



12 DAYS OF

Christmas



A FAMILY CHRISTMAS
DEVOTION



At Fruit Cove Baptist Church, we believe there is no greater privilege in life than to disciple your own child to follow Jesus. This is a deep commitment we have as a church and pastoral staff. We created a 12 day family devotion guide to help you as parents redeem your Christmas season for making special memories with your family that draw you closer together and to Jesus.

Every year it seems that Christmas comes earlier and earlier. The stores now have Christmas sections before Halloween has even arrived. There is so much pressure to decorate, buy gifts, plan family events, prepare for traveling to family, and on the list goes. Don't forget all the stresses of work: end of the year evaluations, projects, quarterly inventory management, Christmas specials, and the always exciting work Christmas party. It is interesting that a season about family and friends often accomplishes the very opposite. Instead, this is the season of stress!

Did you know Jesus never celebrated Christmas. After all, Christmas is something the Christians invented years after Jesus to celebrate his birth. Jesus, was a Jew, and he actually would have celebrated Hanukkah. Although, during Jesus' time, it was referred to as the Festival of Lights. Hanukkah is an annual celebration for the Jewish people. This holiday commemorates God's faithfulness to his people during a time of persecution. Each night the family lights a candle as part of the Festival of Lights, and they tell stories of God's faithfulness and his love for his people.

This 12 day devotion is designed to do something similar for us. We encourage you each night to take time as a family to pause and celebrate God's love and faithfulness to us because he sent Jesus to rescue us from our sin! Each night, you can read through Scripture and share stories as a family for how God loves us and has been faithful to us. These stories are centered around Christmas.

May Your Christmas be wonderful and full of hope as we celebrate Jesus!

Sincerely, Your Pastors



Instructions

Each night you will have a discussion guide for your family. The discussion guide will have a passage of Scripture listed at the top. Please get out a real Bible (paper) and read the passage together as a family.

To commemorate the story, we have listed a nativity piece. Each night as the story of Christmas unfolds, you can add another nativity piece from your set. Slowly, over 12 days you can assemble your nativity. Now, we have added some pieces that are not traditional pieces. You may want to create pieces or purchase these additional elements, such as small stones to be the "Road to the Nativity."

Each day one of the ministerial staff has written a brief commentary for the passage. This commentary is designed to be a resource for you in engaging with your children and the passage of Scripture. Do not feel like you have to read the commentary out loud to your children, especially if they are younger. If you have middle school or high school students, you may want to discuss the contents of the commentary as they lead into the discussion questions.

Each day comes with activities and discussion questions for the different ages. There is a preschool activity, elementary activity, and discussion questions for students. We attempted to keep the activities as simple as possible for the children with as little materials as possible. This way the activities for the children to learn the Christmas story is easy.

Finally, each day comes with a short prayer and a worship song to help you process the lesson. The prayer acts as a conclusion to the family devotion and a Christmas carol can further reinforce the story of Christmas.

Need

Tim Maynard
Isaiah 9:6-7



Nativity Piece:

The Stable
12/13

I remember the detail and planning that went into the arrival of our children. We had bought and built an ornate cherry wood cradle. The cradle had a hand-selected mattress and little baby pillow. It would be lined with special quilts, hand-crafted by my mother-in-law, a true Appalachian artisan.

Sometimes I think about that when I read or am reminded of the story of the birth of Jesus. No such preparations were made for His arrival. In fact, it almost seemed His birth was designed to happen in the very worst of circumstances.

No cradle...just a roughhewn wooden manger. The animals were real, not toys. And the setting was not a warm lit birthing suite where the baby would be received with soft and welcoming hands of nurses or midwives. Instead, it was a cave or maybe a wooden shed... designed for livestock...not a child's birth.

And instead of a quilt, handmade by a loving relative...swaddling clothes...most likely meant to wrap a dead body for burial. Unthinkable, really, but true.

And predicted! Isaiah the prophet foretold the coming of this child-king and Savior and recorded it for us in Isaiah 9:6-7.

This wondrous child was sent from glory and received in humility to live in obscurity and die in obedience to His Father, and then be raised in glory and received into Heaven to the praise of the angels who welcomed Him to earth. No wonder we sing, "This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing."

There was no room for Him on earth. Is there room for Him in your heart?

