



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 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. 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!

Christmas at  
 **Fruit Cove**





## 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 are easy for the children to learn the Christmas story.

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

12/13

## Waiting for Jesus

Tim Maynard

*Micah 5:2*



## Nativity Piece:

*The Stable*

Many hundreds of years before Jesus was born, a prophet in the Old Testament named Micah made an amazing prediction. He wrote what we just read. This prophecy predicted the exact place where the Messiah (Jesus) would be born. It was not a large city. In fact, Micah told us Bethlehem was the SMALLEST of all the families and tribes of Israel.

One of the things we may not always understand is that, while we sing songs about this place where Christ came to Earth as a baby, it was not a nice place. It was a place where shepherds would come to town for a night to take a break from keeping sheep in the fields. It was not a large village, since it only had one inn, which was already filled with travelers who came to be counted for the Roman government.

In fact, the only place left where Mary and Joseph could stay while she gave birth to the baby Jesus was a cattle shed behind the inn. There, in a place where animals would stay and be fed, Jesus came into the world to be our Savior.

Sometimes we sing or hear the song at Christmas, which says, "Away in a manger, no crib for a bed. The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head." Jesus was rejected from the first moments of His life. He was forced to sleep with animals on His first night on the Earth. No room was found for Him with the people He had come to save.

So, as we look at our nativity scenes and particularly at the manger, let's remember that Jesus' sacrifice for our sin did not begin when He went to the cross. It began when He cried His first breath on the Earth, and inhaled the smell of cattle and sheep. The Father sent His Son to this place, to show us that no one was too unimportant or too sinful for God to love.

He was born in "the little town of Bethlehem," just as the prophet Micah said. Knowing the place of His birth "from ancient days," Jesus came anyway because of His love for us all!

**What an amazing picture of Christmas!**



## Preschool Activity:

Make a Musical Horn

Decorate a paper towel using stickers, glitter, glue, and/or markers to make a musical horn. As a family parade through the house, making horn sounds through the tube and exclaiming through the tube, "Jesus is Coming!"

## Materials:

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

## Elementary Activity:

Christmas Lights

Gather some strings of Christmas Lights, and make sure they are tangled. Have the children untangle the lights, and give them 3-4 minutes. After that discuss what it takes for your family to prepare for Christmas. Reread the Scripture and discuss 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 that we can be ready for him.

## Materials:

Christmas Lights

## Student Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever felt too insignificant for God to use you -too unimportant?
2. What is something you have excitedly waited for?
3. Do you get excited and anxious for what God is going to do in your life? Can you give an example?

## Prayer:

Jesus, help us not to miss you this Christmas. Help us to be watching for where you are working among us as we prepare for Christmas!

## Christmas Carol:

Oh Little Town of Bethlehem

12/14

## The Angel & Zechariah

Neal Cordle

Luke 1:5-25



Nativity Piece:

*The Angel*

What did you ask for last Christmas, but didn't receive? Were you disappointed? What if you asked year after year after year and never got what you asked for? How would you feel about that?

Zechariah and Elizabeth had asked God for years for a child. While it is painful for any couple to be childless, Elizabeth endured cultural shame. To top it off, they were old. Yet, even in their disappointment, they still lived for God and were considered righteous because of their faithful obedience to Him.

One day, Zechariah was selected to offer the incense and prayers for the people of Israel. This was the grandest event in the life of a priest. Many were never selected, and no priest was allowed to offer it more than once in a lifetime. Imagine his joy.

Standing in the temple holy place, Zechariah must have been overwhelmed. It's not hard to imagine him whispering a prayer for his nation and a personal request for a son. Then, he saw an angel and was afraid.

The angel, Gabriel, assured Zechariah that God was answering his prayer and giving him a son. Zechariah could not believe it. God was giving him and Elizabeth what they wanted most. Yet, because he doubted God, Gabriel announced that he would be unable to speak until his son was born. Imagine the scene when he departed the temple and tried to describe his experience without using any words!

Zechariah and Elizabeth's named their son John. He became known as "The Baptist," because he baptized people preparing them for Jesus' arrival. He was the fulfillment of prophecy (Malachai 4:5-6). After all those years, they were having a baby whose birth and life mission was worth waiting for as God used him to prepare for the coming of Jesus!



