



# **The Cross & The Manger**

**A 25 Day Christmas  
Devotional For Families**

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*The Cross & The Manger: A 25 Day Christmas Devotional  
For Families*

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“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

-Proverbs 22:6-

# Introduction

## *Why do we need this devotional?*

That's a great question! The Christmas season is one of my favorite times of the year. I love the smell of Christmas trees and the sounds of Christmas music. I love, even more, the time we get to spend with family and friends. But, we celebrate Christmas primarily because of a person...and his name is Jesus. He is the reason for the season!

My fear is that often we lose sight of the true reason for our celebration in the midst of a culture that celebrates everything but our Savior. Even worse, this lack of focus on Jesus has crept into the church. This should not be the case. I have put this devotional together for you to use as a tool to help focus your family's attention on Jesus, the baby born in Bethlehem and the Savior of our souls.

## *How should you use this devotional?*

This devotional should be used every day from December 1<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>. Each day has a specific text of Scripture that should be read, followed by some devotional thoughts. There are also questions following the devotional thoughts that can be used to help instill the truths from the text of Scripture. Finally, at the end of each week is family action plan that will help your family do some practical things to help focus attention on Jesus during this season.

Merry Christmas!  
Michael

## **December 1: “Before Creation”**

### ***Revelation 13:8***

Have you ever wondered what was going on before God created the world and everything in it? The verse we read gives us a little glimpse of what was taking place. You see God knew that he was going to create the world and that a problem would come up very quickly after he created the first human beings, Adam and Eve. Even though they would enjoy walking with God in the cool of the day, he knew that they would soon be tempted by the serpent and choose to sin instead of obeying him.

God knew all of this before he created the world because God knows everything, even before it happens. Did you know that God knows what you are going to eat tomorrow before you eat it? Since God knows everything, he knew that his greatest creation, Adam and Eve, would need someone to rescue them from this disobedience, from this sin.

Revelation 13:8 shows us that God was planning, even before he created the world and everything in it, to send someone to rescue his people. This rescuer would come and enable us, once again, to walk with God. He would pay the debt of sin and make it possible for us to have our names written in the Lamb’s book of life. This is an exciting story and it began a long, long time ago.

***Why do we need someone to rescue us?***

***Who do you think this rescuer will be?***

## **December 2: “Creation”**

### ***Genesis 1:1-31***

Isn't it cool to think that God spoke all of creation into existence! He said “sun” and the sun jumped into the sky. He said “tree” and trees popped up from the ground. He said “lion” and a huge lion appeared with a loud roar. God not only created all of the animals and plants and stars; he also created the first man and woman. In fact, they were so special that God personally made them and breathed the breath of life into them. After creating them, he said his creation was very good.

Have you every wondered why God created you? He made you for a very special purpose! The Bible says that God created us in his image. There is a special reason why he created us this way. His desire is that we have a relationship with him and reflect him and his glory in the world wherever we go. Just like a mirror reflects light, we are to reflect God's love to the people around us.

God loved Adam and Eve so much that he came down to earth to walk with them and talk with them. He told them that he was their Creator and that he wanted them to love him and obey him. He even provided food for them and a wonderful place to live and work. They lived in true paradise and in right relationship with God.

***How much do you think God loves you?***

***Do you know that God wants to have a personal relationship with you?***

## **December 3: “The Fall”**

### ***Genesis 3:1-24***

Adam and Eve walked with God and enjoyed his presence in the Garden of Eden. Life was perfect! But, when we read through Genesis 3 we realize that something happened that was terrible. God told Adam and Eve they could eat from every tree in the garden except the one in the middle of the garden and if they disobeyed him, they would die. You would have thought that they would have avoided that tree altogether but they chose to listen to the serpent and disobey God.

This must have broken God’s heart! Anytime a person sins, it breaks God’s heart. So what did God do after Adam and Eve sinned? Did he get mad? No. Did he tell them he would never talk to them again? No. In fact, God came to find them. He wanted to walk with them like he had before. There was a problem, though. Adam and Eve tried to hide from God. But, God saw them and knew they had disobeyed him.

