GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES

A FAMILY CHRISTMAS DEVOTIONAL

Copyright © 2026 Southeast Christian Publishing.

All rights reserved.

Southeast Christian Church
920 Blankenbaker Parkway
Louisville, KY 40243

www.southeastchristian.org

Scripture quotations marked (NIrV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version®, NIrV®. Copyright © 1995, 1996, 1998, 2014 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The "NIrV" and "New International Reader's Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES

A FAMILY CHRISTMAS DEVOTIONAL



INTRODUCTION

We are so thankful to have you partnering with us for our *God Keeps His Promises* devotional. Since June, elementary kids have been exploring the Old Testament and God's covenants—His special, unbreakable promises to His people. This December, they'll move into the New Testament, following the events leading up to Jesus' birth. Our devotional recaps where the kids have been and unfolds the excitement that God is a promise keeper and sent His greatest gift, Jesus.

If you are creating space for a family devotional for the first time, we want to encourage you: the time together will not look perfect. Your kids may or may not sit still, and they may not even appear to listen, but that's okay—don't give up! Keep establishing the rhythm of pausing during your day to read the suggested Scripture and devotional. For younger kids, try giving them paper and crayons to respond through coloring, or let them "follow along" in their own Bible. For older kids, encourage them to read verses aloud, come up with questions, or even lead a younger sibling through the devotional text.

Because December gets busy, each Sunday is intentionally written as a day of rest or catch-up, with a family prayer to read aloud and an optional activity. We've also included a timeline to help place events, and two interactive elements in the back: a seek and find and a sticker nativity (add a character each week or save it all for Christmas Day while reading Luke 2).

As you walk through this season together, we pray your family will slow down to wonder and reflect. May God draw each of you closer to Him this Christmas.

Christmas Blessings,
Southeast Kids

For additional family resources, join us online by scanning the QR code.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Timeline of Scripture	1
December 1-Adam and the Fall by Bill Rattray	4
December 2-God's Covenant with Noah by Makenzie Mullin	5
December 3-God's Covenant with Abraham by Tim Hester	6
December 4-God's Covenant with Moses by Chris Denney	7
December 5-God's Covenant with David by Shepherd and Reid Milliken	8
December 6-Prayer by Carley Buckingham	9
Family Fun by Anna Laura Turner	10
December 7-The Years of Silence by Brandon Braun	11
December 8-God Breaks His Silence by Bryce Osborne	12
December 9-An Angel Visits Mary by Jodi Seevers	13
December 10-Mary's Song by Christy Weaver	14
December 11-Zechariah's Song by Caleb Hutchcraft	15
December 12-Joseph by Craig Donnelly	16
December 13-Prayer by Carley Buckingham	17
Family Fun by Anna Laura Turner	18
December 14-Caesar Augustus Calls for a Census by Brandon Braun	19
December 15-Jesus Arrives Quietly by Tessa Young	20
December 16-The Shepherds Hear the Good News by Sara Whitbeck	21
December 17-Glory and Wonder by Lacey Boze	22
December 18-Simeon's Long Wait by Cheryl and Murphy Belding	23
December 19-Anna's Faithful Waiting by Sharon Neville	24
December 20-Prayer by Carley Buckingham	25
Family Fun by Anna Laura Turner	26
December 21-The Wise Men Meet Herod by Julie Clark	27
December 22-The Wise Men Meet Jesus by Brandon Braun	28
December 23-Before Bethlehem by Susan Wilder	29
December 24-God Keeps His Promises by Bill Rattray	30
December 25-Emmanuel Has Come! by Jennifer DeVries	31
Bonus Fun: Seek and Find	35
Bonus Fun: Sticker Nativity and Prayer by Carley Buckingham	37

This booklet was written by Southeast staff and volunteers from different campuses and ministries, each contributing a devotion with your family in mind. Though each devotion carries a different voice, they all point to the same story.

TIMELINE OF S









GOD

OLD TESTAMENT









F SCRIPTURE



THE KINGDOM DIVIDES

SHHH

GOD WAS QUIET FOR 400 YEARS



JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN!

WE ARE HERE

NEW HEAVENS & NEW EARTH

BELIEVERS WILL LIVE IN HEAVEN WITH GOD

OLD TESTAMENT | NEW TESTAMENT | NOW | TO COME



THE PROPHETS



JESUS WAS BORN!



THE CHURCH BEGAN

JESUS RETURNS

JESUS WILL COME AGAIN



DECEMBER 1

ADAM AND THE FALL

READ: GENESIS 1:1; 1:26-30; 2:15-17; 3:1-7; 3:14-19

Have you ever wondered what was there *before*...before there was a world? Before there was *anything*?

Before anything began, there was GOD:

"Before you created the whole world and the mountains were made, from beginning to the end you are God." (Psalm 90:2)

And then, God made EVERYTHING!

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

With the power of God's voice He spoke and made the day and night, the sky, the land, the trees, the sun, moon, stars, the fish that swim, the birds that fly, and animals that walk and crawl and climb!

On the sixth day God made something VERY special:

"God created human beings in his own likeness." (Genesis 1:27)

God created people! He created us with a special, unbreakable promise called a *covenant*. He made us to fill the earth and take care of His very good world—a world where we could share in God's perfect love forever.

But the first people, Adam and Eve, did not obey God's command. They listened to a serpent's lie. Instead of trusting God, they trusted their own way, and did the one thing God said not to do: they ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And then... "Sin entered the world because one man sinned..." (Romans 5:12)

Adam and Eve's sin came to ALL people and separated us from God.

But God had a plan.

He would put the world we had broken back together again. He would make a way for people to be free from sin and death, to be with God, and share in His perfect love *forever*.

God's plan was a *person*.

That person's name is *Jesus*.

Jesus is God's one and only Son. God promised that He would come and bring an end to the serpent and get rid of what sin had brought into the world. Through Jesus, we could be with God again.

This promise of Jesus is where Christmas began.



DECEMBER 2

GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH

READ: GENESIS 6:5-9:17

Imagine that a huge rainstorm is coming. But instead of grabbing your raincoat, rainboots, and umbrella before leaving the house, your parents tell you to get in the boat.

Would you give them a funny look and laugh, saying, "What boat?" as you walked out the door?

That sounds a little strange, doesn't it? You might wonder why you would need a boat for a little rain.

But for Noah, he needed more than an umbrella. He needed that strange boat after all! But why?