Christmas Light Unscramble

Christmas lights

Gather one strand of Christmas lights (or several if you want to make the game more challenging!), and make sure they are tangled. Have the children untangle the lights and give them 3-4 minutes. Next, discuss the steps your family takes to prepare for Christmas.

Reread the Scripture and talk about what God did to prepare for the birth of Jesus. Discuss how we can prepare our hearts to celebrate Christmas. Ask God to untangle the confusion of our lives so that we can be ready for Him.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways are you excited about Christmas?
2. Few people were excited about Jesus. They were too busy. In what ways do you get too busy for Jesus?
3. What stands out to you from Isaiah 9:6-7?

Prayer

Holy Father, help me to be excited about what you are doing and not to too busy to miss it. Help me this Christmas to celebrate the coming of Jesus and find ways to make room for him in my life.

Christmas Carol

“What Child is This?” - By Shane and Shane



Are You Expecting?

Darin Dunham

Luke 1:5-25



Nativity Piece:

The Angel

12/14

God is always faithful, completely dependable... but rarely predictable! This is a lesson that the Priest Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth experienced personally.

Before babies in mangers and angels singing to shepherds, the Christmas story is first tied to preparation of the human heart. First Prophets testify 400 years before about the coming Messiah so humanity may prepare. Then John The Baptist arrives on earth to "make ready people prepared for The LORD". John is a major player in God's redemptive plan for mankind but Luke 1:5-25 picks up the story of his parents Zechariah and Elizabeth and the incredible circumstances that lead to John's birth.

They were "well along in years" and Elizabeth was barren. One day Zechariah is given a once in a lifetime honor to attend to duties in the most sacred inner-sanctum of the temple. While in this place, where the presence of GOD dwells, he encounters the Angel Gabriel. He is told an incredible truth that he and his wife are to be parents despite their age AND that their son was to be the great "preparer" for the Messiah. It's such an incredible prediction that Zechariah expresses doubt and pays a price but even that can't diminish his great joy.

Christmas lesson for the young: don't limit God to your conventional wisdom. For the mature: your greatest contribution to the Kingdom of God may come unexpectedly late in your life. For all: prepare for the LORD and remember His ways are higher than our ways. Prepare to be surprised.

Children's Activity

Angel Feet

Materials

Paper, glue, string, markers, and glitter.

Trace your child's footprint to use for the body of the angel, trace their handprints to use as the wings, draw a face on the foot. Glue it together and place a string for hanging the angel on the tree

Discussion Questions

1. How does it serve GOD for him to work unexpectedly instead of conventionally at times?
2. How might God use you unexpectedly for Jesus this Christmas?
3. What are some reasons that we let our keep us from serving the Lord?
4. At what age must we stop looking towards our own interests first and prioritize serving God? (Answer Code: ALWAYS)

Prayer

Father, as we endeavor to prepare the "Way of the LORD" so others may know you, remind us first to examine and prepare our own hearts every day. Amen.

Christmas Carol

Oh Little Town of Bethlehem



Obeying God Takes Courage

Karen Roy

Luke 1:26-38



Nativity Piece:

Mary

12/15

Imagine you are a young girl, recently engaged, ready to become a wife and mother. Your future seems set and secure until you receive the most life-altering news. You look up to see a figure unlike any you have seen before who says he is a messenger from God. The angel Gabriel came to Mary in the city of Nazareth. What he told her would change her life and the world forever. She was to bear a son, and he would be the long-awaited Messiah! But how could this be? Why did God choose a seemingly unimportant young girl from Nazareth to accomplish such a great task?

Mary was favored. Only God knows the reasons that he chose Mary, but she was not a random selection. From scripture, we know she was morally pure, humble, and faithful. These qualities equipped her for God's service. She was also of the of the lineage of the royal family. God favored Mary for a task that would allow each of us to one day be favored. Gabriel said, "The Lord is with you," and as a result, the Lord is with us all.

Mary was courageous. Mary understood the hardship she would face, unmarried and pregnant. In the culture of that day, she would be shunned, and her reputation would be damaged. Yet, despite the rejection, humiliation, and pain that would surely come her way, she trusted God and accepted the assignment.

Mary was obedient. When Mary asked how she would become a mother, the angel Gabriel told her that God would perform a supernatural act to bring about the baby. Mary believed God could do this, unlike Zechariah, who doubted God. Mary's obedience was a result of her faithfulness to take God at His word and know nothing is impossible for Him. When God calls us to an assignment that is beyond our comprehension, our faith in Him can help us respond in obedience like Mary.

