

25 DAYS OF JESUS



AN ADVENT JOURNEY THROUGH
THE GOSPEL OF LUKE



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Endorsement Copy

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*Dedicated to Grandma Iris Logan, who carried on favorite family traditions,
and always made our Christmas time warm and special.*

*Thank you for letting me play with your typewriter. You are dearly loved
and missed every day.*

Forward

We were rushing through Walmart on a sunny December day in Southern California. Mom wanted to pick up some gift bags and stocking stuffers for the younger kids, and I was her tag-a-long assistant after school.

As Mom darted her cart through the crowds of hurried shoppers, I noticed my favorite colorful jars stacked like soldiers on the end aisle display.

"Mom! Can I get this candle? *Sniff... Mmmmmm*, it smells like a Christmas tree." She grinned and let me add it to our basket.

Seasonal candles were my favorite thing as a kid. They were a sign to me that a magical time was coming, and each smell prepared my spirit to get caught up in the fanciful festivities of Christmas. Even the name of each candle was whimsical: Snowy Fir, Gingerbread Cookie, Peppermint Stick.

I wanted the one that a freshly-snowed forest. Balsam, cedar, spruce. Smells are very important to me. Smells instantly transport me to past memories and into imaginary worlds. But we had to drive an hour up to the mountains for anything that resembled a forest.

I grew up in a busy city, next to a liquor store parking lot and a major intersection. The smells of tire rubber, gas, and exhaust were first to hit my senses. As the oldest of four kids, our household bustled with sounds and scents of family life, too. Diapers, dish water, damp towels, and dirty socks were in no short supply.

As soon as I was allowed to click a long-neck lighter, I was lighting candles. I loved how such a small light could fill an entire

room, and create a warming mood. That small flame released a powerful fragrance that wrapped us in all the goodness of the holiday.

I wonder what it smelled like on that first Christmas night, in the manger of Bethlehem. If you've ever spent time around barn animals, you don't need to wonder. I'm sure it was not exactly peppermint sticks and cinnamon pinecones.

We get to experience the wonderful smells of celebration because God chose to come down to this dusty world as a baby. He lived among us, and eventually sacrificed Himself so we could experience the joy of His love and presence in our lives.

As you walk through this devotional with your family, we will begin with the Christmas story, and walk through each chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Instead of just the manger scene, we will look at the whole picture: the life and purpose of Jesus on earth.

In between devotions, sing each classic Christmas song together, and notice how the lyrics teach about God's love for His people. Treat it like a Bible study if you like, and look up the corresponding scriptures.

Christmas time may bring back memories for you. Sweet ones of baked goods, or cedar trees. But Christmas might also remind you of difficult times. Remember this: God knows every season of life we go through and He promises to be close to us. His Spirit stayed with us even after Jesus resurrected, and is with us even now. Do you believe that?

The blessing of Christmas is that Christ came to redeem us back to Himself. Redemption is about restoring what has once been broken, forgotten, or left worthless. His birth, life, and death is our great hope because we regain purpose as precious creations of a living God.

Decide in your heart what you will do with this Christmas season. The old times have passed away. Keep the good memories and carry them forward. Create a new season of new memories, and new traditions, but never forget the original reason why we celebrate.

Take in all the wondrous scents of Christmas, and hold each other close. Read and pray together for advent, not as another thing for the to-do list, but to solidify the bonds of your family relationship. Light your candles, bake delicious treats, and gather together in the memory, acceptance and grace of what Jesus did for you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenna". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping tail.

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Advent Calendar

Follow along for the first 25 days of December and look up the corresponding Bible verses before reading that day's devotion. Some days have a classic Christmas carol after each reading.

Christmas Songs

Every song published here has lyrics based in scripture. Look up each scripture reference below the song and discuss the Biblical message with your family. Use our playlist here for easy access:

<https://practicalfamily.org/25DaysJesusSongs>

Recipes

Choose any of our 12 recipes to try out for holiday parties or cozy family time at home. Download the entire recipe book here:

<http://practicalfamily.org/25DaysJesusRecipes>

BONUS: Audio Book

Download the audio version of each devotional to play for your individual or family devotional time. Read by the author.