God saw that people had become very sinful. They were hurting each other and the earth was filled with sin. So, God decided to judge the world with a great flood.

But Noah loved God and worshiped Him. God told Noah to build an ark (a large boat).

Not because it was raining.

Not for a fishing trip.

Not even for a boat ride.

But because something big was about to happen.

Would you have trusted God and built the boat?

Noah did. He built the ark and trusted that God would protect his family even though he hadn't seen a drop of rain yet.

The flood came just as God said it would. He remembered His promise to protect Noah, his family, and the animals in the ark.

But that's not all. Have you ever seen a rainbow in the sky? After the flood dried up and the ark rested on a mountain, God made a special, unbreakable promise to Noah. He said He would never destroy all life and flood the earth again.

The story of Noah reminds us of something important about God. When we are in sin, God will make a way for us to be rescued.

Many years after Noah, God sent Jesus to rescue us from our sin. Jesus is the Savior that God promised to send to save us from our sin.

God kept His promise to Noah. God kept His promise to send a Savior. God will keep His promises to you!



DECEMBER 3

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

READ: GENESIS 12:1-3; 15:1-6; 17:1-8

God loved Abraham. God loved him so much that He made a special unbreakable promise with him. That's called a *covenant*.

God promised Abraham would be the father of a great nation. He also promised Abraham He would give him a lot of land. It would be a place that would belong to Abraham's family forever!

God told Abraham He would give him a son. That son would have more children. The nation would keep growing through them!

But Abraham was an old man. He did not have any children when God made that promise to him. It seemed like an impossible promise for God to keep.

When God makes a promise, He always keeps His promises. God does what He says He will do. Always. Even if it takes a long time for the promise to be kept.

It was hard for Abraham to believe God's promise. It was hard for him to wait for God to give him a son. But Abraham believed God. Abraham waited for Him, too.

And guess what? After a little while, God did it!! God allowed Abraham to become the father of a great nation. God promised that through this nation, all the people of the world would be blessed. God keeps His promises!

Eventually, God gave Abraham a BIG family. While his family was growing, God made another promise. He promised that one day a baby would be born in Abraham's family. That Baby would bless the whole world.

That baby is Jesus.

Matthew wrote that Jesus would save the people from their sins. That's why we are so excited to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas.

God loves you just as much as He loved Abraham. God has made you a special promise too. He promised that if you believe in Jesus, you will live in a special place with God forever.

God always keeps His promises...even if it takes a long time.



DECEMBER 4

GOD'S COVENANT WITH MOSES

READ: EXODUS 2:23-25; 6:2-8

One thing that's hard for me to figure out is why some things "stick" in my memory and others go in one ear and out the other. I can remember the words to old songs from a long time ago, but I can quickly forget what I had for lunch two days ago! I remember what people promise me, and I even make promises to others. Remembering and keeping our promises isn't always easy. Have you ever forgotten to keep a promise you made?

Because God is all-powerful, He is an all-powerful "remember-er"! But why does the Bible tell us that God remembered His promises? Did God somehow forget His promise first? Did it just pop back into His mind, like the words to an old song?

The word "remembered" doesn't mean God made a note to remember. When the Bible says God remembered, it means God was about to make one of His promises come true. Long ago, God promised to help the Israelites. Hundreds of years passed, but God did not forget His promise. What did God do next? He picked a man named Moses. Through a burning bush, God told Moses He would use Him to rescue His people from slavery. God remembered. Then, God acted!

It's possible that many of God's people who were slaves in Egypt forgot the promise He had made to their ancestors. Many had never heard about the promise to begin with. Hard times can make us forget. Even when God doesn't seem like He's working, He never forgets. When the Bible says, "God remembered," something big was about to happen!!

Christmas is the celebration of Jesus, God's Son, coming into the world to save everyone who would believe and obey Him. The same God who remembered Israel in their slavery also remembered that the whole world needed a Savior. God even remembered us, before we were born! That remembering began the plan for Jesus to come to Earth, so we can be rescued from sin and be with God forever. God remembers, and God always keeps His Word!



DECEMBER 5

GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID

READ: 2 SAMUEL 7:8-16

Have you ever had someone make a promise and they end up breaking it? One time my sister promised she would give me a whole pack of Skittles if I gave her one bite of my Airheads. Most of the time when we make promises, it sounds like this, "I promise to do *this* IF you promise to do *that*."

But this isn't how God works. He doesn't say, "I will give you *this*, but only if you give me *that*." When God makes a promise, He ALWAYS KEEPS HIS PROMISE, even if we break ours with Him.

Today, we read about God's special promise with David. He was a king over God's people, the Israelites.

2 Samuel 7:16 says, "Your royal house and your kingdom will last forever in my sight. Your throne will last forever." "Royal house" means a king's throne or palace. God promised David that someone from his family would rule as king FOREVER.

Almost 420 years later, the Israelites probably felt like God had forgotten His promise. Their city had been destroyed. They weren't living in Israel anymore. The Israelites were probably thinking, "I don't think God is going to keep His promise to David."

If God promised there would always be a king, we can trust Him even if we don't know HOW He's going to keep His promise.

Now, let's see how all of this connects to Christmas. Jesus is the answer to this promise, because Jesus is a family member of King David. David was Jesus' great-grandpa, plus 30 more "greats." When we get to Christmas, we see Jesus as the promised Son of David. "His throne will last forever" means Jesus will never stop ruling over His people.

Every king is worthy of the best gifts. The wise men brought Jesus three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. If Jesus is the promised King and He is still on His throne, what gifts can you bring to Jesus? What does He really want? (Clue: it's not more gold, frankincense, or myrrh.)



DECEMBER 6

PRAYER | FAMILY FUN

If your family has had a busy week, use this day to reset or have some intentional family time.

Pray this prayer aloud as a family:

HI, GOD!
WOW! YOU ALWAYS KEEP YOUR PROMISES! YOU MADE PROMISES TO ADAM, NOAH, ABRAHAM, MOSES, AND DAVID—AND YOU KEPT THEM.
THANK YOU FOR THE PROMISES YOU HAVE MADE TO ME. HELP ME TRUST YOU, LISTEN TO YOU, AND WALK WITH YOU EVERY DAY. WHEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT, HELP ME REMEMBER THAT YOU DO. YOU ARE FAITHFUL. YOU NEVER FORGET YOUR PROMISES, AND YOU NEVER LEAVE ME.
I LOVE YOU, GOD.
I LOVE BEING YOUR FREND!
IN JESUS' NAME, AMEN

SALT DOUGH ORNAMENTS

Have you ever made a salt dough ornament?