Children's Activity

Find the Hearts

Ahead of time, write directions on each heart to locate a subsequent heart. You can make the directions more or less difficult depending on the age(s) of your children. For example, you could write, "find the next heart in the pantry," or, "find the next heart where we keep the bread" depending on how much of a challenge you want to create! Give the child the first heart that has instructions to find the next heart. He or she will eventually find all the hearts by following the directions. When all the hearts have been found, explain that, in order to find all of the hearts, he or she had to be willing to follow the directions just like Mary was willing to follow God's directions that the angel delivered to her.

Materials

Heart shaped cut-outs, as few or as many as you would like.

Discussion Questions

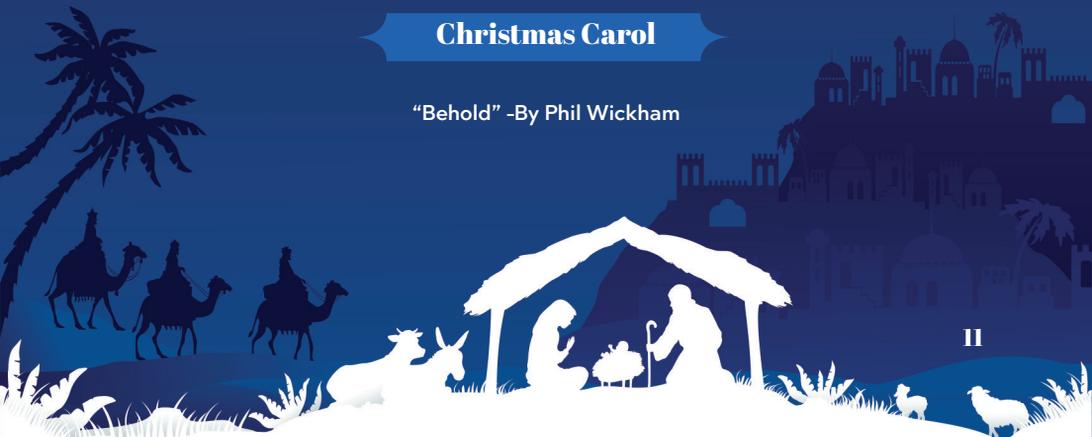
1. Has God ever led you to do something that seemed impossible? If so, what was it?
2. When was a time in your life that obeying God was difficult.
3. Respond to the comment: "Gabriel said, "The Lord is with you," and as a result, the Lord is with us all." How is the Lord with us all?

Prayer

Father, thank you for the example of Mary. Help us to be faithful and trust you in all things you set before us, for we know nothing is impossible for you.

Christmas Carol

"Behold" -By Phil Wickham



Mary's Song

Brian Woolfter

Luke 1:46-56



Nativity Piece:

The Star

12/16

In the text, we find the Lord's servant (vs. 38), Mary glorifying and rejoicing (vs. 46 & 47) in the things of God. Mary's response is genuine worship as she praised God for what He was about to do and for the part she was privileged to play in His plan. Through this text and Mary's example, we see the importance of a life of humility, surrender, and obedience. A life devoted entirely to God and motivated to worship.

Even in her fear and questioning, Mary surrendered in humble obedience to the will of God. Humility is essential for us to be used by God. Humility exalts God to His proper position in our lives and aligns us to surrender in obedience to His will. Simply saying "yes," Mary showed a life of worship.

In verse 39, we see that Mary felt overwhelmed by what God did in her life she could not wait to share with someone. She could not remain silent. She had to tell of the great things God had done for her (vs.49). She had to exclaim the greatness and goodness of God.

We still worship and serve the same God that called Mary to join Him in His plan of salvation. God is calling us all to join Him. Like Mary, we can all worship through a life of humble obedience to the will of God in our lives. God may be calling you! Are you listening? What God wants most - what God is seeking - are men and women totally devoted to Him; full of love for God because of what Christ has done; transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and passionately motivated by their worship to tell the Good News of Jesus Christ to everyone they meet.

Children's Activity

Thank You God Game

Materials

Beanbag or soft “nerf-type” ball

Talk about how Mary praised and thanked God for choosing her as the mother of Jesus. Sit in a circle as a family. One parent throws the beanbag or ball to a family member and that family member names something for which he or she is thankful. Continue the game until all family members have had several turns. End the time together in prayer, thanking God for Jesus.

