

Family Advent Devotional



Wonders OF His Love

Finding Jesus
in Isaiah

Champ Thornton

ILLUSTRATED BY
Jeremy Slagle

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Introduction

The word *advent* means arrival. For kids it may mean the never-ending weeks before the arrival of Christmas gifts.

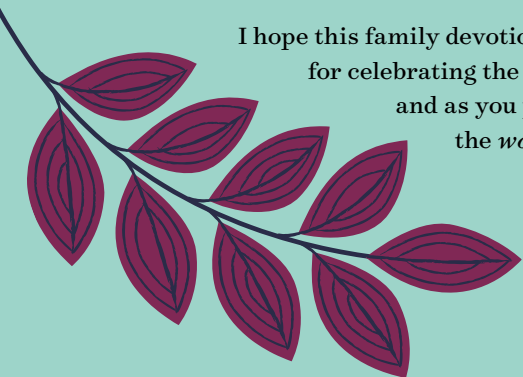
But the season of Advent is when Christians remember the long-awaited arrival of the Messiah. During these weeks, as we look forward to Christmas, we stand in the sandals of those who waited centuries for the arrival of the One God had prophesied would come.

One of these prophets was Isaiah. His prophecy spans 66 chapters and contains over 37,000 words in English. Isaiah uses some of his words to paint pictures—flocks and fruit, roots and roads, swimmers and shepherds. He helps us see the real-world connections between God’s truth and God’s world.

Wonders of His Love: Finding Jesus in Isaiah will help your family visualize the main portrait Isaiah paints—of the promised and long-awaited Messiah.

In each week of this family devotional, there are five short devotionals to read aloud. Each one is intended for even little children to grasp. You’ll also find fun bonus sections, as well as crafts and activities to help make family memories together.

I hope this family devotional will help you prepare for celebrating the arrival of the Messiah—
and as you prepare, for delighting in
the *wonders of his love*.



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Week One

The First Wonder

Jesus Is the Light of the World
and He Makes Us See

Day 1: Picture It

Light Shines in the Darkness

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. Isaiah 9:2

Have you ever tried to walk in the dark? Let's try something simpler. Close your eyes. No looking around.

Now without opening your eyes—try to touch your nose. Easy, right?

Close your eyes again. In your mind, pick out something in the room related to Christmas—a wreath, a stocking, an ornament. Try to point at it. Keep pointing. Open your eyes. Were you close?

Can you imagine living in the dark?
Always night, and never day?

Some animals love the dark.
They sleep during the day and play at night.

Bats and rats. Owls and aardvarks.
God made them able to see at night.

But how would you do in the dark? Could you find your toys?
Your room? Your friends? Your nose?

We're not made for the dark. We need the light.

But for thousands of years, most people lived in darkness. Not in darkness of night but in darkness of heart. Ever since the

first people sinned against God, they were born not being able to see what they were doing, and they couldn't see what God was doing.

They were in the dark. They thought they knew what God wanted. They thought they knew the right way to him. They thought if they could just worship the right God, it would be OK—so they worshiped hundreds of gods just to be safe.

They thought if they could just be good enough, it would be OK—so they tried to be perfect. And then sometimes (lots of times) they just gave up trying and did whatever they wanted.

But like walking in the dark, without God no one could find their way. And people ended up getting hurt. In the dark, they tripped on things and crashed into each other. Without God, they stumbled and fumbled along.

But the darkness wasn't around them, it was in them. They couldn't just turn on the light. They needed someone to open their eyes, to lead them from darkness to light.

And someone did.

God gave light to his people. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah announced what God was going to do about the darkness in people's hearts. He promised: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone" (Isaiah 9:2). Jesus is the promised Light of the World.

Questions

What's so bad about living in the darkness of the heart?

Why is it so good that Jesus is the light of the world?

Day 2: A Closer Look

Jesus Is the Light

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. Luke 2:8–16

On the night when Jesus was born, the nighttime sky shone like day—bursting with blazing light and angel song. A Savior had been born.