These simple handmade ornaments are a great way for your family to slow down and catch up on the week as you mix the dough, bake it, and decorate it. Press your hand prints into the dough, or shape it into a rainbow, crown, or star to remind you of one of God's promises!

Recipe
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ cup salt
¼–½ cup lukewarm water (start with ¼ cup and add as needed)

Combine flour and salt in a large bowl. Slowly add the water, mixing well as you add it. After all the water is added, kneed the dough about 10 minutes or until the dough has even consistency. The dough should not be sticky! Roll the dough with a rolling pin until it is about ¼-inch thick. Use cookie cutters, a knife, or your hands to create shapes in the dough for your decorations. If you want to make these to be ornaments, use a straw to put a hole through where you want your hanger. Bake at 200° for 2–3 hours, flipping at the halfway point. If you choose to paint your ornaments, allow them to cool completely, then use tempera or acrylic paint to add your design.

As you make the ornaments, ask each other these questions:

- Who could we invite to a Christmas Eve service?
- Which of God's covenants is your favorite, and why?

DECEMBER 7

THE YEARS OF SILENCE

READ: ISAIAH 9:2; MICAH 5:2

Waiting can be hard! Think about how much you have to wait at Christmastime! You have to wait to open your presents. You have to wait for cookies to bake in the oven. Then, you have to wait for them to cool down! Worst of all, you have to wait for Christmas Day to come! Christmas is a season of waiting.

This has been true since the very first Christmas! In the Old Testament, God made an unbreakable promise to His people. He promised them a Savior. God's prophets reminded the people of this promise every chance they got. The prophet Micah even told them where this Savior would be born: "Bethlehem Ephrathah, you might not be an important town in the nation of Judah. But out of you will come for me a ruler over Israel." (Micah 5:2) God's promised King would come from the small town of Bethlehem!

God told them where, but He didn't tell them when. So, God's people waited. It wasn't just hours or days—their countdown to Christmas took years! And it wasn't just one or two years. They waited over 400 hundred years for the Savior to come! Can you imagine waiting that long? It's hard enough to wait 400 seconds! (Seriously, set a timer and see how long you can last!) Generations of people waited without seeing the promise fulfilled. What would it feel like to wait on a promise like that?

Waiting can be hard. It's even harder when you are waiting for a great present. But God wasn't slow in keeping His promise. He was waiting for the right time. When the moment finally came, God sent His Son Jesus to Bethlehem. The Light of the World broke through the darkness of our worry and our waiting (Isaiah 9:2). God did everything just as He had promised to do!

Waiting can make us mad and confused. We can wonder why God would make us wait for so long. Jesus reminds us that God's promises are worth waiting for. When we wait for Him, we won't be disappointed!

400 YEARS

SILENCE

DECEMBER 8

GOD BREAKS HIS SILENCE

READ: LUKE 1:5-26

Have you ever waited so long for something that you thought it would never arrive? Like having a friend come over, a special birthday treat, your favorite meal, or a fun day doing something you love? Take a few minutes and share about the longest wait you've ever had for something you really wanted.

In the Old Testament, God spoke to His people, Israel, through prophets. These prophets would hear a message from God and then tell it to the people. Sometimes the message was about things that would happen later, like the coming Savior. Other times, it was a warning to turn back to God and follow Him. Israel did not obey God over and over again and wouldn't to listen to His prophets. So, God stopped speaking through the prophets like He had before—for 400 years.

The silence didn't mean God forgot to keep His promise to send someone to save them from their sins. In Luke 1, there was a priest named Zechariah who was working in the temple. For the first time in a very long time God spoke! The wait was over! God was making a way for the Savior to come! An angel of the Lord, Gabriel, appeared to Zechariah that day and told him that he and his wife, Elizabeth, were going to have a baby named John. God was going to use John to get the people ready for the promised Savior, Jesus! Zechariah thought this news was too good to be true. Because of his unbelief, the angel made Zechariah unable to speak until the birth of his son. But that didn't stop God's plan!

Let today's story be a reminder to share the Good News of God's greatest promise, Jesus. No matter how long it took, God was always working. Even when we have to wait, we can trust that God keeps His promises!



DECEMBER 9

AN ANGEL VISITS MARY

READ: LUKE 1:26-38

Have you ever made a promise to someone? Maybe you promised you would clean your room. Or you promised your friend you would bring candy to share. Whatever that promise was, you wanted to let someone know that you would do what you said you would do.

God does the same for us. We have been learning about the word *covenant*—God's special unbreakable promise with His people—and that God keeps His promises every time. EVERY time!

In Luke 1:26, we read that God sent the angel Gabriel to visit Mary. Just before this visit, God also sent Gabriel to visit Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah. And over 500 years before that, God sent Gabriel to visit Daniel. Each time Gabriel appeared, he brought important messages from God! In this visit with Mary, he had another important message: You will give birth to a Son and name Him Jesus!

Mary had questions, though. She was very young and not married. At that time in history, she knew this could turn into a big mess...she could have been rejected by her family and left without a home. But, as she listened to Gabriel say, "...what God says will always come true" (verse 37), Mary knew that God was asking her to serve Him, and she willingly obeyed. She told Gabriel, "I serve the Lord...May it happen to me just as you said it would" (verse 38).

Mary realized in this moment that God was using her for something very special. She didn't understand everything yet, but she trusted God and was ready to serve Him! She would later find out that God would use the baby in her belly to make a way for people to be with God forever. Every covenant God made was pointing to Jesus. Wow!

This Christmas season, may we be reminded of the gift of Jesus and that God keeps all His promises. And may we be like Mary and say, *"I serve the Lord,"* as we share this Good News with others!



