

Family Christmas Advent Devotional

“The Jesse Tree”

CHCC Children’s Ministry

What is a Jesse Tree?

The Jesse Tree comes from Isaiah 11:1: “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a branch will bear fruit.” Jesse is the father of King David and one of Jesus’ great-grandfathers. The tree and ornaments can be used like an advent calendar. The word “advent” means “coming; the arrival of a notable person, thing or event.”

In the busyness of the Christmas Season, we want your family to spend time anticipating the celebration of the birth of Jesus, the Son of God (Matthew 1:25). For almost every symbol, there is an Old Testament and New Testament scripture. Some of the Old Testament symbols refer to a person in the lineage and line of Christ while others refer directly to Christ Himself.

The tree and ornaments are resources to teach your children parts of “The Big God Story” (God’s ENTIRE story) stretching from Genesis to Revelation and beyond. We want to always keep the focus on who God is (examples: He is faithful, He is in control, He keeps His promises) and His redemptive plan to bring us in to relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.

The Jesse Tree reminds us that the entirety of the Bible points to the coming of Christ directed by the sovereign hand of our amazing and awesome God! You will be able to see how the story of God in the Old Testament points to the coming Messiah and how the story of God in the New Testament points back to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. He came to earth, died, resurrected and is coming back again for those who trust and believe in Him.



How to use this handout:

This handout is a guide for your family. We want your family to read and discuss God’s Word to understand more about Him and His Son, Jesus Christ! Each day has a symbol and related scriptures in the Old Testament and the New Testament for you to read as a family. There is also a short reading, talking point and a prayer. We’ve included symbols that you can color, cut out, and put on a tree. We used resources from the members of First Reformed Church in Lynden, Beverly Smith, Christina Van Eyl, Helen Phillips, and Jeff Brown.



Ideas for Making a Tree:

<https://www.rca.org/jesstree>

Google – Ideas for a Jesse Tree

Google Images – Jesse Tree

Pintrest – Jesse Tree

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/inspiredtraditions>

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December 1 – Stump with Branch

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-2, Jeremiah 23:5, Matthew 1:1-6, Romans 15:8-12

Reading: God has a plan for everything. Long before Jesus was born lived a man named Jesse. Jesse had seven sons; the youngest was named David. When David grew up, he became a great king of Israel. God had a plan for Jesse and for his son David, even before they were born. Jesus was also part of Jesse and David's family tree, born many, many years after David. The stump with a branch is a reminder of God fulfilling His promise through the family of Jesse. People waited a long time for the birth of the savior. The season of Advent is a season of waiting for us, too. We wait for Christmas, the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus. It is hard to be patient, especially when we are waiting for something wonderful like Christmas! But it is important to learn to be patient, and to trust that God has a plan for us.

Talk About: Why is waiting so hard?

Prayer: Dear God, we thank you that you have a plan for each of us. Help us to be patient as we wait for Christmas.

December 2 – World



Scripture: Genesis 1:26-31

Reading: God is the creator of all things. God made the world and everything in it: the air and the water, the plants and the fish, the animals and the people. When God finished creating the world, it was perfect. When God first created people, even they were perfect. They did not sin or do anything to make God unhappy. They were given a beautiful place to live in and they walked with God. We have been given a beautiful world in which to live, and God has asked us to take care of it. We can care for the world by showing kindness to all living things. The world is God's gift to us. God wants us to enjoy this gift, but God also wants us to treat it with care.

Talk About: What are some ways that you can take good care of plants, animals, birds, rivers, people, and everything else in the world that God made?

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

December 3 – Fruit & Snake



Scripture: Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-6, Romans 3:23, 5:12-21

Reading: Yesterday we read about the perfect world that God created, including perfect people. Today we read in the Bible about Adam and Eve, and how they disobeyed God. God had given them everything, and had only asked that they not eat the fruit of one special tree. But Eve and Adam did eat the fruit. The fruit made them understand certain things, but eating it brought sin into the world. We remember that we have all sinned. Jesus is the only one who can forgive our sin and give us new life.

Talk About: What kinds of things do we do that make God unhappy?