Discussion Questions

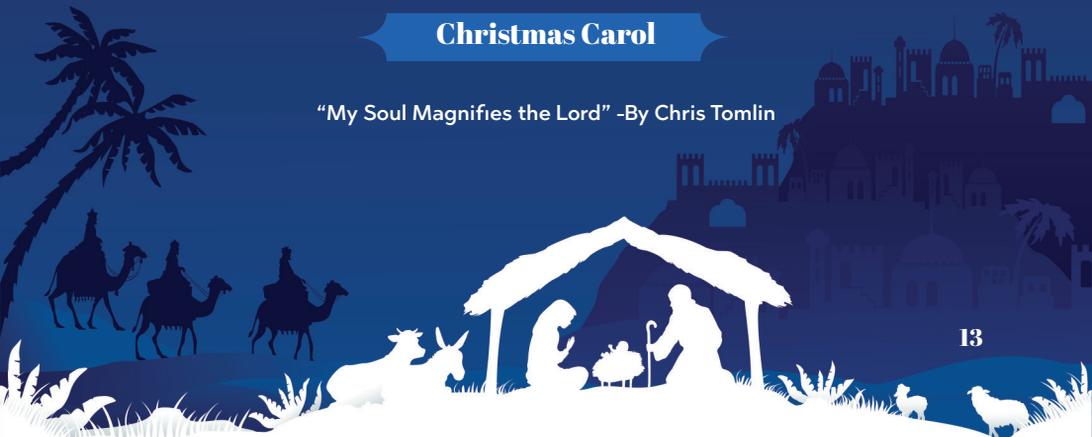
1. What are some things you can rejoice and glorify God for today?
2. What is God calling you to say “YES” to today?
3. Whom do you need to share the good news of Jesus Christ with today?
4. In what ways has this motivated you to worship God today?

Prayer

God, thank you for the demonstration of genuine worship Mary portrays to us through scripture. Help us all to be obedient to your calling in our lives and to surrender and say, “Yes.”

Christmas Carol

“My Soul Magnifies the Lord” -By Chris Tomlin



Unmet Expectations

Kade Rapoza

Matthew 1:18-25



Nativity Piece:

Joseph

12/17

Put yourself in the shoes, or sandals, of Joseph. Everything was going according to plan. He found a wife to spend the rest of his life with. He was to raise a family and grow old with her. Everything was planned, prepared, and set in place to have the best wedding they could have only to find out that his beautiful bride-to-be was pregnant! In a single moment all expectations Joseph had for his life were ruined.

Joseph was devastated. He began planning how he would cut off the engagement with Mary. He did not believe her that the baby was the Messiah, and he thought she had been unfaithful. He felt that he could not marry her anymore.

While asleep, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph. It was explained that God had chosen him and Mary to be the parents of Jesus. Of all the expectations Joseph had for his life, raising Jesus was not one of them! How much stress would come knowing that you have been given the responsibility to raise the one who would be called Immanuel, which means "God with us!" The one who would "save his people from their sins." The savior of the world!

Joseph could continue to quietly divorce Mary or trust and have faith in the Lord's plan even when it meant that his plans were to change. The Bible tells us that as soon as he woke up from sleep, he did just as the angel of the Lord commanded. Joseph was a righteous man. He chose to love, honor, and care for Mary. God sent Jesus to save all from their sin and he chose Joseph to be the man to raise Immanuel. And he called his name Jesus.

Children's Activity

Draw the Story

Materials

Piece of blank paper and something to draw.

Spend time with your children drawing the Bible story and “recreating” the decisions and challenges Joseph had. Have fun, be creative, and talk about all the things your child draws on their paper! Ask them what everything they drew means to them.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you feel if God asked you to do something that does not meet your own expectations?
2. What does fully trusting in God look like?
3. Student asks parents: Has God ever asked you to do something that was uncomfortable or challenging to obey? What was it?
4. Student asks Parent: How have you approached a challenging season in life? What helped follow God's plan over your own?

Prayer

Thank you God for sending Jesus. Help us choose to obey you over our own desires. Help us set our minds on Jesus and believe that you are better than anything else.