DECEMBER 10

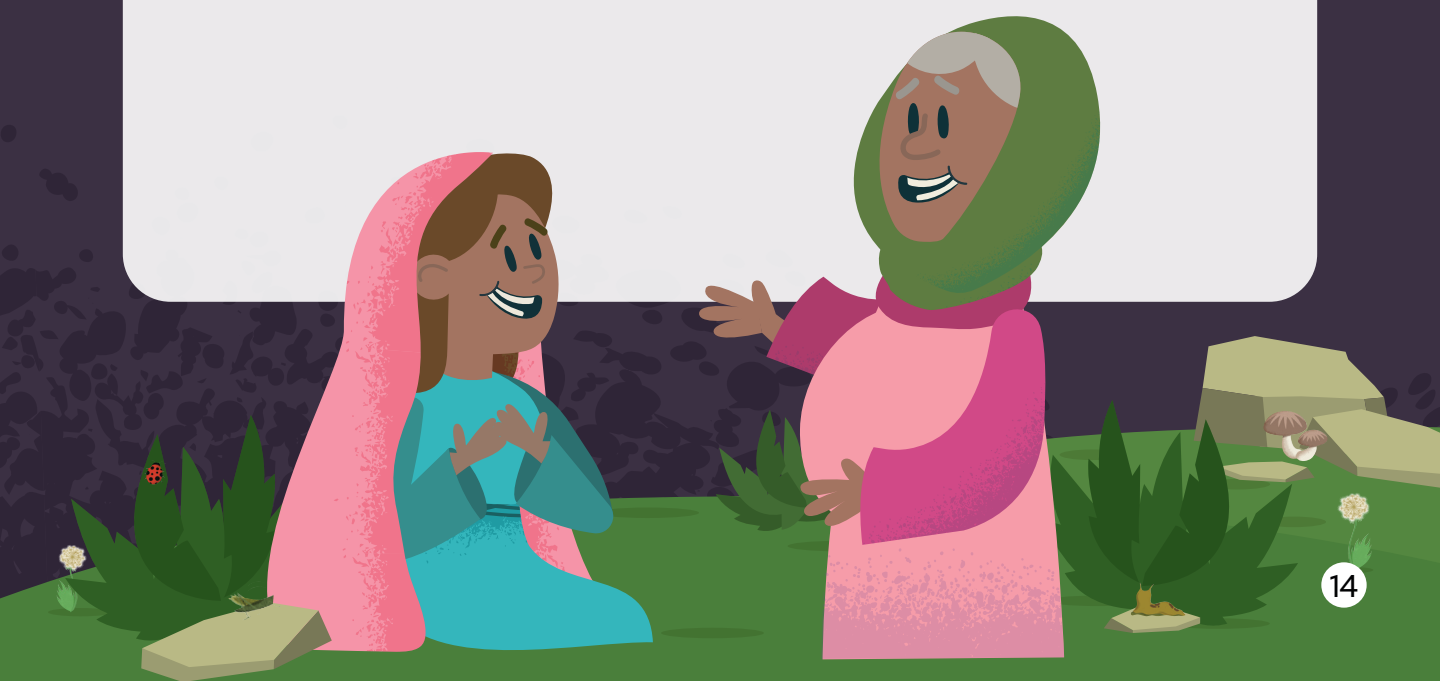
MARY'S SONG

READ: LUKE 1:40-56

Mary was given a big job, the biggest job, to be the mother of baby Jesus! This news was so big that other people, even her family, would not understand. God chose Mary, a young woman who would have been seen by most as not important, to do this most holy work. God knew that Mary was going to need someone who would understand her big job. So, He made sure that she knew her relative, Elizabeth, was also going to have a baby.

Read Luke 1:39-56.

Mary felt so thankful for the goodness and kindness of the Lord when she was in the safety of Elizabeth's home. Mary realized that Elizabeth understood what the Lord was doing in and through her. Mary glorified (to give thanks, praise, and honor) the Lord! As she praised God, she remembered His promises to Abraham. She would have known these promises because she knew God and His Word. We call God's special, unbreakable promise to Abraham and to his children, "The Abrahamic Covenant." Mary knew that by carrying Jesus in her belly, God was starting His New Covenant–His plan to save His people. She sang the Lord's praises and included Scripture that talked about God's promise as an important part of her praise. We can be encouraged and we can worship, because God used people who seemed unimportant to do some of His most holy work.



DECEMBER 11

ZECHARIAH'S SONG

READ: LUKE 1:67-79

Have you ever been so happy that you started to sing? Maybe you broke out in song, like you were in a musical!

Did you know that happened in the Bible, too? There were times when people were so full of joy that they sang songs of praise to God.

Zechariah sang a very special song to God.

But why was Zechariah filled with so much joy?

He remembered that God keeps His promises.

God is a promise keeper. He is a covenant maker. Zechariah knew that God made special, unbreakable promises, called covenants, to His people many years before—to people like Abraham, Moses, and David. And even after all those years, God still kept His promises.

In his song, Zechariah remembered the covenants God had made with His people. He sang, "...He did it for those who are from the family line of his servant David" (Luke 1:69).

David lived a very long time before Zechariah. But God did not forget His covenant with David—that a King from his family would rule forever.

Zechariah also remembered God's promise to Abraham. He kept singing, "He promised to save us from our enemies. Then we could serve him without fear" (Luke 1:74).

God promised Abraham that his family would be a blessing to all nations. God also promised to be with His people. Now, Zechariah was starting to see that God was keeping His promises. He sent Jesus to save His people.

Then, Zechariah sang, "...His kindness will bring the rising sun to us from heaven. It will shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death. It will guide our feet on the path of peace" (Luke 1:78-79).

Zechariah's words reminded people of what the prophet Isaiah said a long time ago. Isaiah said light would shine on people living in darkness (Isaiah 9:2). That light is Jesus!

God brings light into dark places.

God helps us know where to go when we feel lost.

And God gives us peace when life feels like a storm.

Jesus was not a new plan. God promised to send a Savior long before Jesus was even born. Zechariah sang to celebrate that God was keeping His promises!

God is a promise keeper.

God is a covenant maker.

I don't know about you, but that makes me want to sing, too!



DECEMBER 12

JOSEPH

READ: MATTHEW 1:18-24

Have you ever seen an artist paint a picture upside down? I remember attending a sporting event and during halftime an artist came out. She started painting random lines and shapes. People in the crowd were confused. At the end, it was still unclear what the image was until she flipped over the painting to reveal that it was a majestic red bird. When the crowd recognized that she painted their mascot, they cheered.

In our story, Joseph was like the people in this crowd. He knew God was doing something, but it was still unclear exactly what was happening. Joseph trusted and obeyed God even when His plan was hard to understand.

Joseph was probably nervous and afraid when the angel visited him. It might have been easier for him to disobey God. Although he didn't understand God's plans, he chose to obey.

What was God's plan? His plan was to send His Son Jesus from heaven to Earth to save people from their sins. Long before this, God spoke through a prophet named Isaiah. He said this would happen. Now, it was time for the world to see what God was doing.

