus and help other people exchange what they may believe is just a fun family time for the real reason we celebrate—the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior and King!

## QUESTIONS:

1. What are some fun things we enjoy at Christmas that aren't the real reason we celebrate? How can we enjoy those things while remembering Jesus' birth?
2. Who is one person you want to share the joy of Christmas with this year? Who could you invite to your home or church so they can celebrate with you and learn about the true, living God?

## ACTIVITY:

On your ornament today draw a fire to remind you that God has power over every hard thing in your life. He may not stop them from happening, but He will always be with you through them. As a family, brainstorm some "fake gods" that you might be tempted to put in front of the one true God. (Think sports, grades, jobs, appearance, etc.) Pray and ask God to help you worship Him alone, instead of things that can never save you.



# Do You See What I See?—December 18

**SCRIPTURE:** Micah 5:2-5

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## DEVOTION:

From the very beginning, God had promised a Messiah, a Savior, who would come and rescue the people from their sin and brokenness. He would bring them back to a relationship with God. The details of the Messiah were not given all at once but in pieces. Micah and the people of Israel and Judah were facing punishment for years of disobedience. They would soon be taken into exile. Before that happened, God gave His people another glimpse of the coming Messiah, which was a message of hope in the midst of despair.

Bethlehem was a town not even worth mentioning. If the Israelites had smartphones, they would have needed to scroll a few times before the name Bethlehem would even pop up on the map. There's a reason we call it "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

Even though God told them where they could find the Savior, He also told the people that they would have to wait. Can you imagine receiving exciting news such as the birthplace of the Messiah but then having to wait over 400 years to see it come true? It's hard enough to wait for Christmas morning. On top of this, God was going to use a no-name town to usher in the Messiah.

Do you see what I see? The little town God chose for the Messiah to enter into was also the hometown of King David, whose family God promised the Messiah would come from. When the Magi visited King Herod, they quoted Micah's prophecy in Matthew 2:6 to prove that the baby Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah.

God works in ways or in a timeframe that we may not understand, but we can trust that He is at work. No matter how long we wait, God always comes through. He offers hope to us because His promises are sure. God never abandons His people. We can say this with full confidence as we look to the manger in the small, farming town of Bethlehem.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What promise did God make about the Messiah in these verses? How did He keep those promises when Jesus was born?
2. Do things sometimes happen in your life that you don't understand? Have you ever had to wait a long time for something? What can you remember is true about God even when you don't understand or have to wait?

## ACTIVITY:

"Bethlehem" literally means "house of bread". On your ornament today, draw a picture of a house to be reminded again how Jesus left His home in Heaven to make His home with us here on earth. Sing or listen to "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and thank God that He can use anyone, anything, or anywhere, no matter how small, to accomplish His purpose.

# Do You See What I See?—December 19

**SCRIPTURE:** Esther 4:1-17

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## DEVOTION:

Have you ever read a book or seen a movie in which the hero faced a really big decision to risk her own life for the chance to save many others? Don't we love to see and cheer for those who are willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of others?

That's what happened in the book of Esther. A death plot was planned against the Jews who were living in exile. Queen Esther was Jewish, but no one knew that except her cousin, Mordecai. Esther was faced with a really big decision...speak up and risk being killed with the rest of the Jews or stay silent, save herself, and risk death for every other Jew. Silence was not an option, according to Mordecai. He told Esther that she was chosen as queen "for such a time as this"—the opportunity to deliver the Jews. In God's sovereign plan, Esther talked to the king about the evil plan and God, once again, delivered the Jews. Esther's faith was demonstrated by her willingness to stand firm and speak up, which enabled her to be used by God in His plan to rescue His people.

Do you see how God's rescue plan in Esther points to another, even more amazing rescue plan? Esther, who couldn't see the big picture, faithfully risked her life to save God's chosen people. Jesus, who did know the whole story, gave His life to save us. Esther didn't die but was willing to. Jesus did die and was willing to. God proved Himself faithful in Esther's day and He continues to show His faithfulness to us through Jesus. God loved His people in exile by sending a faithful queen and her encouraging cousin to deliver His people from certain death. Several generations later, God sent King Jesus to deliver His people from the punishment, power, and presence of sin.