Prayer: Mighty God, help us to please and obey you in everything we do and say.

December 4 – Ark & Rainbow



Scripture: Genesis 6:11-14, 7:17, 8:3, 9:8-13, Hebrews 9:15

Reading: When people sin, or do wrong things, God is sad. There came a time when there was so much sin in the world that God had to find a way to remove sin from the world. So he asked Noah to build the ark and to save his own family, as well as the animal. Noah and his family remembered God. Then God sent rain and flooded the world. God destroyed all the people and animals that were not on the ark. When the flood was over and Noah and his family were safely on dry ground, God made a covenant, or a promise, with Noah. God promised not to send another flood that would destroy the world. As a sign of this promise, God put a rainbow in the sky. God has offered us a promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. The rainbow is a reminder of that God saved Noah and will save those who believe in Jesus.

Talk About: Can you name a promise that God has kept?

Prayer: Thank you, Almighty God, for keeping all of your promises.

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December 5 – Tent & Camel



Scripture: Genesis 12:1-7, Romans 4:18-25, Galatians 3:6-9

Reading: Sometimes God asks us to do things that are hard to do. God asks us to obey when it would be so much easier to disobey. God asked Abram to take a long trip and leave behind the place that Abram called home. But in return, God made promises to Abram. God promised that Abram would be blessed by God to be a blessing to the nations. Abram still had problems and struggles, especially when he forgot to listen to God's directions, but God kept all of the promises made to Abram. As believers in Jesus Christ, we are children of Abraham who are blessed to be a blessing to others.

Talk About: Name some ways that God shows you what He wants you to do.

Prayer: Holy God, help us to do the things that you want us to do, obeying you, and blessing others.

December 6 – Cradle



Scripture: Genesis 21:1-7

Reading: It's so hard to be happy when we focus on the things we don't have, instead of the things we do have. Sarah wanted a baby more than anything. She prayed a lot and tried everything she could think of but still didn't have a baby. As she got older, she was surprised when God promised a son to her! Later God gave Sarah a son and she named him Isaac. The cradle represents the birth of baby Isaac. Sarah was very happy and grateful to God for giving her a wonderful son. God remained faithful to His promise even in Abraham and Sarah's old age.

Talk About: How has God answered your prayers?

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for answering our prayers.

December 7 – Ram



Scripture: Genesis 22:1-14, Hebrews 11:17-19, John 3:16

Reading: Isaac was a special boy, and his father, Abraham, loved him very much. But Abraham loved God even more than he loved Isaac. One day God asked Abraham to take Isaac on a journey. Abraham obeyed. God also asked Abraham to kill Isaac as a sacrifice, as a way of showing how much Abraham loved God. Abraham was sad, but he knew that he had to obey God. As he was getting ready to sacrifice Isaac, God sent an angel to stop Abraham and save Isaac's life. God provided a ram for Abraham to sacrifice. Abraham sacrificed the ram as a way of honoring God and thanking him for saving Isaac's life. Many years later, God loved the world so much that He sent His only son Jesus to die on a cross.

Talk About: When is it toughest to obey God?

Prayer: Dear God, thanks for sending your only Son to earth.

December 8 – Ladder



Scripture: Genesis 28:10-15, John 1:51

Reading: Jacob had not always been a good person. He had done some unkind things, but instead of saying he was sorry, Jacob ran away. He lived away from his family for many years, but now it was time to meet with his brother. He had to face up to the things he had done wrong many years before. The night before he was going to see his brother, God spoke to Jacob in a dream. In the dream, Jacob saw angels walking on a ladder that reached from Heaven to Earth. God reminded Jacob of promises God had made to Jacob's father and grandfather. God reminded Jacob that those promises were meant for him, too. Jacob thought that he had run away from God, but God was always with him.

Talk About: How do you know that God is always with you?