Do you remember David from the Old Testament? The guy who fought Goliath and later became king. Did you know that Joseph and David were part of the same family? But they lived hundreds of years apart. God promised that Jesus would come from the family line of David, and that promise came true. David didn't fully understand what God was doing, and neither did Joseph.

Here is the Good News we get to celebrate today. Unlike before, now there is no mystery. Christmas is when we celebrate that a Savior was born to save people from their sins, and that Savior's name is Jesus. This Good News is exactly what the angel came and spoke to Joseph about.

From the time of David all the way to the time of Joseph, God's people were waiting, watching, and wondering when God was going to fulfill His promise. God kept His promise through the birth of Jesus.



DECEMBER 13

PRAYER | FAMILY FUN

If your family has had a busy week, use this day to reset or have some intentional family time.

Pray this prayer aloud as a family:

DEAR JESUS,
SOMETIMES I DON'T LIKE TO WAIT.
WHEN I AM WAITING, I CAN WONDER,
"JESUS, ARE YOU STILL THERE?
DO YOU HEAR ME?" PLEASE REMIND ME
THAT YOU ARE ALWAYS WITH ME–EVEN
WHEN I CAN'T SEE YOU OR HEAR YOU.
YOU SEE ME. YOU KNOW ME.
YOU LOVE ME. HELP ME WAIT WITH A
JOYFUL AND TRUSTING HEART.
HELP ME REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE
ALWAYS WORKING, EVEN WHEN I CAN'T
SEE WHAT YOU ARE DOING. YOU ARE
GOOD. YOU ARE FAITHFUL. I LOVE YOU,
JESUS. WE PRAY THESE THINGS
IN YOUR NAME, AMEN.

PUZZLES!

This past week we read about some people who had to wait—Zechariah waited for his voice to return and his son to be born, Mary was visited by Gabriel and waited for Jesus to be born, and all the people were waiting on their long-awaited Savior.

Today, begin working a jigsaw puzzle as a family. Sometimes puzzles can take days to complete, and we have to wait to see the full picture. If you work through yours quickly, start another, and this time consider not displaying the box as you put it together. It'll make you practice waiting to see the completed picture!

When you begin working on the puzzle, ask each other these questions:

- What is something you've waited for a long time?
- How did you feel while you were waiting?

DECEMBER 14

CAESAR AUGUSTUS CALLS FOR A CENSUS

READ: LUKE 2:1-5; MICAH 5:2

What would you do if you were a king?

One thing's for sure. You could do whatever you wanted! You could eat ice cream for breakfast. You could stay up as late as you wanted. You could play video games all day. Kings have power. They have control. No one gets to tell a king what to do.

Caesar Augustus probably felt like this when he was the king of Rome. He was the king over a huge empire, filled with more people than you could count. But Augustus wanted to count them. So, he commanded everyone to go back to their family's original hometown to be counted in a census. He wanted to make a list of everyone in his kingdom to show his greatness. The more people he ruled, the more important he felt.

As a result of this census, millions of people had to travel back to their hometown. This included Mary and Joseph, Jesus' parents. Luke 2:1-5 tells us they had to travel to the small town of Bethlehem because that's where Joseph's family was from. Mary gave birth to Jesus shortly after they arrived.

Augustus didn't know it, but his census was part of God's plan. Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth. But the prophet Micah had promised God's people that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). How would God get them to Bethlehem in time for Jesus' birth? God used the king to make it happen! Caesar Augustus thought that making a list of the people in his kingdom would make him look powerful. All he really did was show everyone how powerful God is!

Caesar thought he was the king. He thought he could do whatever he wanted. He thought everyone had to do as he said. He forgot about the King of heaven. God is in control. God always does what is right. God always does what He has promised. He is the True King. He can use anyone—even a selfish king—to make His plans happen!



DECEMBER 15

JESUS ARRIVES QUICKLY

READ: LUKE 2:6-7

Jesus was the King of kings. But He was not born in a palace. He was born in a stable and then placed in a feeding box for animals. Why? Because there was no room for Him anywhere else.

A king should get a special room—maybe even a parade—to announce his birth, so this felt strange. People should have noticed Him coming, but God did not do it that way.

God works this way again and again in the Old Testament.

God gave Abraham and Sarah a baby when they were very old. It did not make sense, but God kept His promise. Baby Moses, whom God would use to save His people, was placed in a basket and floated down a river to escape danger. Young David was not even brought in from the sheep field when his family was deciding who could be king. Everyone forgot about him. But God did not.

A very old couple. A baby in a basket. A boy nobody remembered. A manger in a stable.

Do you see the pattern? God's biggest plans almost never look the way we expect. He is not showing off. He is being faithful, even in small and forgotten places.

If things are not going the way you hoped or you feel overwhelmed, sad, or anxious, always remember that God keeps His promises. These moments are exactly the kind of places where God loves to show up. What story sticks with you most right now–Jesus, Abraham and Sarah, Moses, or David? How can you make a little more room for God this week?

Pray this prayer together as a family: God, thank You for sending Jesus in a quiet, small way. Thank You that You do not need perfect plans to keep Your promises. Help me trust You, even in the small parts of my life. Help me make room for You today. In Jesus' name, amen.



DECEMBER 16

THE SHEPHERDS HEAR THE GOOD NEWS

READ: LUKE 2:8-12

Do you know what a *covenant* is? It's God's special, unbreakable promise to His people. A long time ago, God made a covenant with a man named Abraham: "...All nations on earth will be blessed because of you" (Genesis 12:3). All people. Not just Abraham's family. Everyone, everywhere.

Years later, God made another covenant, this time with a king named David. He said someone from David's own family would be King forever. Not just for a little while. Forever.

Then, David died. Years passed. Then, even more years passed.

Did God forget His promises?

He didn't. He never does.

One night, some shepherds were out in a field watching their sheep, right outside a little town called Bethlehem—the same town where King David grew up, long before he was ever king.

Out of nowhere, an angel appeared, shining bright against the dark sky. The shepherds were terrified. But the angel said, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10).

Think about who heard that news first. Not kings. Not rulers. Not the religious leaders who studied Scripture their whole lives. Shepherds! People with the lowest, least important-looking jobs of their day.

But God picked them to hear the Good News first.

That wasn't an accident. It was God keeping His covenant with Abraham, and with David, right in front of everyone. Through Jesus, ALL people on earth would be blessed, and the promise was starting to come true that very night, with shepherds in a field.