## Preschool Activity:

Make an Angel

To make an angel, trace one of your children's hands with the white crayon in the center of the paper. Guide your child to place his other two hands on each side of the center hand, slightly higher than the center hand for the wings. Trace those hands with the white crayon. Turn the paper upside down, and draw a circle above the center hand for the angel's face. Encourage your child to color the angel using the white crayon and the glitter glue.

## Materials:

Black or dark blue construction paper, white crayon, glitter glue, and some string

## Elementary Activity:

Angel Feet

Trace your child's footprint to use for the body of the angel, trace their hand prints 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.

## Materials:

Paper, glue, string, markers, and glitter

## Student Discussion Questions:

1. What do you want from God enough to ask Him year after year even when it seems He is silent?
2. How do you show you trust God by living in trust and obedience?
3. If God answered your prayer today, how would you recognize His answer? How would you respond to Him as a result?

## Prayer:

God, help us trust you even while we wait on you to answer our prayers. And when you answer us, remind us to worship you as the one who loves us more than we know.

## Christmas Carol:

Hark the Harold Angel Sings

12/15

## The Angel & Mary

Linda Warne

Luke 1:26-38



Nativity Piece:

Mary

In this passage of scripture, God sent the angel Gabriel to announce His plan to an unlikely teenage girl from Nazareth, who was probably only 13 or 14 years old. Her name was Mary.

We're told the Lord God, looked on her with favor. Mary was going to not only be blessed, but she would be a blessing to others. However, it would come at a staggering cost. In the culture of that day, she would have been shunned and her reputation damaged for life.

Mary was about to be told she was chosen by God to give birth to the long awaited Messiah, who would redeem the world and save all humanity from their brokenness and sin. This baby would be God, but He would also be a man. The angel gave her a name for the baby: Jesus. Mary was going to be the mother of the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Who would believe her?

Mary asked a sincere question about how she would become the mother of Jesus, and the angel told her God would perform a supernatural act to bring about this baby. Mary's servant heart accepts this assignment with a humble obedience. Mary believed God could do this, and she faithfully accepted unlike Zechariah who doubted God.

The angel also gave her some news about her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth was also going to have a baby, even though she was much older than Mary. Was this another miracle? This must have encouraged Mary to know that God could do anything - nothing was impossible with God. Mary told the angel she was willing to trust God and Gabriel left.



## Preschool Activity:

Sing the JESUS Song

To the tune of "Bingo," sing these words: "There was a baby born to us and Jesus was his name O. J-E-S-U-S, J-E-S-U-S, J-E-S-U-S. And Jesus is his name O." You can continue to sing the song, but for each additional verse, clap for each letter in J-E-S-U-S instead of singing the word.

## Elementary Activity:

What's in a Name?

Research the meaning of names of people in your family. Share the meaning of your family names with everyone. Then discuss the name of Jesus. Have the children write their name on a paper and write down the meaning of their name. They can also draw a picture representing the meaning of their name. Have them do the same for the name of Jesus.

## Materials:

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

## Materials:

Construction paper and markers.

## Student Discussion Questions:

1. How was Mary's question different from Zechariah's? (from yesterday)
2. How would you feel if God asked you to do something that would guarantee that you would lose all your friends and have your reputation ruined?
3. How does it make you feel to know that God is a God of Impossible things?

## Prayer:

Father, thank you for loving us so well that you didn't leave us in our sin and brokenness. We are so grateful that you had a plan and made a way for us to know you through Jesus.

## Christmas Carol:

Mary, Did You Know?

12/16

## Mary's Song

*Brian Wooffter*

Luke 1: 46-56



Nativity Piece:

*The Star*

In the text, we find the Lord's servant (Luke 1:38), Mary glorifying and rejoicing (vs. 46 & 47) in the things of God. Mary's response is one of genuine worship as she praised God for what He was about to do, and she was privileged to play her part in His plan. Through this text and Mary's example, we see the importance of surrender and obedience. She devoted herself completely to God and was motivated to worship.

Mary, even in her fear and questioning, surrendered in obedience to the will of God. Surrender and obedience go hand-in-hand. We cannot be obedient to the things of God, until we first have surrendered to Him. Obedience is the highest form of worship. Obedience to God is itself an act of worship. Mary is worshiping God by simply being obedient and surrendering to His plan for her life. By simply saying, "yes," Mary demonstrates a life of worship.

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

We still worship and serve the same God that called Mary to join Him in His ultimate plan of salvation. God is calling us all to join Him. 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.