Purchase here:

<https://practicalfamily.org/25DaysJesusAudioBook>

Extra Resources

See the back of the book for more goodies available through Practical Family.

Advent Calendar

The Christmas season is finally here! This is what **advent** means: the arrival of a much-awaited time. Follow these December days as a pathway instead of a calendar & re-use this devotional every year as you await the celebration of the birth of our Savior.



Dec 1 Luke 1:32-33	Dec 2 Luke 2:9-11 <i>Angels We Have Heard on High</i>	Dec 3 Luke 3:21-22	Dec 4 Luke 4:1-2 <i>Away in a Manger</i>	Dec 5 Luke 5:10-11
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December 1

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end. Luke 1:32-33



Devotional

The God of heaven saw fit to send the most important message to a young girl from a small town. Mary had a most important assignment. She would serve as a vessel to deliver the Son of the Most High safely into this world. It was an incredible fulfillment of prophecy through the blood lines of King David, all the way back to Jacob.

God had a plan to save His people from the moment sin entered the Garden (Genesis 3), but it was not a quick fix. It was a process, drawn out over centuries, with many chances for a rebellious and self-serving people to turn back to their Creator and trust Him with their lives. God continued to be good, just, and most of all, patient. He sees every one of us, and wants to speak to our heart about His plan for our lives.

Just as Mary's assignment came at a specific time in history, God is unfolding events in our world according to His perfect plan. You might be in a waiting pattern today. Waiting for the Christmas season to arrive so the traditions and feel-good activities might bring your family closer together. Maybe you're waiting for a child to come around and show a spark of interest in all your effort to love them. Maybe this is your first Christmas without a loved one, and you need more time to

heal and grieve. Just remember, God is faithful.

As He waits for us, He prepares a way back, provides comfort and rest in our brokenness, and an open door to run into His arms as our loving Father. He is faithful from beginning to end.

Prayer

Lord, help me to trust the plan You've had for my life from the very beginning. Thank You for the gift of time and second chances to come back to You in honesty and sincerity. Help my unbelief when the days are difficult. Amen.



December 2

And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:9-11



Devotional

It's the classic picture of the angels appearing to poor shepherds in the field, and another example of the humble beginnings of our Savior. It wasn't a dazzling presentation in the courts of kings and high priests. No—it was a dazzling presentation in the night sky for the lowliest of men. Not for a large crowd, but for a chosen few.

But why shepherds? My guess is that these individuals knew what it was like to care for sheep who would wander from the fold, fall into ditches, or follow the crowd over a cliff. Jesus himself would eventually compare us to sheep, but also to declare His love for even one who wandered away. The angels gave a sign: a baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a feeding trough. It was a simple message without elaborate explanation, but when they followed, they found great hope.

As parents, we know the tendencies of our kids, whether we've got quiet and timid or rough and rowdy little people at home. Just like these shepherds, we become afraid when we don't quite know what God is doing.

But as Jesus came to be our shepherd, He helps us to lead and care for our precious ones as well. When you allow Him to lead you, you will hear His voice to find the hope you need.

Prayer

Lord, thank You for leading and guiding me with my kids. I don't know where You're leading them, but I trust that Your plan is good. Help me to find joy in everyday circumstances and believe that You are faithfully leading me to good places. Amen.



Angels We Have Heard on High

Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains

Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song?

Come to Bethlehem and see
Him Whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

See Him in a manger laid
Jesus, Lord of heaven and earth;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
With us sing our Savior's birth.

- Isaiah 9:6
- Matthew 2
- Luke 2:10-13
- Revelation 19:16

Hot Apple Cider

- 4 cups apple cider (bottled or from packets)
- 1 apple (sliced)
- 1 orange (sliced)
- 3 cinnamon sticks
- 2 slices fresh ginger (about 1" each,
or 1/4 tsp ground ginger)
- 1 teaspoon whole allspice (or 1/2 tsp ground
allspice or 1/2 tsp pumpkin pie spice)

Stove Top

Add all ingredients to a medium sized pot. Bring to a simmer (low heat), and continue to simmer for 15-20 minutes. Serve hot and garnish with slice of apple, orange, or cinnamon stick.

Crockpot

Add all ingredients to the crock pot and set on low for 3-4 hours.

Strain out fruit before refrigerating.

Reheat and serve hot.