Christmas Carol

NEEED

Name Above All Names

Dan Elkins
Luke 1:57-80



Nativity Piece:

Camel
12/18

The anticipation for Jesus' birth is building as we get closer to Christmas and today, we read the account of another birth around the Christmas story when John the Baptizer was born!

God kept His promise to Elizabeth & Zachariah that they would have a son. The boy was to be named John, which means "Jehovah has shown grace." This was not a family name, and it was unexpected.

Zachariah had been unable to speak for 9 months because he doubted God's promise, but John was born God gave him his voice back when he obeyed and named his newborn son, John. The prophecy that came next foretold about Jesus and the relationship He would have with John the Baptizer.

We see four names that are talked about in Zechariah's prophesy: Jesus is a Redeemer, who has come to visit and redeem his people (v. 68). We have been bought with a price when Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins. Jesus is a Deliverer, who has rescued us from sin and our enemies (v. 74). We were trapped in our sins and can be set free. Jesus is a Forgiver, who has forgiven us of all our sins (v. 77). Jesus is a Peace Maker, who had come to guide us into the way of peace (v. 79).

John was not an ordinary baby; God had a special plan for his life. John came to prepare the way for Jesus. And God has a special plan for you! He was called the Baptizer because he baptized people to prepare them for Jesus. We are to know Jesus and make Him known, just like John.

Children's Activity

Point to Jesus Game

5 paper plates, marker, sock, and dried beans or uncooked rice. Paper sack or construction paper, markers, small tissue paper squares, and glue sticks.

Write, "HIS NAME IS JOHN" on the paper sack or construction paper. Glue the tissue paper squares on the lines of the letters on the paper. Read "His Name is John" and talk about the birth of John. Place the dried beans or rice into the sock and tie it, making a beanbag. Write the word "JESUS" on the paper plates – each plate gets its own letter. Lay the plates on the floor. Have each child take a turn tossing the beanbag toward the plates. When it lands on a plate, have the child say something that Jesus has done for them that starts with the specific letter. They could also say something to point others to Jesus, using that letter. Continue until all letters are used.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you know what your name means and why your parents gave you the name they did?
2. What is a name for Jesus that you think of the most? What does it mean to you?
3. How are you/your family seeing Christmas as an opportunity to share with someone the Jesus you know?
4. Who is someone we can pray they get to know Jesus this Christmas season?

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for coming into the world to rescue and redeem us. Help us to see opportunities we must share with others the Jesus we know and give us the courage to do so!

Christmas Carol

"Go Tell It on the Mountain" - By Zach Williams

Jesus is Born

Meghan Roy

Luke 2:1-7



Nativity Piece:

Baby Jesus

12/19

Have you ever been to visit a friend or family member in the hospital after she has had a baby? The hospital is clean and quiet - if you listen, you might even hear music chiming through the halls every time a new baby is born! Nurses and Doctors are available to help wherever they are needed, and both baby and parents have all the support they need.

The Bible tells us that the birth of Jesus was nothing like that! After traveling on foot, perhaps with the help of a donkey, for over ninety miles, Joseph, and Mary, who was very pregnant, arrived in Bethlehem to a bustling, chaotic scene. The town was so full of people that Mary and Joseph could not even find a guest room to rent! While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to give birth to her son. Mary and Joseph took shelter in a stable with the animals and Jesus was born. Mary wrapped Jesus snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger.

Wow, is that how you would imagine a Great King coming into this world? Instead of a hospital, Jesus was born in a stable. Instead of friends and family, his visitors were common shepherds. Instead of doctors and nurses attending to his every need, Jesus was taken care of by his young and scared, first-time parents. God chose for Jesus to be born in this humble manner because He wanted to show us that Jesus is a savior for all people. Jesus is Lord for both the poor and the wealthy, the common and the important. Jesus' birth was the greatest gift of Christmas!

Wrap Gifts

Small boxes, wrapping paper, ribbon, and tape.

Have each member of your family wrap and/or unwrap their box; either competing against one another or one at a time. Talk about God's gift that he sent us - Jesus!

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important that Jesus is king of both poor and wealthy?
2. Why do you think God allowed Jesus to be born in a stable?
3. Do you think it was unfair for God to make Mary and Joseph start their family this way? Do you think Mary and Joseph felt like that?

Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, that you were willing to humble yourself and be born in a stable. You were willing to endure that for our sakes, so that you could lift us out of our spiritually darkness.