## Preschool Activity:

Thank You God Game

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 says for what she would like to thank God. Continue the game until all family members have had several turns to say for what they are thankful. End the time together in prayer, thanking God for Jesus.

## Materials:

Beanbag or soft "nerf-type" ball

## Elementary Activity:

Praise the Lord

Have everyone sit in a circle. Tell them to tap out a rhythm as they say, "Up, down, all around!" Tap twice on the knees, then clap twice in time to the words. Have each person say one word for the phrase and continue. Once everyone has the rhythm, periodically sound the noisemaker. When the noisemaker sounds, someone has to give a reason to praise God. Continue until everyone has had a turn to praise God.

## Materials:

Any noisemaker

## Student 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. Who 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 simply surrender and say, "Yes."

## Christmas Carol:

Chris Tomlin "My Soul Magnifies the Lord"

12/17

## The Angel & Joseph

*Jason Stanland*

Matthew 1:18-25



## Nativity Piece:

*Joseph*

Imagine what it must have been like to be Joseph. Here is a good man, whose parents had helped him find a wonderful bride. He had plans of spending the rest of his life with this girl. Raising a family with this girl, and growing old with her. He had prepared his affairs, made all the proper investments for a wedding only to discover his beautiful bride-to-be was pregnant! In an instant, his world began to spin, and he did not know what to do.

One night an angel appeared to Joseph in his sleep. The angel explained his situation that God had in fact chosen Mary and him to be the parents of the Messiah. Joseph would have one of the greatest responsibilities of all time to be Dad to a little boy who would grow up to be the savior of the world! The angel actually quoted the prophet Isaiah, and told Joseph this baby would be Immanuel, which means "God with us!" Can you imagine what that would mean to parent Immanuel?

Still, this meant that Joseph would have to accept what the angel said and choose to obey God. He would have to sacrifice the happy joyous wedding he had been expecting. There was probably no wonderful ceremony. The couple probably had a quiet, private wedding avoiding the public eye. There was no celebrating with the family. There was no honey-moon. Joseph's life was completely derailed because Immanuel was coming to our world.

What I love about Joseph is that he was a righteous man. From the moment he found out about Mary, he decided to show her honor and care. This is the kind of man that God wanted to raise Immanuel. As soon as he woke up from his dream from the angel, Joseph determined to obey God and marry Immanuel's mother. He even waited for God's timing to enjoy his covenant with his bride, and when Immanuel was born, Joseph named him Jesus. The name Jesus means, "rescuer." Joseph now had the immense responsibility to raise the rescuer of humanity. This is the kind of man, God wanted to raise Immanuel.



## Preschool Activity:

### Sing a Song

To the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb," sing these words: "The angel came to see Joseph, see Joseph, see Joseph. The angel came to see Joseph, Mary's having a baby. Name the baby Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Name the baby Jesus."

## Elementary Activity:

### Family Discussion

Discuss how Joseph obeyed the angel. Talk with the children about what it means to obey. We need to listen to God's instructions and obey them. Play your own version of Simon Says.

## Student Discussion Questions:

1. How would you feel if God asked you to do something that wrecked your life and all your plans?
2. What does it mean to be a righteous person? What do they act like?
3. Student asks parent: Has God ever asked you do something that was uncomfortable or hard to obey? What was it?

## Prayer:

Jesus, help us to always choose obeying you over our own wants. Help us to love you and to believe that you are better than anything else in our lives.

## Christmas Carol:

O Come O Come Emmanuel

12/18

## Point to Jesus

*Joshua Glymph*

**Luke 1:57-80**



**Nativity Piece:**

*The Camel*

“What then shall this child be, for the hand of the Lord was with him.” In Luke 1:66, we see the question/statement asked: “There is something special about this child, what is it?” What was so special about John the Baptist? The bible teaches that John the Baptist was the one who would point to THE ONE - JESUS! The purpose of John the Baptist's life was not be somebody great, but to point to the only one who is great, Jesus!

In our world, it seems that many desire to be great. From athletics, to business, money, power, fame, education, etc... There is a great aim in our world to be great! While pursuing greatness may not be necessarily a bad thing, maybe the desire for greatness is really stirring something bigger inside of us. Maybe the desire for greatness and excellence is the desire to point to and find the only thing that is really great, Jesus! I heard it said once, ‘The role of a Christian is to be a nobody, who is pointing everybody towards somebody – JESUS!’ This is who John was, and who we are called to be - a bunch of nobodies, pointing everybody to the greatest somebody of all – JESUS!