Instead of fussing at them and getting mad, God made it possible for them to have a relationship with him. He sacrificed an animal and covered their sin. This was just a small glimpse of what was to come. Later, God would send his Son to cover our sins with his own blood.

***What is sin? Why does sin separate us from God?***

***What makes it possible for sinners to have a relationship with God?***

## **December 4: “The Promise”**

### ***Genesis 3:15***

Has someone ever made you a promise that they were going to do something? They may have told you that they were going to buy you a gift or invite you to a birthday party. Did they follow through with what they promised? Promises are only as good as the person making the promise because promises are good only when they are kept.

I’m not sure if you recognized it yesterday but in Genesis 3:15, God made a specific promise. He told the serpent that one day a man would be born who would crush the head of the serpent even as the serpent struck his heel. The serpent had convinced Adam and Eve that God was not being fair. He told them that God was holding back good things from them. They bought the lie and chose to disobey God instead of trusting in his goodness.

Even though Adam and Eve failed to trust God’s goodness, he still promised that he would demonstrate his goodness once again. He promised that he would make it possible for his people to have a personal relationship with him once again. The man who would crush the head of the serpent would also save people from their sins. He would experience intense suffering (“strike his heel”) but he would triumph over evil!

***Why is it important for God to keep His promises?***

***Do you believe that Jesus was the fulfillment of God’s promise...the one who would crush evil?***



## **December 5: “God’s Covenant With Abraham”**

### ***Genesis 12:1-3***

Could you ever imagine God telling you to pack up everything you have, all your toys and clothes, and move to a place you have never been? That is exactly what God did to a man named Abraham. But, God made a promise to him and this promise was amazing.

God promised Abraham that he was going to protect him and make him into a great nation. He told Abraham that every person on the earth would be blessed because of Abraham’s obedience. In fact, the Bible tells us in Hebrews 11:8-12 that Abraham obeyed God because he believed God was going to keep his promise. Abraham was looking beyond his circumstances and the difficulty of having to move. He recognized that God was going to use him to fulfill a promise God had already made, the one we read about yesterday in Genesis 3:15.

So what happened? Abraham moved just like God told him. He obeyed God and we find out later in the Bible that Abraham was actually one of Jesus’ distant relatives. Because of Abraham’s obedience, millions of people have trusted in Jesus Christ for their salvation. They have experienced the greatest blessing the world has ever known.

***Why should we respond to God in obedience?***

***Do you realize that you are blessed because of Abraham’s obedience?***

## **December 6: “A Covenant Forever”**

### ***Genesis 17:15-21***

Yesterday we saw Abraham respond to God in obedience when God told him to move to a new place. You see, God wanted to use Abraham and even made a promise to bless Abraham and all the nations of the earth through him. But, there was one really, really big problem! Abraham did not have any children with his wife Sarah. How could he be the father of many nations when he and Sarah did not have any children?

We must remember that what we see as problems for us are simply opportunities for God. Whenever we think there is no way for God to work, we must remember his promises. God had already promised to make Abraham into a great nation even though Abraham could not understand how this could happen. He even laughed at God because he believed he and Sarah were too old to have children – Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 90!

Even with Abraham and Sarah’s doubt, God knew what he was going to do. He was going to bless Abraham and Sarah with a child and make a forever promise with this child. Through Isaac, God wanted to accomplish a magnificent plan. It would take many years to happen but ultimately, Jesus would be the fulfillment of this forever promise.

***How long is forever?***

***How does Jesus fulfill this forever promise made to Abraham?***

## **December 7: “The Royal Tribe”**

### ***Genesis 50:1-10***

Have you ever wanted to be a king or queen? Wouldn't it be neat to get to wear a crown and have servants take care of everything you could ever need? The verses we covered yesterday focused on a man named Isaac (Abraham and Sarah's son) and the forever promise God made to him. Remember, He promised that Isaac's children would become a great nation and God would be with them. In our verses today, we are introduced to one of Isaac's sons named Jacob.