Christmas Carol

NEED



Shepherds and Sheep

Neil Muniz

Luke 2:8-20



Nativity Piece:

Shepherds and Sheep

12/20

The King of Kings was born in the most humble of ways. It might have been peaceful and still for some time, but the heavens were ready to SHOUT for joy! They were ready to let the entire world know of this amazing thing that had just happened. And who did God decide to share this news with first? Some humble shepherds who were busy doing their work. God chose to tell this humble group of people his great news. This is just like our great and loving Heavenly Father to pick the outcasts and the ignored by many of the “more liked people” in the community.

The Glory of the Lord shone around the angel and the shepherd, and the shepherds were greatly afraid. They had never seen anything like this. They had no idea what was happening. They were so scared that the angel could not immediately tell them about the great news. He first had to tell them not to be afraid. This was not just a regular kind of good news either. This was the best news ever - not only for them, but also for all mankind. This was such an exciting and momentous occasion for all of Heaven. As soon as the angel finished telling them about Jesus’ birth, a heavenly host appeared with the angels praising God. This would have easily been a choir of thousands of angels bringing much energy and undeniable proof of who was the source of the message. God was sharing with these lowly shepherds the very fulfillment of prophecy. The high and exalted King of the Universe was arriving lowly and humble to begin His mission to bridge the gap between God and man. The shepherds wasted no time and directly went to Bethlehem to see what had happened. They did not sit around questioning what they had seen, they were sure of it and wanted to see more. In obedience, they went to worship their savior. After seeing their savior, they went and told everyone they could find of the message they received from the angel. Let us go and do the same. Amen.

Make a Puzzle

Christmas card depicting the shepherds (or print a picture of the shepherds), scissors.

Cut the card or picture into several puzzle pieces ahead of time. Guide your child to put the puzzle together. Ask your child questions about the Bible story while he or she is working the puzzle.

Discussion Questions

1. What repeating themes do you find in this story? Why are they important?
2. What truth found in these verses can we apply to our lives today?
3. Who can you tell about this good news today?
4. Why would Jesus come in such a manner?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we praise you. Thank you for the gift of Jesus and help us to think about you more and talk about you more today, amen.

Christmas Carol

"Angels We Have Heard on High" -By King and Country

Jesus Dedicated

Jason Hodges

Luke 2:21-38



Nativity Piece:

Turtle Doves

12/21

40 days after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph took him to the temple to fulfill the Law of Moses by presenting a sacrifice of two turtle doves and they consecrated him to the Lord as Jesus was the firstborn son. Consecration was not to be taken lightly as it means to “set apart,” indicating that the parents were committing to raise Jesus in accordance with the scriptures, providing a home where God was honored, and giving God priority in the decisions they made and how they lived their lives.

A devout man named Simeon was at the temple. God revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. With such a promise, Simeon was expectantly watching and waiting for the Messiah’s appearance. On this day, something was different as the Holy Spirit moved him, so he was probably searching the faces of those coming into the temple intently as he waited. Finally, the parents brought Jesus. Simeon took Jesus into his arms. Can you imagine his excitement? and praised God for fulfilling the promise by allowing his eyes to see the salvation of the Lord, who would be a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to God’s chosen people Israel. Mary and Joseph marveled at his words about Jesus and were comforted hearing another recognize Jesus as Savior.

As we look at the turtle doves today, we should remember not only the dedication of Jesus. We should also remember that the promise of His salvation is still being fulfilled and is available now to all who believe in Him. And, for those who have received the gift of salvation, we should be waiting and watching expectantly each day for the promised return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Looking at Pictures

Pictures & Videos

Look at pictures and/or videos from when your children were dedicated. Talk with them about what a special time that was for your family. Tell them on that day, you thanked God for blessing your family and promised to always talk about Jesus in your home. If you have not participated in Christian Family Dedication, show your children some of their baby pictures and tell them how glad you are that God chose you to be their parents. Tell your children that Mary and Joseph loved baby Jesus just like you love them.

Discussion Questions

1. Did you dedicate your child to God when they were born? What was that like?
2. For what purposes do you think Jesus was consecrated?
3. How does Christmas make you excited for Jesus' second coming?

Prayer

We praise and worship you, God for what you have done and for all that you are yet to do in our lives and at Christ's return. In this special season call us to rejoice, sing praise and give thanks to God for sending this amazing baby Jesus to be the Savior of the world.