In Luke 1, we see that John's parents gave him a different name than many expected. John was the name given by God through the angel Gabriel. The significance in the name John, was not what it was, but from whom the name was given. That every time someone said the name “John” aloud, they would remember all of what God had done. They would remember Zechariah and Elizabeth having a child in their old age and God's purpose for John's life - to point to Jesus!

Christmas should carry with it the same weight. That every time we say the word “Christmas,” it should remind us of Jesus and what he did on our behalf; so that, we could spend eternity with Him. This Christmas, I hope all the décor, meals, parties and activities can be a reminder of JESUS, pointing to JESUS, and reminding us of the hope we have in JESUS! Let us follow John's example and point to the greatest one of all, JESUS!!



## Preschool Activity:

Decorate a Name

Write, "HIS NAME IS JOHN" on the paper sack or construction paper. Guide your child to 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.

## Materials:

Paper sack or construction paper, markers, small tissue paper squares, and glue sticks.

## Elementary Activity:

Point to Jesus Game

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.

## Materials:

5 paper plates, marker, sock, and dried beans or uncooked rice.

## Student Discussion Questions

1. How are you/your families seeing Christmas as the opportunity to point to someone great? JESUS!
2. What are some ways you can intentionally point your families/ loved ones/church to Jesus this Christmas?
3. What are some ways you can intentionally point those who have never heard (are not Christians) towards Jesus this Christmas?

## Prayer:

Lord Jesus, help us to see opportunities to point others towards Jesus this Christmas, and give us the desire and courage to do so!

## Christmas Carol:

Go Tell It on the Mountain

12/19

## Jesus is Born

Ginna Ashby

Luke 2:1-7



## Nativity Piece:

Jesus

When one thinks of a royal birth, the birth of Prince George, the oldest son of Prince William and Kate, and the future king of England, comes to mind. George arrived with much anticipation and celebration. He was born in the finest hospital. People flocked to the hospital and the palace awaiting news of the birth. Photographers jockeyed for positions to take the first picture of this royal baby. Transportation to and from the hospital was in limousines with drivers and body guards. Access to the baby was tightly controlled.

The birth of Jesus, the King of Kings, lies in stark contrast to the birth of Prince George. Joseph and Mary had to travel ninety miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Transportation was by foot or perhaps a donkey. A camel, the finest transportation of the day, was not attainable or affordable for this young peasant couple.

Imagine how tired Joseph and Mary had to be by the time they arrived in Bethlehem. No one greeted them upon their arrival or had procured the finest lodging for this royal birth. Joseph could not even find a room at the inn. The only choice for the birth was a stable. When Mary gave birth to God's Son, she swaddled him in strips of cloth. Jesus' bed was a manger, an animal feeding trough.

The King of Kings was not born in a palace with great fanfare and luxury. There was no royal ceremony. Jesus' throne room was a stable. The crowds did not flock to see him. His visitors were lowly shepherds. God orchestrated a humble birth for the messianic King because Jesus came for all people, not just the influential and wealthy. He came for the poor and insignificant of this world also. We all have access to this King for our salvation.



## Preschool Activity:

Role Play

Dress up in robes and act out the Bible story. Wrap a baby doll in a blanket and use a box for a manger. If you have raffia (or shredded paper), place it in the box to represent the hay. After you have dressed up your family, read through the passage.

## Materials:

Bathrobes (towels if no robes), baby doll, blanket, box, raffia or shredded papers

## Elementary Activity:

Make Gifts

Have each member of your family wrap/unwrap their box; either competing against one another or a time. Talk about the gift of Jesus that God sent us.

## Materials:

small boxes, wrapping paper, ribbon, and tape

## Student Discussion Questions:

1. If you were a king (queen), how would you want people to treat you?
2. Why do you think God would let his son be born in a stable with the stinking animals?
3. How does this change your opinion about the type of king Jesus was?

## Prayer:

Thank You, God, for sending Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Help our family this Christmas focus on the best gift ever-JESUS.

## Christmas Carol:

Away in a Manger



12/20

## The Shepherds

Neil Muniz

Luke 2:8-20



Nativity Piece:

*Shepherds & Sheep*

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.



## Preschool Activity:

Make a Puzzle

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 is working the puzzle.

## Materials:

dark colored construction paper, small paintbrushes, teaspoon, cups, water, salt, and access to an oven.