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

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December 9 – Tablets

Scripture: Deuteronomy 5:1-22, Romans 10:4, Hebrews 4:15, Col 2:13-15



Reading: God wants us to love each other. God wants us to treat others the way that we want to be treated. Many years ago God gave Moses the ten best rules for living. These rules are called the Ten Commandments and they are still good rules for us today. Not everyone likes to follow the rules. They think rules keep them from having fun. God gave us the rules not as a punishment, but as a way of showing us our need for a Savior. Every one of us has sinned and sin and fallen short. Jesus is the only one who lived a perfect, sinless life. He is the only one who can forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Then, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can strive to follow God’s rules and please Him in everything we do.

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

Prayer: Righteous God, thank you for giving us rules to guide us. Thank you for Jesus, the only one who lived a perfect, sinless life so that we can be forgiven.

December 10 – Rope

Scripture: Joshua 2:1-21



Reading: The Israelites were ready to enter the land that God had promised them. They sent two men into the land to find out more about the land. It was very dangerous to go into the land; if the people who ruled the land had found the two Israelites they would have been killed. Rahab saved the lives of two of God's people. She hid the two men in her house and then helped them to escape. She knew that God had promised the city of Jericho to Joshua and the Israelites, and she believed that God is a powerful God. Rahab honored God because she believed in God's power. In return, the Israelites protected Rahab and her family. Rahab hung a red rope from the window in her house so that the Israelites would remember to protect her. God remembered Rahab and took care of her for the rest of her life. When we trust in Christ, we receive Christ power to live for and honor God in all circumstances!

Talk About: Tell about a time when God gave you courage to help someone.

Prayer: Dear God, give us courage to serve you and help others.

December 11 – Grain

Scripture: Ruth 1:15, 2:3, 4:13-17, Matthew 1:1-5



Reading: Ruth and Naomi had lost all the people they loved. Naomi's two sons--one of them was Ruth's husband--had died, and Naomi's husband had died too. Naomi had been living in Ruth's country, far from her family, and so Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem. Ruth could have stayed in her own country with her own family, but she chose to go to Bethlehem with Naomi. Naomi was so sad that she thought that God had forgotten her. In the days of the Bible, most women couldn't get jobs, so women would go to the fields and take the grain that the farmers left behind. Ruth went to the field to gather grain, and there she met Boaz, a relative of Naomi's, who took care of them. Boaz and Ruth married and had a son, and Naomi was happy. She knew that God had not forgotten them, even when she had been sad. The grain reminds us that just as Boaz rescued Ruth, God sent Jesus to rescue us! God blessed Ruth as a great-grandmother of Jesus.

Talk About: When did you feel really sad? How was God with you in that situation?

Prayer: Holy God, thank you for turning our sadness into joy.

December 12 – Oil Horn

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-13, Matthew 2:9-12



Reading: God has a plan for you. Even when we are young, God sees into our hearts and knows what kind of people we are and what kind of people we will be. Most of the grown-ups who saw David thought he was just a kid who tended the sheep, but while David was still a child God chose him to be a king. God's servant Samuel poured oil on David's head and anointed him as the future king of Israel. Similarly, when Jesus was born the Magi came and recognized Jesus as the King. They responded by worshipping Him! God had a plan for David and for each of us through Jesus. Not many of us will be rulers, but each of us can serve God in important ways. It's important to listen for God's call and to find ways to honor God in our lives.

Talk About: How can you honor God in your life?

Prayer: God of wisdom, guide and lead us to fulfill your plans for us.

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December 13 – Fire & Altar

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:17-24,36-39, 1 Corinthians 6:14, Acts 2:24



Reading: The people of Israel had forgotten to worship God. Instead, they were worshiping a false god named Baal. God sent his prophet Elijah to remind the people about the true God. But the people didn't want to listen to Elijah. So Elijah offered to show the people God's power. He prepared a sacrifice, and the prophets of Baal prepared a sacrifice. The prophets of Baal prayed that their god would send fire to burn the sacrifice, but of course the false god did nothing. When Elijah prayed, God sent fire. The Israelites had forgotten God, until God showed them a miracle. The greatest miracle God performed was raising Christ from the dead! God still does miracles today as He changes people's lives forever. Our God is a great God. We need to praise God at all times.

Talk About: What are some things you can do to praise God?

Prayer: We praise you, powerful God, for all that you have done for us. Thank you for raising Christ from the dead.