Jacob had 12 sons and they were going to be very important in God's plan. In fact, he was going to use one of Jacob's sons, Judah, in a very special way – Judah's family was going to be a royal family. The amazing thing is that God's promised that this royal family would be in power for all eternity! God promised that a king would come from Judah's family and he would sit on the throne forever. At the end of Jacob's life, he blessed his sons and told them how important Judah and his family would be in God's plan.

As we continue to read the Bible, we find out that Jesus came from the family of Judah. He is the royal ruler that reigns forever. He is the king who sits on the throne for all eternity!

***Do you want God to bless you and use you?***

***If Jesus is the king forever, how should we respond to Him?***

## **Week 1: Family Action Plan**

### ***“Jesus Tree”***

Most of us are familiar with Christmas trees. In fact, I would imagine you have one set up in your house right now. It is probably decorated with shiny ornaments and may even have beautifully wrapped presents sitting underneath. Often, the Christmas tree serves as the centerpiece for our holiday celebration.

I want to encourage you to add something to your Christmas decorations this year. We will call it a “Jesus Tree.” Since he is the reason for the season, I think it would be a great thing to decorate a tree with reminders of his life, death, and resurrection. Feel free to use a miniature Christmas tree or even a small branch from a tree in your yard. Take some time to decorate this tree with your family. Include ornaments that remind you and your family about Jesus.

You may choose to use a small cross to remind you of his death. Feel free to craft a miniature manger out of popsicle sticks to remind you of his birth. Your kids may want to make a heart out of construction paper to help remind them that Jesus lives within their heart. The goal of this project is to help focus your attention on Jesus during this season. Put the tree in a prominent place in your house and take some time to talk through the various ornaments as you hang them on the tree.

**Above all, make sure this is a fun time for your family!**

## **December 8: “God’s Covenant With David”**

### ***2 Samuel 7:12-17***

Over the past several days we have seen quite a few promises that God made with different people. He promised that Abraham would be the father of many nations. He promised that Abraham would have a son and God would bless the entire world through this son, Isaac. We also saw God, through the words of Jacob, promise that a king would come from Judah’s family and he would reign for all eternity.

The promises do not stop there, though! In the verses we read today, we saw God make another promise. The prophet Nathan told King David this promise. The immediate fulfillment of this promise can be found in David’s son Solomon. But, the ultimate fulfillment of this promise would not occur until much later. You see, this promise was very similar to the promise made concerning the royal family of Judah. A king would come from Judah and David’s family and this king would reign for all eternity.

Do you remember who this forever King would be? Yes...Jesus. The baby born in Bethlehem on Christmas Day is the Son of God who died on the cross to pay our debt of sin; the one who was raised to life and now reigns in heaven for all eternity.

***Why do you think God kept making promises about the king who would come?***

***Are you glad that God kept his promise?***

## **December 9: “The Lord’s Anointed”**

### ***Psalm 2:1-12***

The book of Psalms is a wonderful book in the Bible. It contains songs written by various men in the Bible including King David. Some of the songs declare God’s goodness while others describe times of difficulty and trial. Psalm 2 is quite unique. This song is about the rise and reign of a king.

The king described in Psalm 2 is thrust into a cosmic battle. Many on the earth reject his rule and reign. They do not want to submit to his authority. But, it is very clear that this is not an option. You see, the Psalmist declares that this uprising is hilarious to God. In fact, God sits in heaven and laughs at those who plot against His king.

Who is this king? Well, we must remember the promises God has been making so far in the Bible. He has promised to bless all the peoples of the earth through Abraham. He has said that a forever kingdom would be established with Judah and his descendents. The prophet Nathan gave this same promise to David.

This forever king’s name is Jesus. He is the Son of God and the fulfillment of God’s promises. He will rule and reign forever and those who take refuge in Him will be blessed!