Preheat the oven to 150 degrees. Mix a cup of water with 3 teaspoons of salt. Have children paint a Christmas scene telling the news of Jesus' birth using the water salt/mixture. Make sure they stir each time they dip their brush in the cup. Bake the finished scenes for 5 minutes or until the papers dry. The images will appear as sparkling crystals on the dark paper. Discuss while the paintings bake how the shepherds might have felt seeing the angels.

## Student Discussion Questions:

1. What repeating themes do you find in this story? Why are they important?
2. What truth 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

12/21

## Jesus Dedicated

*Meghan Roy*

**Luke 2:21-38**



## Nativity Piece:

*Turtle Doves*

When Jesus was 40 days old, his parents brought him to the temple to be dedicated. This was a normal Jewish practice. Presenting baby Jesus at the temple revealed he belonged to God and that Mary and Joseph intended to raise Jesus in a home where God was the boss! Mary and Joseph brought with them two turtle doves to offer as a sacrifice, according to Jewish tradition. Even though Jesus was so young, God was already at work letting people know that this was no ordinary baby. The Holy Spirit revealed to a righteous man named Simeon and a prophetess named Anna that Jesus would grow up to be the Messiah, God's chosen one who would save the world. The name Jesus' means, "God saves," and it tells us that Jesus had come as a savior for all people, Jew and Gentile. Mary and Joseph knew that Jesus would be the Messiah, and they had told only a few others. They must have been amazed when Simeon, a perfect stranger, took baby Jesus in his arms and praised God for sending Jesus to save the world. The bible tells us that Mary and Joseph marveled at Simeon's words. How did Simeon know that Jesus was such a special baby? Surely it must have been comforting for Mary and Joseph to see another person recognize Jesus as the savior. When Simeon, moved by the Holy Spirit, affirmed that Jesus would become salvation for all people, he also confirmed to Mary and Joseph that they were following the path that God had for them and living according to his commands.

Both Simeon and Anna were patiently waiting to see the Messiah. Can you imagine their excitement, when they saw the baby with their own eyes? Can you imagine Simeon's excitement when he held the one who would save him from his sins? We too can be excited for what God has done and is going to do. Praise God for sending baby Jesus to save the world!



## Preschool Activity:

### Looking at Pictures

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.

## Materials:

3 round coffee filters, clothespin, glue, marker, & scissors.

Fold one filter into quarters for the tail of the dove, then glue it to clothespin. Fold the second filter into eighths for the head of the dove. Use the marker to draw eyes and color the tip for the beak. Glue the second filter to the first filter. Fold the last filter in half with glue between the folds. Glue wings over the top of the clothespin to form the wings. Once dry, clip it to your tree.

## Student Discussion Questions:

1. How did Mary and Joseph's dedication of Jesus set an example for parents today?
2. God chose to reveal to Simeon and Anna that Jesus was the Messiah. Why do you think God chose them specifically?
3. What do you think Simeon meant when he told Mary that, "a sword will pierce through your own soul" in verse 35?

## Prayer:

Dear God, thank you so much for sending Jesus to save the whole world. Thank you for giving Jesus earthly parents who loved him and wanted to obey your plan for their life.

## Christmas Carol:

O, Come All Ye Faithful

12/22

## The Wisemen

*Melissa Goodman*

**Matthew 2:1-14**



## Nativity Piece:

*The Wise men*

When we think about the wise men or Magi and their visit with Jesus, we immediately think about the gifts that they brought, the distance they traveled, or that they followed a star. All of these are facts, but do we give much thought to everything they gave?

The Magi, the wise men from the east, were scholars, prominent political and religious figures in their land. They trusted God's direction, not King Herod's. Despite their pagan background and influence in their land, they recognized and worshipped the Christ child for who he is. The journey to see Jesus would have taken a long time, and they would have sacrificed much to come see Jesus. We know that Jesus at that time may have been as old as two years because of what Herod did. For the last two years, the magi had devoted their lives to finding Jesus. Think about the research, the financing, and preparations that went into finding baby Jesus.

Upon seeing the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. When they saw the Christ child, they fell to their knees and worshiped Him. They brought gifts that were expensive and generous; they gave gifts of gold and spices. Some think that the gifts hold symbolic meanings. The gift of gold speaks of Jesus' deity or purity. Frankincense represents the fragrance of the Messiah's life. Myrrh represented Christ's death on the cross. These expensive gifts were not all they gave. They gave their time and energy and devotion to the baby Jesus, the newborn King of the Jews. They traveled hundreds of miles from their home to find Jesus and worship Him.