That "all people" includes you. It doesn't matter who you are, what you've done, where you're from, or what job you'll have one day.

Jesus is here. And He's here because He loves you. The promise God made so long ago—He kept it. He always keeps it. He is the God of love Who keeps His promises, and we can trust Him.



DECEMBER 17

GLORY AND WONDER

READ: LUKE 2:13-20

Have you ever been in on a really good surprise? I mean a huge surprise, one that you have to keep quiet about for a long time. One of the best kinds of surprises are surprise parties. Especially surprise birthday parties!

The Bible-writer Luke might agree. When he told the story of Jesus' birthday, he told it like the best surprise party ever. Except it's kind of a *backwards* surprise party. The birthday boy and his whole family are totally in on it. At this party, it's the guests who get surprised!

Here's the great surprise: one normal night turned into a celebration in honor of one little baby who had a big job. This little baby is the Savior—the Messiah—the One God set apart for a special purpose. Right in front of the shepherds' eyes, they were brought into a celebration that's bigger than a family, bigger than a town, bigger than the earth itself! This celebration of the Savior started in heaven and came down to cover the whole earth. Everyone in heaven and everyone on Earth celebrated the same great news: God had kept His promise at last!

In the very beginning of His story, God made a special, unbreakable promise—a covenant—with His people. He promised He would send someone who would make all things right again. This someone would show everyone that God always keeps His promises to His people. On this night God had sent that someone—He kept his covenant!

The shepherds respond in the best way ever; they didn't just celebrate, they went and saw! Seeing this special Savior was so wonderful they couldn't help but tell everyone. I wonder what it was like to hear them sharing this story?

Here's some more great news. The shepherds' story is our story, too! I wonder what other great things God has done for our family? What stories can we tell about God keeping his promises to us?



DECEMBER 18

SIMEON'S LONG WAIT

READ: LUKE 2:25-35

Long ago, an old man named Simeon lived in Jerusalem. He loved God with all his heart.

Every day, he waited at the temple, because God had given him a promise. The Holy Spirit had told him: "You will not die until you see the Messiah with your own eyes."

The Messiah was the one God promised to send to save His people. Simeon didn't know when it would happen. But he knew God always keeps His promises.

So, Simeon waited—through winters and summers, birthdays and holidays. He waited so long that his hair turned from brown to gray to white. We imagine some days he wondered, "Lord, is today the day?" And other days, we imagine it was hard to keep hoping.

Some people thought Simeon had misunderstood what God told him. But he kept praying at the temple every day—just in case today was the day.

Then, one day, a young mother named Mary and her husband, Joseph, walked into the temple. They carried a tiny baby named Jesus. Nobody else noticed anything unusual. But something in Simeon's heart whispered, "This is Him."

Mary placed baby Jesus into Simeon's arms. Simeon looked up to heaven, his eyes full of happy tears. "Now, Lord," he said, "I can go in peace, just like You promised."

After all those years, God's promise came true—right there, in Simeon's arms.

We love this story, because we have waited on things, too. You know what it's like to wait—for a birthday, for a loose tooth to fall out, for summer vacation. That waiting can feel so long!

Here is what we have learned: God never forgets what He promises. He may ask us to wait.

But He always keeps His word.

So, today, think of one thing you are waiting on God for. Hold on to hope, like Simeon did. Be faithful while you wait, because God always keeps His promises.



DECEMBER 19

ANNA'S FAITHFUL WAITING

READ: LUKE 2:36-38

Anna's husband died after they were married only seven years, and she never got married again. She decided to live in the temple, which was kind of like living at church for the rest of her life. She *prayed* and *worshiped* there as a widow until she was 84. It wasn't like a job, where you stop for the day and go home. It became all she did! She loved God that much.

Anna trusted God to keep His promise to send the One who would set His people free from sin! She had heard about the One God promised all her life and she *expected* Him! She believed He would come, even though such a long time had passed. She continued to pray, worship God, and wait for the promised One for 84 years. That must have been hard.

Anna kept going, without stopping. Waiting for what God promised. Believing God *would* do what He promised. Waiting for it every day. Waiting *with hope*. Praying and worshiping during the day and at night. Going without food to show she trusted God. Every day, she decided to do it again.

It was a regular day for Anna when Mary and Joseph brought their baby to the temple to obey God. As soon as Anna saw the baby, the Bible says, "she gave thanks to God" (Luke 2:38). She knew He was the PROMISED ONE. God let her see the promise come true! She had waited a very long time, but she never stopped worshiping God and praying.

From that time on, she told everyone about what she had seen. Anna knew that Jesus was the One God promised. When we trust God to do what He says, it might not happen right away. We must be faithful, too. We can pray while we wait. Anna shows us how to worship Him before the promise comes true. We can worship God while we wait for Him to return.



DECEMBER 20

PRAYER | FAMILY FUN

If your family has had a busy week, use this day to reset or have some intentional family time.

Pray this prayer aloud as a family:

DEAR JESUS,
YOU CAME! YOU REALLY CAME! FOR SO LONG, PEOPLE WAITED FOR YOU. THEN, AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME, YOU CAME AS A TINY BABY. YOU WERE BORN IN A QUIET AND SIMPLE PLACE, BUT YOU WERE THE GREATEST GIFT THE WORLD HAD EVER RECEIVED. THANK YOU FOR COMING TO EARTH BECAUSE YOU LOVE US SO MUCH. THANK YOU FOR BEING OUR HOPE AND FOR BRINGING US CLOSE TO GOD. THANK YOU FOR COMING, JESUS. YOU ARE THE BEST GIFT EVER! WE PRAY THESE THINGS IN YOUR NAME, AMEN.

WRAP IT UP!

As your family prepares for Christmas in a few short days, find a baby Jesus in your home. This could be a coloring sheet from school, a piece from a nativity set, or a baby doll wrapped in cloth. Put it in a gift bag or wrap it in a box and place the gift under your tree. On Christmas morning, unwrap the gift and allow it to remind you how Jesus is the greatest gift! (This could also be a great time to read Luke 2:1-20!)

As you wrap the gift, ask each other:

- What gift are you most excited to give this year?
- How can we celebrate the gift of Jesus all year long?



DECEMBER 21

THE WISE MEN MEET HEROD

READ: MATTHEW 2:1-8

Have you ever been on a road trip? Where did you go? Did you ask, "Are we there yet?" Let me tell you a story about some men who went on a very long trip.