Do you see what I see? God, the hero in every story from Creation to Esther to Jesus, is a God who rescues.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What is a really big decision that you have made? Who helped you make that decision?
2. God gave Queen Esther an opportunity to "rescue" the Jewish nation from death. What opportunities is God giving you right now to be a part of His plan in "rescuing" the world from sin and death? Who can you encourage this week by sharing God's Word with them?

## ACTIVITY:

Draw a picture of a queen on your ornament to remind you that God is always with us, so we can be strong and courageous even in moments of worry and doubt. Make a list of things that seem scary to you. Make a second list of what you know is true about God. Pray for each other to remember what's true about God during the scary times and thank Him for never leaving or forsaking you.



# Do You See What I See?—December 20

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 1:5-25

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## DEVOTION:

Though Christmas is only one day out of the year, we celebrate the Christmas season for almost a month. Most of that time is preparation for the big day. We spend time decorating our homes, buying presents, attending parties, and celebrating Advent. Just like we prepare for Christmas day, God also prepared the way for the Messiah to come to a world that had been waiting for Him.

Zechariah and Elizabeth had faithfully followed the Lord their whole lives. Unfortunately, they were unable to have children and had become very old. They knew it was impossible for them to have a child now. God, however, is in the business of making the impossible a reality. The angel's appearance to Zechariah showed that this child would be special. Can you imagine the confusion, excitement, and anticipation?

Do you see what I see? Zechariah and Elizabeth's story points back to another old couple who were promised a child. In Genesis, God promised Abraham and Sarah a son in their old age, one who would be the start of a very special family. Just like Isaac, Abraham and Sarah's son, John's life was a miracle. His birth was something wonderful only God could do.

God would use John's life to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. John would call the Israelites back to God and soften their hearts to the true Gospel. The song "Joy to the World" states, "Let every heart prepare him room." John did just that by boldly telling the people that Jesus was coming. God was preparing the space for Jesus to enter in.

During Advent, we can prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus. We also look forward to Easter and the new life found in Jesus through His death, burial, and resurrection. For now, we watch and wait for the anticipated arrival of the Savior.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Even though it had been 400 years of silence between the Old Testament and start of the New Testament, God was still at work. How was God preparing the way for Jesus' coming?
2. What is your favorite activity that your family does to prepare for Christmas? Is it easy or hard for you to wait for Christmas? Why?

## ACTIVITY:

Today, draw a picture of an old man and woman on your ornament to represent Zechariah and Elizabeth. Remind your family that what is impossible for us is possible for God. Sing or listen to "Joy to the World," a song that's more about Jesus' second coming than His first. Talk about what Jesus has already done in your lives and the amazing things He will do when He returns again.

# Do You See What I See? – December 21

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 3:1-6

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## DEVOTION:

Have you ever seen when police cars have their bright red and blue lights spinning? Those are used on purpose to get our attention. They announce that there is something up ahead that we need to be aware of. Well, John was sort of like those bright lights. He was sent to announce a big event ahead!

Nearly 700 years before John was born, God used a prophet named Isaiah to tell us that “a voice shouting in the wilderness” would come and prepare the way for the Lord. Do you see what God was doing? God is in every little detail of history, and by sending John the Baptist, God was fulfilling that prophecy from hundreds of years ago.

Back to John’s announcement: do you know the Christmas song that says, “Hark! The herald angels sing...” It’s about the angels announcing Jesus’s birth. Well, after Jesus had grown, His cousin John was also a sort of herald, or messenger, who shared news of another grand part of God’s plan. The King of God’s Kingdom was here! John was announcing to everyone that Jesus was here and ready to begin His ministry of loving others and teaching them truth.

To do this, John called God’s people to repent from their sin. To repent means “to change one’s mind” or “to turn away from sin.” See, same as today, people back then were choosing to follow their own way instead of God’s way. But John knew that God’s way is the only way that truly leads to life. God is always wanting to point us to what is best for us – and that is exactly why He sent John the Baptist to point us to Jesus!

Do you see what I see? Do you see how God had this plan from the beginning of time? Do you see how He was preparing the world for the arrival of His perfect Son? God is extraordinary, and He chooses to use ordinary people like John to show us His wonderful plan.

## QUESTIONS:

1. How did God use John in the rescue plan He had made before the beginning of time? What big announcement did John share with others?
2. Is it sometimes hard for you to choose God’s way instead of your way? How can you know what God’s way is?