Christmas Carol

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel" - By Maverick City Worship

The Wiseman

Melissa Goodman

Matthew 2:1-14



Nativity Piece:

The Wiseman

12/22

The Magi, the wise men from the east. Who were these men? Why did they take this important journey? This journey was both a physical and spiritual.

These men were scholars, prominent political and religious figures in their land, and advisers to the kings. The Bible does not say, but it is believed that they had knowledge of the coming Messiah. The simple fact that these Gentiles took the journey, followed a “Star” and went to worship King Jesus is a reminder of the prophecy found in Isaiah. Jesus’ birth was a light to these Gentile wise men.

Their journey was directed by a “Star”. This “Star” was unique, it was different, it was a supernatural light. It says in verse 9, “the star which they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the Child was.” This star was like a beacon leading them straight to Jesus. No ordinary star can do this; God wanted these wise men there.

Their journey was a sacrifice because travel in those days was lengthy, tiring, and dangerous. Traveling by camel, was not comfortable and had many obstacles. They sacrificed their time, comfort, and safety, to travel without a clear destination.

Finally, their journey was an act of faith, worship, and obedience. They had faith that this star would lead them to Jesus. Others saw the star but ignored it, they had faith it was a sign from God announcing the birth of Christ. They worshiped when he bowed before Jesus. They brought expensive gifts. These men were obedient because they trusted God and followed his guide, the “Star”.

Stargazing

Blanket

At nighttime, go outside, place a blanket on your lawn. As a family, sit or lie down on the blanket and look at the stars. Ask the children to think about the star the Wisemen saw and followed. Was that star the same as the stars we see? How bright do you think it was? How big?

Talk about how the wisemen followed the star to find Jesus. Remind them that we need to listen and follow God's direction for our lives. (If weather is bad, use an app for looking at stars)

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways have you sacrificed to follow Jesus?
2. How are you giving of your time, strength and effort to worship Jesus?
3. On Christmas we give and receive gifts, but Christmas is supposed to be celebrating Christ's birthday. So what gift can you give to Jesus this year?

Prayer

Lord, help us to be like the Magi, who were obedient and faithful. They sacrificed and worshipped Christ. Help us to follow you and give everything through worship and love.

Christmas Carol

"We Three Kings" -By Rend Collective, Keith & Kristyn Getty



John the Baptizer

Jonathan Wilson

John 1:19-28



Nativity Piece:

Road to the Nativity

12/23

John the Baptizer prepared the way for Jesus. I love that John and Jesus were cousins. I have a few cousins around my same age, and we always enjoy spending time together. I remember several Christmases we spent together when we were younger. We all live in different states now and don't get to see each other often. Sometimes I wonder what John and Jesus talked about and how they may have spent time together. I do know that the Bible tells us that John played a huge part in the story of Jesus.

Four hundred years had passed since anyone had heard a prophet of God speak - enter John the Baptizer with his camel hair and leather accented clothing! Many wondered if he was the prophet Elijah as the priests and Levites asked him in John 1. He was not Elijah, nor was he the Christ. God had tasked him to put the arrival of Jesus on the radar of people. "Get ready!" "He's coming!" "Prepare the way!" "Make straight the path!"

There is great probability that John and Jesus spent time together as young boys. Their relationship was special. I used to play Tonka trucks with my older cousin Brent when we were kids and lived in the same city. I can only imagine cousins John and Jesus hanging out as young boys. They would become young men that would change the course of history! While John was not Elijah as some had wondered, his message was the same as Elijah's. It was simply this, "you need to change!". John said, "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." The word "repent" (metanoeo) means "to change the mind". John's message pointed to the road, the path, the way to heaven. Have you prepared the way for Jesus?

Paper Towel Tube Megaphone

Paper towel tubes, stickers, glitter glue, & markers.

Decorate a paper towel tube to make a megaphone. As John told people about Jesus, children can use their megaphones to tell people about Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. Who are some family members you are close to?
2. The road represents John preparing the way for Jesus. How can you prepare for Jesus?
3. How can you help other people prepare for Jesus this Christmas?

Prayer

Holy Spirit, you go before us to prepare hearts to hear about Jesus. Give us the opportunity this Christmas to lead someone to faith in Christ.

Christmas Carol

"Make Way" -By Matthew West



Behold the Lamb

Jason A. Stanland

John 1:29-34



Nativity Piece:

Cross

12/24

When you think of a lamb at the nativity, you think of the shepherds and the flocks. However, there is another lamb in the nativity. As we read in John 1, John the Baptizer looked at Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" That is a funny title to give Jesus. When John said that, Jesus actually a thirty year old. You generally do not refer to a man as a lamb.

This title of Jesus comes from Leviticus. God gave his people directions for a way to worship him for the forgiveness of sins, and it involved the death of a male lamb. Jesus became our spiritual lamb because he can forgive us of our sins. Jesus died to pay for our sin, but he rose three days later to prove that we can have eternal life in him.

The Bible teaches that all of us have sinned (Romans 3:23). A sin is when you disobey God. When we lie, hurt people, or disobey our parents we are sinning against God. One day God will punish all sin, and the Bible refers to that as hell. However, the Bible also teaches us that if anyone will turn from their sin and trust in Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection, then we can be forgiven of our sins.

He did this for us because we could never pay for our own sins. We can never become perfect again. Jesus is the only perfect person who never sinned. He did this for us because he knew we could not. He did this for us because he loves us!

This is why we add a cross to the nativity. The cross is where Jesus died to pay for our sins. No, the cross is not part of a normal nativity, but the purpose of Christmas is to celebrate that God came to save us! Christmas really is about Jesus. We celebrate his birth because God became one of us. Jesus is fully God and fully human, so that he could represent God and us. He became one of us so he might take our place and pay for our punishment. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!

Children's Activity

Make a Garland

Christmas wrapping paper, white construction paper, markers, Christian Christmas stickers, star stickers, glue or glue sticks, ribbon, & a hole punch.

Talk about the names of Jesus and what they mean. Ask your elementary children to think of other names for Jesus such as Emmanuel, Lamb of God, and Savior. To make the Garland, cut out the Christmas wrapping paper to the desired circle size. Make at least one circle for each name of Jesus. Next cut the circles out of the white construction paper that are smaller than the Christmas wrap circles. Elementary children can write the names of Jesus on the white circles with the stickers. Glue the write circles on top of the wrapping paper circles. Hole punch each completed circle and thread them on a ribbon to make the garland.

Discussion Questions

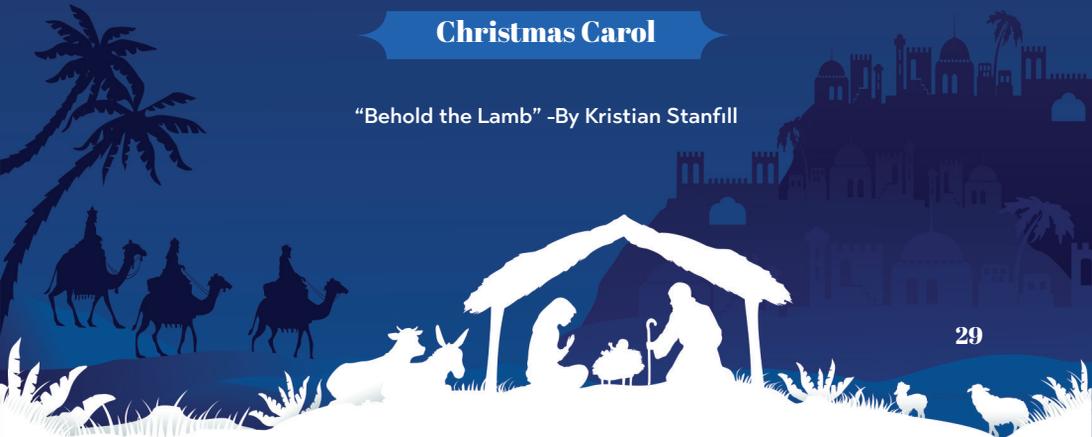
1. How do we know what sin is? What are some sins?
2. Why does it feel funny to put a cross in your nativity? Have you ever thought of this before?
3. Have you trusted in Jesus as your savior?
4. Can you name 3 people you can know need to know about Jesus?

Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for being my sacrificial lamb! Thank you, Jesus, for paying for my sins because I can't. Help our family to worship you this Christmas because you are good and worthy. Help us to tell other people about you that they might know you!

Christmas Carol

"Behold the Lamb" -By Kristian Stanfill





Christmas at
 **Fruit Cove**

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