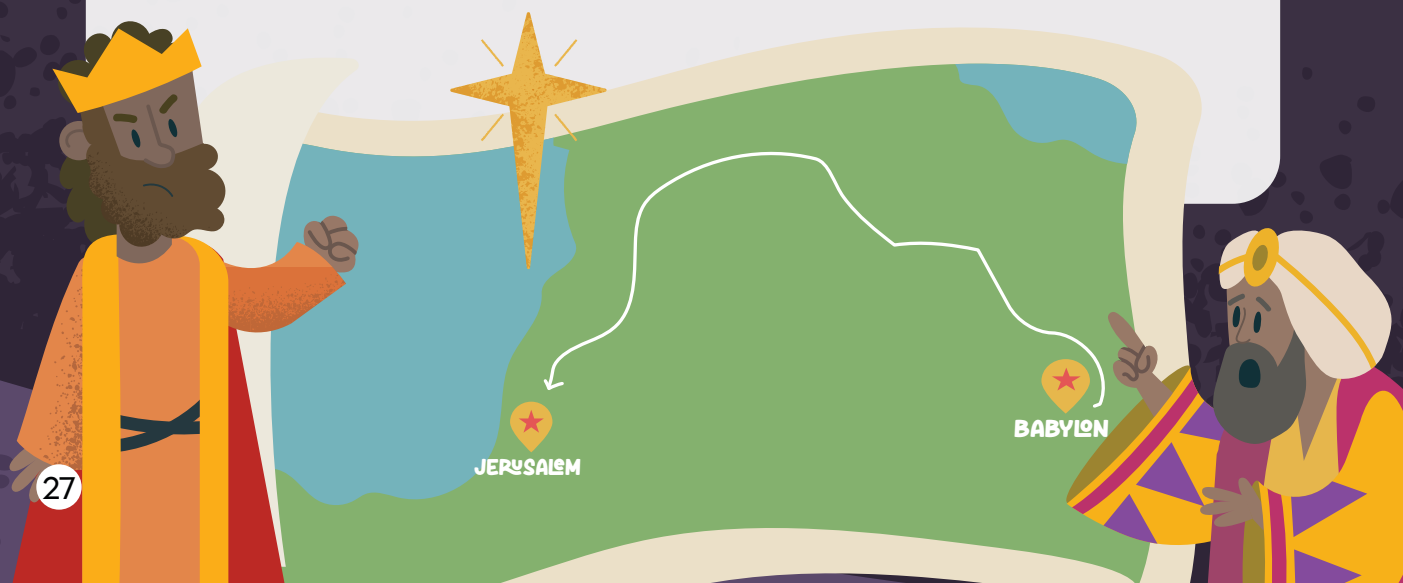
The Bible tells us about some wise men who saw a very special star. They believed it was a sign from God pointing them to the birth of a King. So, they decided to take a trip to follow it.

When I go on a trip, I take lots of snacks, and I make sure to follow my directions app so I don't get lost. I wonder what the wise men took on their journey? What kind of snacks did they take? How long would it take to find the King? They didn't have a phone with an app to guide them; they didn't even exist back then! They just followed the star.

Just when the wise men thought they were almost to the place the star was pointing, they met a jealous king named Herod. Herod didn't want anyone else to be king. He asked the wise men to find the child and report back to him. God showed the wise men where to find the King by following the star.

We know from the Bible the star led the wise men to Jesus. When the wise men found Jesus, they knew He was the King of the Jews. Jesus came to save all people from their sins. He chose to die for our sins, and if we believe that and choose to follow Him, we get to be with Him now and forever.

That is why the star was special. It led the wise men to the One who loves us the most. So, when you look up at the sky and you see all the stars, remember the story of the star, a trip by some wise men, and the King who loves you!



DECEMBER 22

THE WISE MEN MEET JESUS

READ: MATTHEW 2:9-12

I love Christmas presents! The shiny wrapping paper. The ribbons and bows wrapped around the packages. And, of course, the gift tags with my name on them! It's amazing to wake up on Christmas morning and find all the presents under the tree!

Christmas is a time when we like to give (and receive!) gifts. There's something about the birth of Jesus that makes us want to celebrate. We want to share our joy with other people. We give gifts to others because we know the great gift God gave us.

Did you know the Bible tells us about some of the very first Christmas gifts? A couple of years after Jesus was born, a group of Wise Men arrived in Bethlehem to see Jesus. They had seen a star announcing His birth. They knew they had to go see the newborn King. Since they lived far away, it had taken them many months to travel to Bethlehem. When they arrived, they brought gifts to share with Jesus and His family:

"The Wise Men went to the house. There they saw the child with his mother Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures. They gave him gold, frankincense and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11).

The gifts they gave Jesus probably aren't like the gifts under your tree. They gave Jesus gold, a gift normally given to a king. They gave Him frankincense, a gift that priests would use for worship. Lastly, the wise men gave Jesus a bottle of myrrh, a perfume that pointed toward the cross. Even though Jesus was just a young boy, God used these gifts to point toward what He had come to do. In Him, all God's unbreakable promises were coming true!

At Christmas, God gave us the best gift ever. He gave us His Son! The wise men's gifts remind us to respond to God's gift with praise. We sing songs about Jesus. We give generous gifts. Like the wise men, we bow before Jesus in humility and gratitude. We give everything to Jesus because Jesus gave everything to us.



DECEMBER 23

BEFORE BETHLEHEM

READ: JOHN 1:1-14

This Scripture starts with the words, "In the beginning." What do you think about when you hear "in the beginning"? You might think of the start of a new school year. Or the start of a new season of your favorite sport.

In the beginning. Have you heard those words anywhere else? There is a book in the Bible that starts the same way. It's Genesis—the first book of the Bible.

In Genesis 1:1, God spoke words to create the world. John 1 starts with the same words, "In the beginning," but John is going to tell us where Jesus was at creation.

Read John 1:1 again. This time replace "the Word" with "Jesus."

"In the beginning, Jesus was already there. Jesus was with God and Jesus was God."

Before the beginning of time, Jesus was there with God His Father. Before God made the world, Jesus was there. Before God created people, the sky, animals, or even trees, Jesus was there. Jesus always existed because He is God.

But at just the right time, God sent Jesus to Earth as a baby.

In the Old Testament, God made a promise to save the world. Even though people sinned, God had a perfect plan to save His people all along. Jesus was the One God promised to send.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem in a stable, He may have looked like a normal baby. But Jesus was the One God would use to save His people. God loves His people, so He was willing to give His own Son to die on the cross for our sins.