December 14 – Scepter

Scripture: Esther 4, Romans 8:28, Acts 2:23, 1 Peter 1:20



Reading: God is at work in everything. Sometimes things don't seem to make any sense to us at all, but later we understand why God put us in a certain place at a certain time. Esther was a beautiful woman, and because she was beautiful she became queen. God used Esther to save the Jewish people from death. Esther's uncle told her of the danger to her and to her people, and he helped her to plan how to save the people. At first she didn't think she could help, but her uncle reminded her that everyone is important. God had put Esther in the palace for a special job. God used Esther to save many lives. God had a special job for His Son to save people from their sins.

Talk About: Does God have a special job for you?

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

December 15 – Scroll

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7



Reading: The scroll represents God's message to His people. Many, many years before Jesus was born, people called prophets would bring God's message to the people of Israel. The prophets reminded the people of what God wanted them to do. God wanted them to honor him and love each other. The prophets told the people to worship only the one true God. The prophets reminded people that God had promised a savior. The prophets gave the people hope that no matter how bad things might be here on earth, God had not forgotten them. God was going to send a child who would grow to be the world's savior.

Talk About: Have you ever forgotten a promise?

Prayer: Father, thank you keeping every promise you have made to us.

December 16 – Lamb & Wolf

Scripture: Isaiah 11:6-9, Isaiah 9:6, Ephesians 2:13-18



Reading: Animals are one of God's great gifts to us. God made each animal unique. Many of them are gentle, but many others can hurt us or other animals. Most animals only hurt others when they are hungry or frightened. Before Eve and Adam sinned, all of the animals got along with each other. There was no danger. God created a peaceful kingdom, but sin changed things. God sent Jesus, the Prince of Peace to earth to save us from our sin. Only through trusting in Jesus can we have true peace. Someday God will restore peace to the world. In a peaceful world, all of God's children will get along too. There will be no more war and no more pain. What a wonderful place that will be!

Talk About: How can you be a peacemaker?

Prayer: Loving God, help us find ways to have peace in our world and tell others about Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

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December 17 – Big Fish

Scripture: Jonah 1:1-17, 3:1-5, Matthew 12:38-41



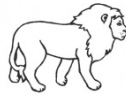
Reading: Jonah was one of God's special preachers, called a prophet. God asked Jonah to do a special and important job. But Jonah didn't want to do the job God asked him to do, and so he ran away. Of course, God always knew where Jonah went; no one can hide from God. God was with Jonah on the storm-tossed ship, and God was with Jonah in the belly of the fish. Jonah was in the belly of a big fish for 3 days and 3 nights. Jesus used this story of Jonah to say how long he would be in the tomb. God was with Jonah when he finally went to Nineveh to do the job God had asked Jonah to do. We can't hide from God. God wants us to obey him, but even when we don't, God is still with us. God loves us at all times and in all places.

Talk About: Have you ever tried to hide from God?

Prayer: Loving God, forgive me for the times I have tried to hide from you. Help me to obey you.

December 18 – Lion

Scripture: Daniel 6, Phil 2:8



Reading: God wants to be the most important thing in our lives: more important than our family, more important than our things, more important than even our own lives. Daniel understood that; he worshiped God even though it might cost him everything, even his own life. It was against the King's law for Daniel to worship God, but Daniel knew that God is the only true God, and he would not stop worshiping God. Daniel was punished for breaking the law, and he was put in a pit with lions. But God protected Daniel from becoming the lions' dinner. God used Daniel to show His power, and many others worshiped God because Daniel had trusted and honored God. Jesus was obedient to God even to the point of death on a cross. God raised Jesus from the dead showing God's power over sin and death.

Talk About: Who do you love the most?

Prayer: Savior God, it is not always easy to love you more than anything else. Help us to worship you above anything and anyone else.

December 19 – Man & Woman

Scripture: Luke 1:5-25, Matthew 3:1-3



Reading: Zechariah and Elizabeth honored God, and God loved them, but they did not have a child. One day while Zechariah was working in the temple, an angel brought him a message from God, saying that he and Elizabeth were going to have a very special son and his name was going to be John. Zechariah wasn't sure he believed the angel, so God took away Zechariah's voice until the baby was born. Imagine if you had seen an angel who had told you wonderful, happy news, and you weren't able to tell anyone what had happened! Zechariah was sad to have lost his voice, but he was happy to know that he would have a son chosen by God to do important work.