***Why do you think people would not want to submit to Jesus’ authority?***

***What does it mean to take refuge in Him?***

## **December 10: “A Throne Forever”**

### ***Psalm 45:1-17***

Yesterday, we looked at Psalm 2 and how it is ultimately fulfilled in the person of Jesus. The verses in Psalm 45 also find their fulfillment in him. Once again, we read about a kingdom that will last for all eternity and a throne that will be around forever and ever. The beauty of this king’s reign is that it will be in perfect righteousness. Justice will be accomplished and peace will be present.

The Psalmist concluded this song with great news. The name of the king who will sit on this throne will be remembered in every generation. There will never be a time when Jesus’ name is not known on the earth. The news gets even better – he will be praised forever and ever. Can you imagine being praised forever...every second of every day? This is hard to imagine! But, the Psalmist tells us that Jesus’ name will be praised for the rest of eternity.

The Bible says that Jesus, after he died on the cross and was raised from the dead, went up into heaven and sat down on the throne beside his father. He is there now and He is praying for us. We must never forget that the baby born in Bethlehem is also our Savior. He is lifting us up in prayer and the day is coming when we will be with him and have the privilege of praising Him forever and ever!

***What does it mean for Jesus’ throne to be established forever and ever?***

***Are you praising Jesus today? How?***

# **December 11: “God’s Forever King”**

## ***Isaiah 9:1-7***

The book of Isaiah is one of the best books in the Bible to read if you want to know more about Jesus. It was written a long time before Jesus was born but describes a lot of details about his life.

The verses we read today focus on the birth of a baby. This was not just any baby though. There are some amazing things this text says about this baby. It says that the entire government of the world will rest on his shoulders. He will be in charge of everything and everyone will submit, ultimately, to his authority. There are several things that the Bible says he will be called...the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Wow! What an amazing list of names to be called! This must be a special baby.

There are some other things that Isaiah says will be true about this baby. He will sit on the throne of David and his peace, power, and authority will increase. In fact, he will reign forever with justice and with righteousness. As we get ready to celebrate Christmas this year, we need to recognize that the baby born in Bethlehem is the baby described here in the book of Isaiah. Jesus is this forever king and we can be sure that everything we read tonight will be true one day soon – he will reign forever.

***What do the names in this passage say about who Jesus is and what he will accomplish?***

***Why is it important for Jesus to bring peace?***



## **December 12: “The Cornerstone”**

***Isaiah 28:14-17***

Have you ever heard of a cornerstone? We don't use them much today but in days gone by they were very important building materials. You see, before we had concrete blocks, builders would use stones to lay the foundation for any type of building. The most important stone they looked for was the cornerstone. This stone would be a huge stone that was the perfect shape and size. It would be the first one they laid down and would serve as the most important piece of the foundation of the building. Without the cornerstone, you would have no building!

Isaiah spoke of God laying down a tested and true cornerstone in Zion. He said that this cornerstone would be precious and serve as a true foundation. In 1 Peter 2:4-8, we see that these verses are used to describe Jesus. Peter said that Jesus is the chief cornerstone and we, as Christians, are smaller stones being laid on Jesus. When we trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are building our lives on him. He is a sure foundation. Peter said that we are being built into a spiritual house - God is using us in the world to make an impact for his eternal kingdom. Unless we build our lives on Jesus, we will never have a solid foundation.

***Why do you think cornerstones were so important to builders?***

***What does it mean for Jesus to be called the “chief cornerstone?”***

## **December 13: “The Works Of The Savior”**

### ***Isaiah 35:1-10***

Over the past several days we have seen how God made a bunch of promises about the Savior that he planned to send into the world. Don't forget, we needed a Savior because we are sinners. The Bible says that this Savior would be a king and his kingdom would be established forever. We know that Jesus, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas, is this king. The verses we read today describe some of the things that Jesus, our Savior, would do.

Isaiah promised that this Savior would open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, loose the tongue of the mute, and heal those who were lame. As we read further in the Bible, we see that Jesus did these very things. In fact, he did many miraculous things during his ministry here on the earth.