In the beginning, long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God promised to send a Savior. Jesus was God's plan to save His people. God always keeps His promises!

Say a prayer together praising God for always keeping His promises.



DECEMBER 24

GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES

READ: LUKE 2:72; 2 CORINTHIANS 1:20

"Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. He said, 'Lord, you are the King over all. Now let me, your servant, go in peace. That is what you promised'" (Luke 2:28-29).

How long had Simeon waited? Did he watch, day after day, to see if God's promise to His people would finally come true?

And then, He came.

Mary and Joseph brought baby Jesus to Jerusalem. The day had come! The promise was here!

Simeon *saw* Jesus. He took Him and held Him—carrying God's promise in his arms.

The Lord's Messiah had come.

How long had ALL of God's people waited? They knew God created the world, and that sin entered the world through Adam and Eve. They knew that sin ruined what was very good—but that God would not leave it that way. He would put the world back together again. He would make all things new.

They knew the Messiah would come.

They knew of God's covenant, or special, unbreakable promise, with Noah—that a flood would never again destroy the earth.

They knew God's covenant with Abraham: "...All nations on earth will be blessed because of you" (Genesis 12:3). God promised a land to live in. He promised to make a great nation through Abraham, and that they would be a blessing to all.

They knew God's covenant with Moses—that God's people would be His special treasure if they would obey His commands, showing love for God and each other.

But God's people didn't keep His commands. Time and time again, they disobeyed God.

But they knew God's covenant with David, that from his family God would bring a special King whose Kingdom would last forever.

God's people waited for the promise. We have waited for Christmas Day. Tomorrow we will celebrate that His promises always come true. Jesus came! Jesus is coming again!

Because of Jesus we can have covenant relationship with God, now and forever, knowing that His promise to make all things new will finally come true.



DECEMBER 25

EMMANUEL HAS COME!

READ: MATTHEW 1:23; JOHN 1:14; REVELATION 21:3

Merry Christmas! This is my favorite time of year! It's the time we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ! But do you know *why* we celebrate Jesus?

Since June, we have been learning about covenants God made to His people. A covenant is a special, unbreakable promise! God made these covenants because He loves us and wants to have a relationship with us. Every single covenant points to a Savior...Jesus!

You see, a long time ago, sin came into the world through Adam. Sin made it hard for us to be close to God, because God is holy and perfect and we are not (Romans 3:23). But God loves us so much that, way back in the Garden of Eden, He made a promise to send a Savior (Genesis 3:15).

God didn't stop there! When the world became full of sin, God sent a flood, but He saved Noah and his family. Then, God made a covenant with Noah: He would never flood the whole earth again (Genesis 9:8-13).

Sin grew again in people's hearts. Because God loves, He made a covenant with Abraham and Sarah, a couple who had no children. He promised to make them into a great nation and to bless every nation on Earth through them! (Genesis 12:2-3) Jesus would come from Abraham's family line.

God kept His promise. Abraham's family grew into the nation of Israel. But sadly, Israel became slaves in Egypt for 400 years. Because God loved His people, He sent Moses to lead them to freedom! In the desert, God gave His people laws for living and taught them how to be close to Him. He also taught them to offer sacrifices for their sins. This showed them what was coming. One day, a perfect Savior would give His own blood for our sins.

Later, God's people wanted a king, so God let them have kings. Some were good, most were not. But one king loved God with all his heart—King David. God made a covenant with David that his family would have a King and a Kingdom that would last forever! (2 Samuel 7) This King would be Jesus.

Later, God sent special men, called prophets, to warn His people to turn from sin. God gave one prophet, Isaiah, some amazing promises about the Savior who was coming (Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6-7). These promises were very clear, and the time for the Savior to come was getting close!

Many years passed. It seemed quiet,



but God was working on the biggest event in all of history!

When we get to the New Testament, we read about the life and ministry of Jesus in the four Gospels. Matthew and Luke tell us about the events leading up to the birth of the long-awaited Savior.

Jesus is the Savior God promised in the garden. Jesus is why God saved Noah's family. Jesus is in the nation God promised to Abraham. Jesus is the King God promised to David. Jesus is everything the prophets said He would be! Jesus is our Prince of Peace! Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor! Jesus is our Mighty God! Jesus is our Everlasting Father!

This Christmas, let's remember Jesus' birth is not just something that happened 2,000 years ago. Jesus is God keeping *every single covenant* He ever made! Jesus gave His life on the cross so we could be close to God and live with Him now and forever...if we believe in Him!

I pray your family's Christmas is full of hope! I pray you will boldly tell everyone you know about the amazing promise of Jesus, our Lord and Savior!

Merry Christmas, everyone!

Today is also a great day to read Luke 2:1-20. Take a few moments to remind yourself of the greatest gift, Jesus!



BONUS

S FUN!

SEEK AND FIND

THERE ARE HIDDEN PICTURES ALL THROUGH THE BOOK! TAKE A LOOK BELOW AND SEE IF YOU CAN FIND THEM ALL!



2 DUCKS



2 BLUE BIRDS



7 8-POINT STARS



2 TURTLES



2 MICE



1 WHITE BIRD



4 SPIDERS



3 MUSHROOMS



2 SLUGS



6 DANDELIONS



2 LADYBUGS



3 GRASSHOPPERS

PRAY THIS PRAYER ALOUD AS A FAMILY:

DEAR JESUS,
THANK YOU FOR COMING TO EARTH FOR ME. YOU ARE THE PROMISED KING AND THE GREATEST GIFT GOD HAS GIVEN US. I WANT TO GIVE YOU MY VERY BEST. HELP ME OFFER YOU MY HEART, MY TIME, MY CHOICES, AND MY GIFTS. HELP ME REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE EMMANUEL—GOD WITH US. YOU ARE NOT FAR AWAY; YOU ARE NEAR TO ME EVERY DAY. HELP ME SHARE YOUR LOVE WITH OTHERS THROUGH MY WORDS AND ACTIONS.
GIVE ME COURAGE TO TELL PEOPLE THAT YOU HAVE COME, YOU LOVE US, AND YOU ARE OUR KING. HELP ME LIVE EACH DAY IN THE JOY OF KNOWING THAT YOU ARE WITH ME. WE PRAY THESE THINGS IN YOUR NAME, AMEN.



SOUTHEAST

KiDS