When the shepherds came to see Jesus, they stepped out of the dark streets into the light of that tiny room. And for the first time, they could see the Son—whose life would shine and whose death would bring the darkness to an end.

And when the child grew up, whatever he said and did were like rays of early morning sunlight piercing the night’s darkness (John 1:5).

How did Jesus bring light to the world?

He took every dark thing and shone the light of his love on it. When he cleansed the lepers, you could see the light of his love. When he healed the sick, his light shone. When he raised the dead, light broke into the darkness. His light of love was the light of life (John 1:4).

Questions

What did Jesus do in the Bible that amazes you the most? Why?

What has Jesus done for you that amazes you the most? Why?

Day 3: A Promise to Remember

You Will Never Be Alone

I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them. Isaiah 42:16b

Are you sometimes worried that you are all alone?

It's true that wanting to go our own way and not God's way (what the Bible calls sin) has separated us from God (Isaiah 53:6). We are far from God, and we can't get back. We are lost in darkness. But Jesus can bring us back.

Jesus always walked in the light (John 8:12). He always went God's way (Philippians 2:8). He always loved God and loved people. He didn't fight with his brothers and sisters. He didn't make fun of anyone. He didn't disobey his parents.

So when he died on the cross, he didn't give his life for his own sins. He gave his life for ours (1 John 3:16). All we have to do is turn to him and ask for forgiveness and he will forgive and welcome us into his family. And he gives us new eyes to see God.

Now we can be sure that God will always be with us (Hebrews 13:5). We will never be forsaken. We will never be all alone. We can see clearly to follow Jesus. He is the light of the world.

Because of him, we will live in the light of God's love, not only at Christmas but every day of every year.



Questions

What would heaven be like if Jesus weren't there?

Would you still want to go if Jesus wouldn't be there?

Day 4: A Challenge to Accept

We Are the Light of the World

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.” Matthew 5:14

Here’s something amazing. Not only does Jesus say he is the light of the world but then he turns right around and says to his followers, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). How can that be? It turns out that when we ask Jesus for forgiveness and put our faith in him, then he lives in us and his light shines through us.

Jesus gives us the job of shining the light of his love on the world around us (Matthew 5:14). Just like you can see the lights of a city from far away, so you can see, from a long ways away, the light of God’s love shining in the kind things Christians do for others.

Do you know anyone you can shine the love of Jesus on today? What about someone at school—someone the other kids aren’t very nice to? What about a neighbor? What about your brothers and sisters? It can be especially hard to love your own family!

Did you know that sometimes people get extra sad at Christmas time? They miss their families or they see others getting gifts and their own families don’t have enough money for gifts. Is there someone your family could share God’s love with this Christmas? Think about that together.

Maybe you can start a new tradition of shining the love of Christ on someone or some family at Christmas time every year. Jesus is the light of the world, and when you help others, his light shines through you.

Questions

How can you shine your light this week?

Who are some people that you could help or encourage?



Day 5: Family Fun

There is another way that light was used to announce the birth of Jesus, the Light of the World. In Matthew 2:1-11, read the story of the wisemen who, following the bright light of the “star,” found Jesus, the light of the world.

After this Christmas carol, you’ll find lots of fun for the whole family: crafts and other activities.



O Come All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him,
born the king of angels.

Refrain:

O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heav’n above:
“Glory to God,
all glory in the highest!” [Refrain]

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning,
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv’n;
Word of the Father,
Late in flesh appearing. [Refrain]

Craft

Week 1: Ornament

Supplies You'll Need: Week 1 ornament craft (one copy for each child); coloring/art supplies; scissors; glue stick or tape; yarn or string. Note: Scan the QR code at the back of the book to access digital copies of the ornament crafts.

Directions: Cut out the ornament copy and have the children decorate the design. Read the "Isaiah says" and the "Jesus says" statements. Then have the children write their answer to the "I say" statement. Fold the ornament on the dotted line. