

JESSE TREE

family advent devotional



THERE SHALL COME FORTH A SHOOT FROM THE STUMP OF JESSE,
AND A BRANCH FROM HIS ROOTS SHALL BEAR FRUIT.

ISAIAH 11:1

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

One of my family's most treasured Christmas traditions was our Jesse Tree. Each year, we pulled out these devotions, read Scripture, and discussed each lesson before bedtime.

I bought a little tree specifically for our Jesse Tree, and we made ornaments for each day's devotion. My kids loved taking turns hanging their ornaments on the tree and telling us what each picture represented. Oh, what sweet and fruitful conversations happened around our tree! While making family memories, our children were also learning about God's great plan of redemption and how the Old Testament pointed God's people to a coming Messiah! The more we as parents got excited about the story, the more our kids did, too. (Isn't this where we want to direct our Christmas anticipation, anyway?)

Christian parents decide how to shape their family's holiday anticipation and focus every Christmas. While the world emphasizes gift-giving and festive traditions, it can be easy to lose sight of God's greatest gift to humanity: the birth of Jesus Christ!

I hope that these devotions will bless your family as much as they have mine! You can make this time together as straightforward or elaborate as you want.

You can take the cover page of this document, cut out the circles, glue them on simple ornaments, and make your own Jesse Tree. Or, you can meet around your dining room tables or snuggle on the couch and discuss the glorious plan of salvation culminating in a lowly stable in Bethlehem. All that matters is that you have fun as you prepare your hearts to make room for the newborn King, Jesus, this Advent season.

Because the root of Jesse has come!

Cara



Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-2

God has a plan for everything. Long before Jesus was born, there lived a man named Jesse. Jesse had seven sons, the youngest of whom was David. When David grew up, he became a great king of Israel. God had a plan for Jesse and his son David even before they were born.

Jesus was also part of Jesse and David's family tree, born many years after David. People waited a long time for the birth of the Savior. Advent is a season of waiting for us, too. We're waiting for Christmas, the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus. It is hard to be patient, especially when waiting for something as wonderful as Christmas! But it is important to learn to be patient and trust that God has a plan for us.

Talk about:

Why is waiting so hard?

Prayer:

Dear God, we thank you for having a plan for each of us. Help us to be patient as we wait for Jesus' birthday.

Scripture: Genesis 1:26-31

God is the creator of all things. God made the world and everything in it: the air and the water, the plants and the fish, the animals and the people. When God finished creating the world, it was totally and completely perfect. And did you know that when God first created people, they were perfect, too? They did not sin or do anything to make God unhappy.

Even though there is now sin and sadness in the world, God still cares for us. We have been given a beautiful world in which to live, and God has asked us to take care of it. We can care for the world by showing kindness to all living things.

The world is God's gift to us. God wants us to enjoy this gift and treat it with care.



Talk about:

How can you take good care of plants, animals, birds, rivers, people, and everything else in the world that God made?

Prayer:

Thank you, Creator God, for making our wonderful world.



Scripture: Genesis 3:1-19

Yesterday, we read about God's perfect world, including perfect people. Today, we read in the Bible about Adam and Eve and how they disobeyed God. God had given them everything they needed and asked that they not eat the fruit of one particular tree. But Eve and Adam did eat the fruit. The fruit made them understand certain things, but eating it brought sin into the world.

God still loved Adam and Eve, but he had to punish them for disobeying him. He sent them out of the beautiful garden, and they had to work for their food. But God also promised to always love them.

Talk about:

What kinds of things do we do that make God unhappy?

Prayer:

Mighty God, keep us from doing things that make you unhappy.

Scripture: Genesis 6:11-14; 7:17-18, 8:6-18

When people sin or do wrong things, God is sad. There came a time when there was so much sin in the world that God had to find a way to remove it. Because Noah obeyed God, God asked him to build an ark and save his family and the animals. Then God sent rain, and the world flooded, and God destroyed all the people and animals that were not on the ark.

When the flood was over, and Noah and his family were safely on dry ground, God made a covenant, or a promise, with Noah. God promised not to send another flood that would destroy the world, and he put a rainbow in the sky as a sign of this promise. Even in a sinful world, God still loves us and keeps his promises.



Talk about:

Can you name a promise that God has kept?

Prayer:

Thank you, Almighty God, for keeping your promises.



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Scripture: Genesis 12:1-7

Sometimes, God asks us to do hard things. He told Abraham to take a long trip and leave his home, which must have been challenging and maybe scary for Abraham. But in return, God promised to bless Abraham for obeying him.

Abraham still had problems and struggles, especially when he forgot to listen to God's directions, but God kept all of the promises he made to Abram. Even though Abraham didn't always obey God as he was supposed to, God always loved him and was his friend forever.

Talk about:

Name some ways that God shows you what he wants you to do.

Prayer:

Dear God, help us obey you and do what pleases you.

Scripture: Genesis 21:1-7

Have you ever wanted something so much that you thought you would die if you didn't get it? Sometimes, it's hard to be thankful for the things we do have when we want something else. Sarah wanted a baby more than anything else in the world. She prayed and cried and kept asking God for a baby, but for years, and years, and years, she still didn't have one. Sarah became very old and thought God did not want her to have a child.

But then, one day, God gave Sarah what she always wanted: a son! She was so happy, she laughed! She and Abraham named their son Issac, which means laughter. Sarah was so happy and thankful that God gave her a wonderful son even after she had given up on her dream.



Talk about:

How has God answered your prayers?

Prayer:

Gracious God, thank you for answering our prayers.



Scripture: Genesis 22: 1-14

Isaac was a special boy, and his father, Abraham, loved him very much. But Abraham loved God even more than he loved Isaac. One day, God asked Abraham to take Isaac on a journey. Abraham obeyed. God also asked Abraham to kill Isaac as a sacrifice, as a way of showing how much Abraham loved God.

Abraham was sad, but he knew that he had to obey God. He trusted that God would make everything right even though he was being asked to do something terrible. As he was getting ready to sacrifice Isaac, God sent an angel to stop Abraham and save Isaac's life. Then Abraham sacrificed a sheep to honor God and thank him for saving Isaac's life.

Talk about:

When did you feel protected by God?

Prayer:

Dear God, help us obey you, even when it is hard to do.

Scripture: Genesis 28:10-22

Jacob had not always been a good person. He had done some unkind things to his brother, and instead of saying sorry, he ran away. He lived away from his family for many years, but it was time to meet again with his brother. He had to face up to the things he had done wrong many years before.

When Jacob ran away from his family, he may have thought he was also running away from God. The night before he would see his brother, God spoke to Jacob in a dream. God reminded Jacob of promises God had made to Jacob's father and grandfather and that those promises were meant for Jacob, too.

Jacob thought he had run away from God, but God was always with him.



Talk about:

How do you know that God is always with you?

Prayer:

Remind us each day, God, that you are with us.



Scripture: Genesis 37:1-36; 50:15-21

Sometimes, even love cannot protect us from bad things. Joseph was loved very much by his father, Jacob, but Joseph's brothers were jealous of him and hated him. They did a very bad thing and sold him to a man who made him a servant and then put him in prison.

But God had given Joseph a special gift of understanding dreams, and Joseph could use his special gift to help others. He was rewarded for his help by being given a very important job. Many years later, while he was doing his important job, he met his brothers again, and they did not recognize him. Even though Joseph could have been mean to his brothers, he chose to help and forgive them. He knew that even though he had gone through some terrible times, God had been with him through everything and still expected him to do good things.

Talk about:

Who can you be kind to today?

Prayer:

God of forgiveness, help us to be kind even to people who make us angry.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 5:1-22

God wants us to be good to each other and treat others how we want to be treated. Many years ago, God gave Moses the ten best rules for living to help us understand how to care for each other. These rules are called the Ten Commandments and are still good for us today.

Not everybody likes to follow the rules. They think rules keep them from having fun. But God gave us the rules not as a punishment but as a way of helping us to show God that we are thankful for what God has done for us. God wants us to do good and will help us do the right thing by guiding us on the right path.



Talk about:

What rules help your family to live together and be happy?

Prayer:

Righteous God, thank you for giving us rules to guide us.



Scripture: Joshua 2:1-21

The Israelites were ready to enter the land that God had promised them. They sent two men into the land to find out more about the land. It was very dangerous to go into the land; if the people who ruled the land had found the two Israelites, they would have been killed.

Rahab saved the lives of two of God's people. She hid the two men in her house and helped them escape. She knew that God had promised the city of Jericho to Joshua and the Israelites and believed that God was powerful.

Brave Rahab honored God because she believed in God's power. In return, the Israelites protected Rahab and her family. Rahab hung a red rope from the window of her house so the Israelites would remember to protect her. And God remembered Rahab and cared for her for the rest of her life.

Talk about:

Tell about a time when God gave you the courage to help someone.

Prayer:

Dear God, give us the courage to help others.

Scripture: Ruth 1:15-2:3

Naomi and Ruth had lost all the people they loved. Naomi's two sons—one of them was Ruth's husband—had died, and Naomi's husband had died, too. Naomi had been living in Ruth's country, far from her family, so Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem. Ruth could have stayed in her own country with her family but chose to go to Bethlehem with Naomi.

Naomi was so sad that she thought that God had forgotten her. In the days of the Bible, most women couldn't get jobs, so women would go to the fields and take the grain that the farmers left behind. Ruth went to the field to gather grain, and there she met Boaz, a relative of Naomi's, who took care of them. Boaz and Ruth married and had a son, and Naomi was happy. She knew that God had not forgotten them, even when she had been sad.



Talk about:

When did you feel really sad? What can make you happy?

Prayer:

Holy God, thank you for always being with us.

SAMUEL!!!



13



Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1-11, 15-18

Hannah prayed very hard that God would give her a child. God heard her prayer and gave her a son, Samuel. Soon after Samuel was born, his mother brought him to the temple so that he would grow up there and learn to serve God.

When Samuel was a boy, God spoke to him in the night. At first, Samuel didn't recognize God's voice, but wise Eli knew that God was calling to Samuel. Even though he was young, God had a special job for Samuel. He was to be a prophet, one who spoke God's word to the people. From the first night God called to him, Samuel obeyed God and did what he wanted. God has a special job for you, too. God might not call out to you at night, but God will speak, sometimes through the Bible, sometimes through something you do, and sometimes through the words of friends and family. We don't always recognize God's voice at first, but if we respond with a willingness to serve, God will speak to us.

Talk about:

Have you ever felt or heard God calling to you?

Prayer:

Loving God, help us to listen to your voice and do the work you want us to do.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

God has a plan for you. Even when we are young, God sees into our hearts and knows what kind of people we are and what kind of people we will be.

Most of the grown-ups who saw David thought he was just a kid who tended the sheep, but while David was still a child, God chose him to be a king. God's servant Samuel poured oil on David's head and anointed him as the future king of Israel. God has a plan for each of us. Not many of us will be rulers, but we can serve God in important ways. It's important to listen to God's call and to find ways to honor God in our lives.



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Talk about:

How can you honor God in your life?

Prayer:

God of wisdom, guide us to serve you.



Scripture: 1 Kings 18:17-24, 36-39

The people of Israel had forgotten to worship God. Instead, they were worshiping a false god named Baal. God sent his prophet Elijah to remind the people about the true God. But the people didn't want to listen to Elijah. So Elijah offered to show the people God's power. He prepared a sacrifice, and the prophets of Baal prepared a sacrifice. The prophets of Baal prayed that their god would send fire to burn the sacrifice, but the false god did nothing. But when Elijah prayed, God sent fire.

The Israelites had forgotten God until God showed them a miracle. God still does miracles today, but we need to remember God even if we don't see miracles. Our God is great; we need to praise God at all times.

Talk about:

What are some things you can do to praise God?

Prayer:

We praise you, mighty God, for all you have done for us.

Scripture: Micah 5:1-5a

Often, God does things that surprise us. God chose the small town of Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus. In Bible times, most rulers in important families were born in bigger cities, but Jesus was born into an ordinary family in a small village.

God chose Bethlehem many years before Jesus was born. The prophet Micah wrote that Bethlehem would be the place where the Savior would be born. But even so, the town of Bethlehem wasn't ready for the birth of Jesus. There was no place prepared for God's Son to be born. The day when we celebrate Jesus' birth will soon be here. We need to make our hearts ready.



Talk about:

How are you getting ready for Jesus' birth?

Prayer:

Eternal God, help us always to be ready to serve you.



Scripture: Esther 4

God is at work in everything. Sometimes, things don't seem to make sense to us at all, but later, we understand why God put us in a certain place at a certain time.

Esther was a beautiful woman, and because of her beauty, she became queen. But because she was brave, she saved the Jewish people from death. Esther's uncle told her of the danger to her and her people, and he helped her plan how to save them. At first, she didn't think she could help, but her uncle reminded her that everyone was important.

God had put Esther in the palace for a special job. Her bravery saved many lives.

Talk about:

Does God have a special job for you?

Prayer:

All-knowing God, open our eyes to the special plans you have for us.

Scripture: Daniel 6

God wants to be the most important thing in our lives: more important than our family, more important than our things, and even our lives. Daniel understood that; he worshiped God even though it might cost him everything, even his life.

It was against the law for Daniel to worship God, but Daniel knew that God was the only true God, and he would not stop worshiping God. Daniel was punished for breaking the law and put in a pit with lions. But God protected Daniel from becoming the lions' dinner. People learned of God's power because of Daniel, and many others worshiped God because Daniel trusted and honored God.



Talk about:

Who do you love the most?

Prayer:

Savior God, loving you more than anything else is not always easy. Help us to trust and honor you each day.



Scripture: Luke 1:5-25

Sometimes, even good people have prayers that are not answered. Zechariah and Elizabeth honored God, and God loved them, but they did not have a child. One day, while Zechariah was working in the temple, an angel brought him a message from God, saying that he and Elizabeth were going to have a very special son, and his name was John.

Zechariah wasn't sure he believed the angel, so God took away Zechariah's voice as a sign of God's power. Imagine if you had seen an angel who had told you wonderful, happy news, and you couldn't tell anyone what had happened! Zechariah was sad to have lost his voice, but he was happy to know that he would have a son chosen by God to do important work.

Talk about:

How can you tell others about what God has done for you?

Prayer:

Almighty God, give us the courage to tell everyone about your good works.

Scripture: Matthew 3: 1-6

Elizabeth and Zechariah's son grew up to be John the Baptist. He was Jesus' cousin. God chose him to tell the people about Jesus. John wanted people to know that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior God had promised so many years ago. He wanted them to be ready to believe in Jesus. John also wanted the people to remember God, so he baptized them in the river if they promised not to sin anymore. The baptism reminded them that God forgave them for their sins.

John did not look like others, and some people probably thought he was a little strange. However, many other people listened to John, and they were ready to believe in Jesus.



Talk about:

What do you need forgiveness for today?

Prayer:

Holy God, forgive us when we do things that displease you. Make our hearts ready for Jesus.



Scripture: Luke 1:26-38

God had a special job for someone. He was looking for an earthly home for baby Jesus. Jesus would need a mother who loved and trusted God who was smart, strong, and loving. God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother.

God sent an angel to talk to Mary. Mary wasn't sure she could be a good mother to Jesus, but the angel reminded Mary that God would be with her. Mary knew being a mother was a difficult and important job, but she knew God would guide her. She also knew she loved God and wanted to do whatever she could to serve him. Mary said yes with a joyful heart.

Talk about:

Talk about some things that have happened to you or others that seem impossible.

Prayer:

Thank you, God, that nothing is impossible with you.

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

Yesterday, we talked about Jesus' mother, Mary. Jesus also had an earthly father named Joseph, who was a carpenter.

God sent an angel to speak to Joseph in a dream. The angel explained that God had chosen Mary and that Mary's baby would be very special. When Joseph woke up, he knew that he and Mary were a part of God's plan. Joseph knew that he would be a good father to Jesus. Joseph believed in God, listened to him, and obeyed God, even when it was difficult.



Talk about:

Name some ways that God speaks to us.

Prayer:

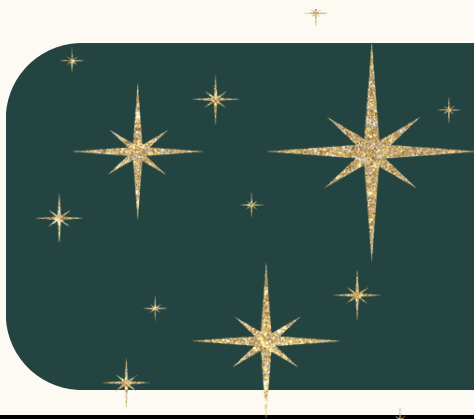
Dear God, help us to hear your voice.