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

Prayer: Almighty God, give us the courage to tell everyone about your good works and the Gospel (good news of Jesus).

December 20 – River

Scripture: Matthew 3:1-6



Reading: Elizabeth and Zechariah's son grew up to be John the Baptist. He was Jesus' cousin. God chose him to tell the people about Jesus. John wanted people to know that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior that God had promised the people so many years ago. He wanted them to be ready to believe in Jesus. John wanted the people to turn back to God, and he baptized them in the river if they promised to turn away from their sins. The baptism reminded them that God forgave them for their sins. John did not look like other people, and some people probably thought he was a little strange. But many other people listened to John, and they were ready to be forgiven and believe in Jesus.

Talk About: What do you need forgiveness for today?

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

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December 21 – Heart



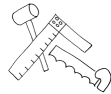
Scripture: Isaiah 7:14, Luke 1:26-28

Reading: God had a special job for someone. God was looking for an earthly home for baby Jesus. Jesus was going to need a mother who loved and trusted God. God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother. God sent an angel to talk to Mary. Mary wasn't sure that she could be a good mother to Jesus, but the angel reminded Mary that God would be with her. She loved God and wanted to do whatever she could to serve him. Mary said yes with a joyful heart.

Talk About: Talk about some things that have happened to you or others that seemed impossible for you to do alone.

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

December 22 – Tools



Scripture: Jeremiah 33:15, Matthew 1:18-25

Reading: The tools remind us that Joseph was Jesus' father on earth. Joseph was a carpenter. God sent an angel to talk to Joseph in a dream. The angel explained that God had chosen Mary and that her baby (Jesus) would be very special. When Joseph woke up, he knew that he and Mary were a part of God's plan. Joseph was a descendent of King David.

Talk About: Name some ways that God speaks to us.

Prayer: Almighty God, help us to hear and obey your voice.

December 23 – Sandals



Scripture: Luke 2:1-5

Reading: The sandals represent the journey Joseph and Mary took to Bethlehem. Sometimes taking a trip is fun, like when we go on vacation. Sometimes it's not so fun, like when we go to the doctor when we're sick. But usually when we're on a journey, whether a short trip or a long one, we experience something new. We learn things on a journey. Mary and Joseph had to take a journey. If we were to take the same journey by car it wouldn't take very long, but because Mary and Joseph were walking, it took a long time. They had to go to Bethlehem and it was all part of God's plan. Their journey to Bethlehem fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

Talk About: What new journeys did you take this past year?

Prayer: God, guide us on our journeys wherever they may take us.

December 24 – City



Scripture: Micah 5:1-5a, Matthew 2:1

Reading: Often God does things that surprise us. God chose the small town of Bethlehem for the birthplace of Jesus. In Bible times, most rulers in important families were born in bigger cities, but Jesus was born into an ordinary family in a small village. God chose Bethlehem many years before Jesus was born. The prophet Micah wrote that Bethlehem would be the place where the Savior would be born. But even so, the town of Bethlehem wasn't ready for the birth of Jesus. There was no place prepared for God's Son to be born. The day when we celebrate Jesus' birth will soon be here. We need to make our hearts ready.

Talk About: How are you getting ready for Jesus' birth?

Prayer: Eternal God, prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

December 25 – Star



Scripture: Psalm 72:10-11, Isaiah 60:3, Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11

Reading: The star led the wise men to baby Jesus. Our waiting is over! Jesus is born! The star is shining, the angels are singing, the shepherds are worshiping. Our Savior is here! When sin first came into the world, God made a promise. Even when the people forgot about God and the promise, God didn't forget about the people. God guided the people, protected the people, and loved the people, even when they were sinful. God was faithful, and today we remember the promise is fulfilled.

Talk About: What is your favorite part of the Christmas story?

Prayer: Thank you, God of the universe, for the most wonderful gift of your son, Jesus.