The Magi may not have known the events that would occur in Jesus' life on earth, but they knew Jesus was going to be an important figure in history. They gave Jesus everything they had - time, energy, gifts, worship and love. We should give Jesus those same gifts - not just at Christmas, but every day of the year.



## Preschool Activity:

Stargazing

At nighttime, place a blanket on your lawn. As a family, lie down on the blanket and look at the stars. Talk about how the wisemen followed a star to find Jesus. (If the weather is bad, use an app for looking at stars).

## Materials:

Blanket

## Elementary Activity:

Finding Jesus

Make paper stars, number them and place them in different places around the house. Place your last star over a closet/cabinet door. Have a Nativity or manger with baby Jesus inside of the closet/cabinet. Dim the lights in the house. Use a flashlight to locate each star in number order, ending at the star over the closet/cabinet. Once you arrive at the last star, open the door revealing the baby Jesus. Discuss how the Magi followed the star that God sent to help them find the Christ child.

## Student Discussion Questions:

1. What might you have to sacrifice for following Jesus?
2. How might we devote out time to seeking out Jesus like the magi?
3. Think about the gifts that the magi gave Jesus. What gift could you give Jesus?

## Prayer:

Lord, help us to be like the Magi, who gave everything they had. Help us to give of ourselves, with our time, energy, worship and love.

## Christmas Carol:

We Three Kings



12/23

## John The Baptist

*Jonathan Wilson*

**John 1:19-28**

**Matthew 3:1-6**



## Nativity Piece:

*The Road to the Nativity*

The first thing that comes to mind when I think about John the Baptist is that he prepared the way for Jesus. The second thing that comes to mind is the kid in school who called me Jonathan the Baptist one day. I didn't take offense to it, after all, my name is Jonathan and I am Baptist, but let's get back to that preparation John was making. Four hundred years had passed since anyone had heard a prophet of God speak - enter John the Baptizer. With his camel 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. He was one who had been placed by God to put the arrival of Jesus and his ministry 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. Scripture tells us that Jesus' mother and John's mother were related (Luke 1:36). Both Mary and Elizabeth had amazing pregnancy stories as Elizabeth had a barren womb (Luke 1:7) and Mary was a virgin. Obviously, Mary and Elizabeth had a close relationship as the Bible records Mary visiting Elizabeth when Elizabeth was pregnant (Luke 1:39-40). John was six months older than Jesus, and in Matthew 14:12-13 we see that Jesus grieved when John died. 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." Repentance was front and center in the ministries of John and Jesus. The word "repent" (metanoeo) means "to change the mind". John's message pointed to the road, the path, the way to heaven. We're one day closer to celebrating the birth of Jesus! Have you prepared the way for Him to be Lord of your life?



## Preschool Activity:

Make a Paper Megaphone

Trace the outline of the paper plate on the paper. Cut out the circle and decorate the center of the circle with markers and stickers. Roll the paper into a cone shape and secure the cone with the tape. As John told people about Jesus, the children can use their megaphones to tell everyone about Jesus.

## Materials:

Construction Paper, paper plate, washable markers, Christian Christmas stickers, scissors, and tape.

## Elementary Activity:

Make paper hearts and markers.

Discuss with the children about how John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. How can we prepare the way for Jesus in our lives? How can we prepare our hearts for Jesus? Have the children write some of their thoughts onto the hearts and then string them together with a string like a garland.

## Student Discussion Questions:

1. What was the relationship between John and Jesus?
2. What was John's main message?
3. Why do you think John was speaking this message? What does that message mean for us today?
4. Who is someone that has encouraged you to prepare the way for Jesus in your life?

## Prayer:

God, thank you for sending people to help us prepare the way for you in our lives. May we also help others know that only faith in Jesus brings the love and hope to their search.

## Christmas Carol:

Joy To The World

12/24

## Behold The Lamb

*Jason Stanland*

**Isaiah 9:6**



**Nativity Piece:**

*Use The Activity*

*Ages 0-10*

A child was given, and his name was Jesus. It is important for us to stop and remember that God gave us Jesus. We did not ask for God to become a human. That idea would have never entered our minds. Moreover, we did not even know that we needed a savior. Only because of God's love and grace do any of us know that we are in sin and need salvation. So, God gave us a savior. He was not the savior we were expecting, but he is the savior we needed.