Scripture: Luke 2: 1-5

Sometimes, taking a trip is fun, like when we go on vacation. Sometimes it's not so fun, like when we go to the doctor when we're sick. But usually, when we're on a journey, whether a short trip or a long one, we experience something new. We learn things on a journey.

Mary and Joseph went on a journey. If we had taken the same journey by car, it wouldn't have taken very long, but because Mary and Joseph were walking, it would have taken a long time. They had to go to Bethlehem because the country's ruler said they had to, but it was all part of God's plan. That is one thing that Joseph and Mary learned on their journey.



Talk about:

What new journeys did you take this past year?

Prayer:

Guide our journeys wherever they take us, holy God.

Scripture: Luke 2:6-21

Our waiting is over! Jesus is born! The star is shining, the angels are singing, and the shepherds are worshipping. Our Savior is here!

Mary was happy to have her beautiful baby, but she knew that not every day would be as special as his birthday. She knew that raising God's son was going to be a challenge, but for the moment, she tried to enjoy all the amazing things that had happened.

When sin first came into the world, God made a promise. Even when people forget about God and the promise, God doesn't forget about the people. God guided the people, protected the people, and loved the people, even when they were sinful. God was faithful, and today, the promise is fulfilled.

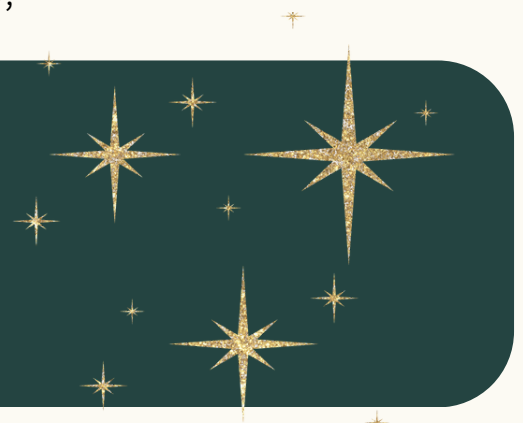


Talk about:

What is your favorite part of the Christmas story?

Prayer:

Thank you, God of the universe, for the most beautiful gift of your son, Jesus.





THERE SHALL COME FORTH A SHOOT FROM THE STUMP OF JESSE,
AND A BRANCH FROM HIS ROOTS SHALL BEAR FRUIT.

2 AND THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD SHALL REST UPON HIM,
THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING,
THE SPIRIT OF COUNSEL AND MIGHT,
THE SPIRIT OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

3 AND HIS DELIGHT SHALL BE IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD.
HE SHALL NOT JUDGE BY WHAT HIS EYES SEE,
OR DECIDE DISPUTES BY WHAT HIS EARS HEAR,

4 BUT WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS HE SHALL JUDGE THE POOR,
AND DECIDE WITH EQUITY FOR THE MEEK OF THE EARTH;
AND HE SHALL STRIKE THE EARTH WITH THE ROD OF HIS MOUTH,
AND WITH THE BREATH OF HIS LIPS HE SHALL KILL THE WICKED.

5 RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL BE THE BELT OF HIS WAIST,
AND FAITHFULNESS THE BELT OF HIS LOINS.

6 THE WOLF SHALL DWELL WITH THE LAMB,
AND THE LEOPARD SHALL LIE DOWN WITH THE YOUNG GOAT,
AND THE CALF AND THE LION AND THE FATTENED CALF TOGETHER;
AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.

7 THE COW AND THE BEAR SHALL GRAZE;
THEIR YOUNG SHALL LIE DOWN TOGETHER;
AND THE LION SHALL EAT STRAW LIKE THE OX.

8 THE NURSING CHILD SHALL PLAY OVER THE HOLE OF THE COBRA,
AND THE WEANED CHILD SHALL PUT HIS HAND ON THE ADDER'S DEN.

9 THEY SHALL NOT HURT OR DESTROY
IN ALL MY HOLY MOUNTAIN;
FOR THE EARTH SHALL BE FULL OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD
AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA.

10 IN THAT DAY THE ROOT OF JESSE, WHO SHALL STAND AS A SIGNAL FOR THE
PEOPLES—OF HIM SHALL THE NATIONS INQUIRE, AND HIS RESTING PLACE
SHALL BE GLORIOUS.

TO LEARN MORE VISIT