## ACTIVITY:

John the Baptist liked to hang out by the Jordan River, so draw a picture of a river on today’s ornament. Let the river remind you that God’s grace and love never runs out for those who believe and repent of their sins. Read Ephesians 2:8-9 and remind each other that salvation is a gift from God to everyone who repents and believes. Thank God for the gift of forgiveness available to us only because of Jesus!



# Do You See What I See? – December 22

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 1:26-38

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## DEVOTION:

Have you ever watched a movie where you knew more about what was going on than the main character did? You want to tell them, “Do you see what I see?” For example, maybe they show that someone is secretly a prince, but the main girl has no idea! When they finally find out, we can’t wait to see what happens next, even though we were in on the secret all along.

Well, that’s kind of like where we are in God’s story. God had shown the Israelites all throughout His Word that He had a rescue plan, one He had been pointing to since the beginning. We’ve spent the last 21 days seeing all the ways God had been preparing the world for this moment since the beginning of His Story. He had been pointing to a Savior, a Rescuer, a Prince who would come to save us!

And Mary found out... He was coming through HER! Can you imagine how Mary must have felt? Scripture doesn’t tell us all of her feelings, but if we were put in her shoes, we might have been shaking in them!

This moment was huge. God was finally revealing the plan for so many things He had told us would happen: there would be an everlasting King and kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12-16), a child would be given to us who would be the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7), and God would give us a sign through a virgin birth, and that the child would be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

Mary had one simple question: How? Even though Mary couldn’t see God’s plan, she trusted that nothing is impossible with God. Mary chose to have faith – to trust in God, His Word, and His promises – and to be His servant for His glory and the good of the whole world.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What did you learn about Mary’s faith from today’s story? What did she believe was true about God? How can God help you grow to have a faith like Mary?
2. How did the stories from the Old Testament point to the baby that God would bring through Mary?
3. Do you see yourself as a servant of God? How does this change the way you live?

## ACTIVITY:

Today, draw a picture of a heart to remind you of the amazing love God showed by sending Jesus to earth. Sing or listen to the song, “Mary Did You Know?” and make a list of all of the amazing things the song says Jesus did. Talk about some of the good surprises you have received, whether big or small. Take time to thank God for specific things He has surprised you and your family with over the past year.

# Do You See What I See? – December 23

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 1:18-25

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## DEVOTION:

Have you ever been startled by someone or something? Maybe your brother or sister jumped out at you to scare you or a loud noise made you jump? Well, when Mary told Joseph that she was pregnant before they were married, Joseph was startled and couldn't see how this could possibly be part of God's plan.

Joseph had a big decision to make. Would he stay with Mary or leave her? According to Jewish Law, Joseph was allowed to divorce Mary, but Joseph was a righteous man and did not want to embarrass her. Joseph decided to privately split up with Mary in order to protect her from shame.

While considering this decision, however, Joseph was startled once again, but this time it was by an angel, sent from God, in a dream! The angel told Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary as a wife, for the baby that was inside her was God's very own Son. The angel told Joseph this child was special, He was sent by God, and would save His people from their sins. All of the stories about God Joseph had probably heard growing up pointed to this child.

When Joseph woke up from his dream, he still didn't fully understand God's plan at the time, but he had faith that God's way was ultimately best. He took Mary as his wife and gave the child the name Jesus, which means "the Lord saves," after He was born!

When God sent Jesus to earth, He was fulfilling promises He had made all throughout the Bible. In fact, the Bible is a bunch of smaller stories that point to one big true Story, the Story of God's rescue plan. The all-powerful, all-knowing, all-seeing Creator of everything sent Jesus to the world to live a perfect life, die a death He did not deserve, and come back to life the third day so that there could be a way for everyone who believes in Him to be saved and have a relationship with Him.

## QUESTIONS:

1. In the past year, when did you and your family need to trust God even though you didn't fully understand His plan? Why can we have faith that God's plan is always best?
2. The angel told Joseph to name the baby "Jesus," which means "the Lord saves." Why was this the name given to the baby? What would Jesus do to show that the Lord really does save?

## ACTIVITY:

Draw a picture of tools on today's ornament to represent Joseph, the carpenter. Let Joseph's story remind you that while we can only see a tiny picture of God's plan, God has a perfect purpose and knows everything. Work together as a family to put together a puzzle this week. Thank God that He sees the big picture of our lives and that one day we will see it too!