As the wonderful counselor, Jesus would have all wisdom and knowledge. Jesus always knows what is the right thing to do. There is nothing that Jesus does not know. Furthermore, Jesus even guides us to be wise. Without Jesus, we are selfish and petty. With Jesus, we are selfless and generous to others. His counsel changes our anger to joy. His counsel changes our mourning to gladness.

He does this because he is the Mighty God. Can you imagine what it was like to hear that a baby would be born with the name "Mighty God?" How could this be? All the power and might would be in a tiny, frail baby. Babies are not strong or mighty, but this baby was God. There was nothing that Jesus could not do.

This next one is confusing! This baby would be the Eternal Father! How can a baby be a father? To be an eternal father, means that he is father to all! However, this is what John 1:1-3 says. Jesus who was born a baby has always existed, and he is the perfect father. He loves us and protects us like a dad should. Even more than an earthly dad could love his children, Jesus loves us more! There is no one that Jesus cannot love.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Many times, we do not think of Jesus in these terms, because many Christians face many hardships by choosing to follow Jesus. However, Jesus is the Prince of Peace. When everyone comes in contact with Jesus and his love for others, there is an end to fighting. There is no fight that Jesus does not end.



## Preschool and Elementary Activity:

### Make a Garland

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.

### Materials:

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

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.

### Prayer:

God, thank you for giving us Jesus! We do not deserve your forgiveness, but thank you for sending Jesus to rescue us from our sin!

### Christmas Carol:

Behold the Lamb by Passion

12/24

## Behold The Lamb

*Tim Maynard*

**John 1:29-34**



**Nativity Piece:**

**A Cross**

**Ages 11+**

Our last picture of Christmas is one that contains the entire story of the Gospel in it: It is the picture of a cross. Not a complicated symbol but one that shows the reality of what Christmas is about.

We have changed the meaning of Christmas to be about the gifts we get from each other - brightly wrapped and laid around your tree tonight - and yet these gifts should point us to a far greater gift that was given: The gift of Jesus Christ, who gave himself on the cross for us!

The Bible tells us that Jesus was "the (sacrificial) lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world." Historians tell us the Jews kept sheep on the hillsides of Bethlehem for a special purpose. The sheep and lambs that "baaaa'd" their way through the night were destined to go to Jerusalem... and be sacrificed by the Jewish priest.

This sacrifice showed the need for our sins to be covered, and for thousands of years, they used lambs as God instructed. God was pointing them to the greatest lamb of all: The Lamb of God who came to earth to willingly be a substitute for our sins and the sins of the world. Jesus' cousin, John, pointed to Jesus and proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!"

That is what Jesus came to do! When he willingly went to the cross for us, our sins were covered and God's anger at our sin was taken away. Once and for all, he absorbed all the bad things we have ever done, and paid the price for those sins with his own body. The Lamb of God died for you!

So as you open presents on this Christmas Day, remember the greatest gift you were given is not hidden under the Christmas tree, but hidden by the blood of the Lamb. It is the greatest gift you will ever receive, and your Heavenly Father gave it to you freely. He gave no great gift! No more important gift can ever be received!

**May you have an amazing Christmas.**



## Preschool and Elementary Activity:

Due to the content of the slain lamb symbolizing the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, we wanted to provide another activity for the children for today. These topics are often difficult for children to grasp. However, please feel free to guide today's discussion as you deem appropriate for your children.

## Student Discussion Questions:

1. What is your favorite Christmas gift you have ever received?
2. Have you ever gotten a gift and forgotten to open it? Did you leave it unwrapped under the tree?
3. What if we never received the gift of Jesus' forgiveness into our lives? How do people not received Jesus?
4. Why does it feel awkward to celebrate the cross at Christmas? Should we?

## Prayer:

God, thank you for giving us Jesus! We do not deserve your forgiveness, but thank you for sending Jesus to rescue us from our sin!

## Christmas Carol:

Behold the Lamb by Passion





# Christmas at **Fruit Cove**

Thank you for participating in our 12 days of Christmas family devotion. We hope that you have a wonderful Christmas this year celebrating Jesus as a family.

Preschool activities by Ginna Ashby and Meghan Roy

Elementary activities by Melissa Goodman

Edited by Jason Stanland





12 Days of  
*Christmas*



**A FAMILY CHRISTMAS DEVOTION**







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