Isaiah does not stop there, though. He said that this Savior would do more than just heal people. Those he saves will have everlasting joy and will never be sad or burdened ever again. For all who are saved, there will be a day when we will no longer experience pain or sadness. We will experience true joy and happiness in Jesus' presence forever.

***Can you name some of the miracles in the Bible that Jesus performed?***

***Are you looking forward to everlasting joy?***

# **December 14: “The Day When Justice Will Be Restored”**

## ***Isaiah 42:1-4***

Have you ever had something bad happen to you? It could be that someone said something that was mean or didn't treat you very nicely. How did that make you feel? One of the things that we find out in the Bible is that people are not always nice and they don't always do the right thing. Have you ever said mean things or treated someone badly? The Bible says that this is called sin.

One of the other promises Isaiah made about the Savior to come (Jesus) is that he would restore justice to the world. “Justice” is a big fancy word that basically means making things right. It means that when people do bad things, they are punished. Have you ever been punished for doing something wrong? If so, your parents were simply demonstrating justice.

Part of God's plan in sending Jesus to the world was to restore justice. In fact, when Jesus died on the cross he freely accepted God's punishment for our sin. Jesus was completely perfect but he took our sins with him to the cross and paid for them. Through his sacrifice, we now have the ability to have a right relationship with God. Isaiah's promise is that Jesus would restore justice on the earth.

***Why do we need justice to be restored on the earth?***

***Have you trusted in Jesus as your Savior?***

## **Week 2: Family Action Plan**

### ***“The Big Give”***

If you ask most of our kids about Christmas, I would be willing to guess that most of them are primarily focused on the gifts that they will receive. After all, turn on your TV to any channel and you will see countless ads promoting the best and shiniest toys available this time of year. These toys and gadgets capture the attention and focus of our kids (and even us) so much that they become the entire focus of Christmas.

I want to challenge you to take some time to focus on giving during this season. One of the things we do each year, as a family, is take time to give to others that are in need. Most of the time we use the Samaritan’s Purse catalog (<http://www.samaritanspurse.org/our-ministry/gift-catalog/>), sit down together as a family, and pick out things to send around the world. We discuss the needs of those in third-world countries and how many of them lack the basics that they need to live. As Americans, we live in the top 1% as compared to those around the world. We are blessed and the fact that we can buy toys at Christmas demonstrates this fact.

You don’t have to use this specific catalog that we use but figure out a way that you, as a family, can generously give to those in need this time of year. You may want to give to a family in need or to a local ministry that impacts others for Christ. Wherever you choose to give, focus your children’s attention on meeting these needs as a way to get the gospel of Jesus Christ (the reason for the season) to people who have not heard.

**Above all, make sure this is a fun time for your family!**

## **December 15: “The Coming Salvation”**

### ***Isaiah 52:1-12***

We have talked about the fact that we, as sinners, need someone to save us. We need salvation! As soon as Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God promised that he would send someone to save people from their sins – to offer salvation.

The verses we read today talk about that precious salvation. You see, God’s people were experiencing difficult times as they suffered in captivity but he told them that he had good news for them. Have you ever had a bad day and needed someone to share some good news with you? God’s good news was that he was going to save the people. He was planning to redeem them and this good news needed to be proclaimed!

Paul, in Romans 10:13-15, used these same verses to talk about people who share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ with others. We need to tell people, who are trapped in their sin, that Jesus has come to save them and he freely offers the gift of salvation to them.

Isaiah, looking forward to the day Jesus would be born, made it a point to let the people know that God was going to keep His promise. He would send someone to offer salvation to the people.

***Why do we need to be saved from our sins?***

***If you have experienced this salvation are you quick to share this good news with others?***

## **December 16: “The Suffering Servant”**

### ***Isaiah 52:13-53:12***

Yesterday, we talked about God fulfilling His promise to send a Savior to save people from their sin. The verses we read tonight focus on exactly how this Savior would make salvation possible. He would suffer and ultimately lay down his life to provide salvation for all who would trust in him.