# Do You See What I See?—December 24

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 2:1-5

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## **DEVOTION:**

Has anyone ever made you a promise? Did they keep it? Now, imagine if someone made you thousands of promises and kept all of them! Well that is exactly what God does throughout the entire Bible! While God makes and keeps all His promises, there is no more important promise than God's promise of His own Son, Jesus, coming to earth. We read about how this promise is kept in Luke 2, but the Christmas story started much, much earlier! In fact, the Christmas story is written throughout the entire Bible. Do you see how all of the stories you've read point to this one?

We see God make the promise of Jesus to Abraham in the very first book of the Bible, and again to David, who was told that God's Son would be a descendant of David's own family. God also used prophets, like Isaiah and Micah, to tell of the coming Messiah, and back in Micah 5, it was prophesied that the Savior of the world would be born in the city of Bethlehem.

But wait . . . Mary and Joseph didn't live in Bethlehem. They lived in Nazareth, which was nearly 100 miles away from Bethlehem, and there was no reason for them to leave, especially with Mary being pregnant. How is God going to keep all His promises, including this promise about Jesus' birthplace?

As you've seen, God always has a plan. At this point in history, the nation of Rome ruled over many parts of the known world, including Israel, the place where Mary and Joseph lived. God placed it in the mind of Caesar Augustus, the king of Rome at the time, that everyone living in the Roman empire should travel back to their hometowns and be counted. This meant that Mary and Joseph would need to take the long journey to Joseph's hometown of . . . Can you guess? That's right! Bethlehem!

Shortly after Mary and Joseph arrived in the city of Bethlehem, all of creation held its breath to see God's greatest promise kept in the birth of Jesus.

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. God makes many promises throughout the Bible. What are some of your favorite promises that God makes? How can you remind yourselves of the promises that God has made?
2. Why do we celebrate Christmas and why is it such an important holiday? Why is Jesus considered the best gift the world has ever received?

## **ACTIVITY:**

When Joseph and Mary got to Bethlehem, there was no room or bed for them, only a stable with a manger as a crib. Draw a picture of the manger Jesus was laid in on today's ornament. As a family, brainstorm all of the different gifts God has given you this past year. See who can think of the most! Be sure to pray and thank God for all of these gifts, especially the gift of His Son.

# Do You See What I See? – December 25

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 2:6-21

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## DEVOTION:

"Let us go . . . and see this thing that has happened," the shepherds said. For the last 25 days, we've opened up God's Word to see all the things that happened leading up to that first Christmas Day. We've seen the miracles God has worked for His people, the battles He has won for them, the messes that His people made that God turned around to use for good, and the promises that He's kept. All of the stories pointed to this moment in history, that the world might SEE this newborn King – Jesus!

God's Word has been to us what the angels were to the shepherds on that night in Bethlehem. The stories have told us good news of great joy that is for all people – of a God who parts the sea, who defeats giants, who restores broken families, who walks with people through the fire, and who rescues the weak and vulnerable. The word "angel" just means "messenger," and the Bible has been our angel, our messenger, through these 25 days of Advent.

The question for us on this Christmas Day is this: will we be like the shepherds? Yes, the shepherds listened intently to the message of the angels, and yes, they went to see Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes in that manger. But the Bible tells us that the shepherds became "angels" or "messengers" themselves when they returned from the stable "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen." Perhaps they asked the people on the streets in Bethlehem, "Do you see what I see? . . . A child, sleeping in the night, who will bring us goodness and light!"

On this Christmas Day, there are still many who do not see what you see. They think Christmas is about toys and reindeer and Santa, and they need to hear the good news of great joy of a God who sent His only Son from Heaven to this earth to save them! Spread the good news! "I spy a King! Do you see what I see?"

## QUESTIONS:

1. Who does your family know who doesn't know the good news about Jesus? Stop right now and pray for them.
2. When was the last time your family invited someone to church so that they could come and see and hear the good news about Jesus? Who could you be a "messenger" to this new year?
3. These last 25 days, we read a lot of stories about things God did in the Bible. God is still doing great things today! What stories does your family know of amazing things God has done recently in the lives of neighbors, friends, or family?

## ACTIVITY:

Merry Christmas! For the final ornament, draw a gift to remind you that the best gift God has ever given you is His Son, Jesus. Pray that God would help you see the story of His big rescue plan not only in His Word but also how He's continuing it today. Parents, pray especially for your kids to see and believe how deeply they are loved and cherished by their perfect Heavenly Father.