Isaiah told us that Jesus grew up as a normal child. He was not extraordinary in the way he looked but he was quite unique. He did not disobey his parents...ever. Can you imagine going throughout your entire life always obeying your parents? In fact, the Bible says Jesus was absolutely perfect. This is important because Isaiah told us that this Savior would take on our sin and pay the penalty that our sin deserved.

The Bible tells us that the only way sin can be covered is that innocent blood must be shed. In the Old Testament, the children of Israel would offer perfect animals as sacrifices to cover their sins. Isaiah, in these verses, lets us know that this perfect Savior’s blood would be shed to cover our sins. He would take on our sin, bear the wrath of God’s judgment against our sin, and offer salvation to us. This is the only way that we can have a right relationship with God!

***Why do you think Jesus had to suffer to pay for our sin?***

***Why did Jesus need to be perfect to pay for our sin?***

## **December 17: “The New Covenant”**

### ***Jeremiah 31:31-34***

We have seen God make several promises in the Old Testament. He promised Adam and Eve that He would send someone to crush Satan and bring salvation. He promised to make Abraham into a great nation. He promised David that a king would come from his family and this king would reign forever. Jeremiah recorded another promise for us in the verses that we read tonight.

This promise is extremely important because it gives us a glimpse of God’s plan to save sinners. Jeremiah told us of a “new covenant” or new promise that God would make with his people. Even though they did not follow his commands, he promised that this new covenant would be different. He would write his law on their hearts and he would take the people as his very own. Instead of expecting them to be good enough to earn their salvation, he would make it possible for them to have a relationship with him through his Son.

One of the most important parts of this promise, given by God, is that he promised to forgive people’s sins and remember them no more. This is exactly what Jesus’ death on the cross accomplished for all who place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation.

***Can we ever be good enough to earn salvation?***

***What happens to our sin when we trust in Jesus Christ?***

# **December 18: “The Messenger And The Savior”**

## ***Malachi 3:1-4***

This week we come to a passage of Scripture from the last book of the Old Testament...the book of Malachi. God spoke to the prophet Malachi about 400 years before Jesus was born. In the same way that God made promises about the coming Savior in other books, he did the same thing in the book of Malachi.

The first promise we see, in the verses we read tonight, focused on a messenger that would come to prepare the way for the Savior. As we will see in the New Testament, this messenger that prepared the way for Jesus was named John the Baptist. He was used by God in an amazing way and had the privilege of preparing the people for Jesus' coming. He also baptized Jesus and let everyone know that Jesus would fulfill all of God's promises.

Malachi also told us more details about this promise made by God. He let us know that the messenger (John the Baptist) would prepare the way for someone who would fulfill the new covenant that we talked about yesterday. This man, Jesus, would come to God's temple and cleanse and purify the people. He would declare that true righteousness before God could only be found in Him. For Malachi this is Good News!

***Who did God send to prepare the way for Jesus to come?***

***Where can we find true righteousness?***



## **December 19: “The Promised Prophet”**

### ***Luke 1:5-25***

Prophets were very important throughout the Old Testament. Their responsibility was to speak for God to his people and remind them to follow Him. Yesterday, we saw God speak through his prophet Malachi and tell him that a special messenger was going to come and prepare the way for the Savior. As we read our verses today, we see this actually taking place.

We are introduced to an older couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth. The Bible says that they obeyed God and kept his commandments – they were a righteous couple. Up until this point, Zechariah and Elizabeth did not have any children and since they were old, it is assumed that they will never have them.

One day Zechariah, who was serving in the temple as a priest, had the responsibility to burn incense to God. During this time an angel appeared and told him that he and Elizabeth would have a son. This son would be named John and he would serve a very special purpose in God’s plan. In fact, he would be a prophet and prepare the way for the Savior to come into the world. Even though Zechariah struggled to understand how God would make this happen, God promised that Elizabeth would have a child and he would be used in a mighty way!

***What happened to Zechariah when he doubted?***

***Why should we trust God when he makes a promise?***

## **December 20: “The Promised Savior”**

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

Yesterday, we focused on God’s promise to send John to prepare the way for the Savior. Our verses today focus on God’s promise to send the Savior. Don’t forget that this is just one of the many promises we have seen God make concerning the Savior that he planned to send. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, God had been working and planning to send a Savior to save his people from their sin.

Once again, God used an angel to deliver this promise to a young lady named Mary. The news she received was wonderful and also a bit scary. You see, Mary did not have a husband and yet the angel promised that she was going to have a baby. This was not just any baby though; this baby was going to be the Savior. He would sit on the throne of David forever and there would be no end to his kingdom.

If you remember, the promises made concerning the Savior in these verses were also made throughout the Old Testament. Mary’s son, who would be named Jesus, would fulfill all of these promises. Mary did not understand how all of this would take place but she trusted that God would fulfill his promise.

***How do the promises we covered in the Old Testament compare to those in these verses?***

***What was Mary’s response to this promise?***

## **December 21: “Mary Visits Elizabeth”**

### ***Luke 1:39-45***

As we continue in the story of Jesus’ birth we see a meeting between Mary (the mother of Jesus) and Elizabeth (the mother of John). These ladies were cousins and I have no doubt that one of the biggest reasons they met together was that both of them were pregnant with boys. The Bible says that Mary journeyed to the town of Judah, which was where Zechariah and Elizabeth lived.

What happened next was simply amazing! As Mary entered the house, she greeted those who were there. This is the same thing that most of us do when we go to someone’s house to visit. There was not anything unique or special about what she said but what happened when she said it was extraordinary. Luke told us that as soon as Mary spoke, John did a summersault in Elizabeth’s tummy. Babies kick and move around all the time in their mommies tummies but this was different.

Elizabeth said something very important about Mary and her baby right after this encounter. She said that Mary was blessed more than any other woman because she was carrying, in her tummy, the Savior of the world. The angel had already told Mary that she would bear the Savior and now Elizabeth told her the same thing!

***Why is what Elizabeth said important?***

***How do think Mary must have felt to know that her baby was going to be the Savior?***

## **Week 3: Family Action Plan**

### ***“Birthday Cake For Jesus”***

Our kids love eating ice cream and cake on their birthday. I think this is probably true for most kids! As we prepare to celebrate Jesus’ birthday, I want to challenge you to do something very special – something that our family has done over the past few years. We have taken time on Christmas day to make a birthday cake for Jesus and sing “Happy Birthday” to him. We do this for every member of our family on their birthday and it is a fun, tangible way for our kids to celebrate Jesus’ birthday.

Take some time during one of the days leading up to Christmas and make a visit to the local grocery store with your family. Pick out a box of cake mix, some yummy frosting, toppings (M&M’s are always my favorite), and candles. Explain to your family that the reason you are buying these things is to make a birthday cake for Jesus. Let your family know that this is something you are going to do every year as you celebrate the birth of our Savior.

At some point on Christmas day (we usually do it that night) gather your family in the kitchen and begin working on the birthday cake. Try to involve everyone so that they are a part of the process. Take some time to talk about the true purpose for celebrating Christmas. Encourage your family to think about how great of a blessing it was for the Son of God to step into this world.

**Above all, make sure this is a fun time for your family!**

## **December 22: “Mary’s Song”**

***Luke 1:46-56***

Yesterday, we started reading about a visit between Mary and Elizabeth. At the beginning of this visit, Elizabeth told Mary that she was blessed more than any other woman because she was carrying, in her tummy, the Savior of the world. The verses we read today tell us what happened right after Elizabeth’s proclamation.

Can you guess what happened? Mary sang a song! Do you sing when you are happy? Well, after Mary heard what Elizabeth said, she started singing because she was so happy. She recognized just how blessed she was to be chosen by God for this high honor. Possibly for the first time, she realized that God’s own Son was growing inside her tummy at that exact moment. All of the promises that God had made about the Savior were about to be fulfilled in her presence. Mary’s song was simply an overflow of all the emotions she was experiencing in this moment.

She began her song by praising God for his goodness and his mercy. After this, she humbly thanked God for choosing to use her as he fulfilled his promise to send the Savior. It is very clear that Mary did not feel like she deserved this honor. She completed her song by thanking God for being faithful to keep his promises.

***Why do you think Mary sang a song?***

***Why is it so important to thank God for his goodness and faithfulness?***

## **December 23: “John’s Birth”**

***Luke 1:57-66***

If you remember the story of the angel visiting Zechariah, you will remember that Zechariah did not really believe what the angel told him. The angel had told him that he and Elizabeth would have a son even though they were old. Because of Zechariah’s doubt, the angel said that he would not be able to speak until his son’s birth. Can you imagine not being able to speak for 9 months?

Well, the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth and, just as the angel had said, she had a baby boy. The custom of the day was for sons to be named after their father. This is what everyone expected. They believed Zechariah and Elizabeth would name their baby boy Zechariah, Jr. But the verses we read today show us that this did not happen at all. In fact, when Elizabeth was asked what they were going to name the child, she quickly gave the name “John.” The people were confused and asked Zechariah what to name the child. Since he could not speak, he wrote the name “John” on a tablet. Do you know what happened next?

As soon as he wrote down the name “John,” he was able to speak again and began praising God for keeping his promise. Zechariah realized that God was going to use John in a special way.

***Why did Zechariah doubt the angel?***

***Why do you think Zechariah praised God as soon as he could speak again?***

## **December 24: “Zechariah’s Prophecy”**

***Luke 1:67-80***

Yesterday, we saw how God opened Zechariah’s mouth as soon as he responded to him in obedience. All of the people around him were confused and wondered how God was going to use his baby son, John. The verses we read today tell us that as soon as Zechariah could speak, he prophesied just like the prophets did in the Old Testament.

What was his prophecy? He began by praising God for visiting his people once again. You see, God had been silent for about 400 years. Zechariah proclaimed that this silence had now come to an end because God was bringing his Savior into the world. This was to fulfill his promises throughout the Old Testament.

As he continued with his prophecy, it is likely that he was either looking at his son or possibly holding him. Zechariah proclaimed that his son would be just like the prophets in the Old Testament. John had a specific mission as a prophet and messenger of God. He would prepare the way for the Savior to come into the world. His mission was to proclaim to the people that God was about to fulfill his promises made in the Old Testament – he was going to bring salvation to his people. This message would be good news for all who heard!

***What was John supposed to accomplish?***

***What was the good news that John was supposed to proclaim to the people?***

# **December 25: “The Birth Of Jesus”**

## ***Luke 2:1-21***

Merry Christmas! Today, we celebrate Jesus’ birth and the verses we read focus on this special moment in history. As Mary and Joseph journeyed to the city of Bethlehem to register for the census, we see that it was time for Mary to give birth to her son. There was only one problem...there were no rooms in any of the hotels. Jesus, the promised Savior and forever king, was not born in a palace. In fact, he was born in a barn that was dirty and smelly; he was not placed in a comfortable crib but in a feeding trough called a manger.

Even though he was not born in a palace, his birth was celebrated. We see that it was celebrated by thousands of angels praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” Shepherds came and visited him and as we continue reading the Bible, we see that wise men came and brought expensive gifts to present to Jesus.

The birth of Jesus is just the beginning of the story. Today, we celebrate Christmas and in a few months we will celebrate Easter – the day when Jesus was raised from the dead. Jesus was born in a manger, lived a perfect sinless life, paid for our sin as he suffered on the cross, died, and rose from the dead. He came to give his life to save us from our sin!

***Why did Jesus come to this earth as a baby?***

***What does this have to do with us being saved?***





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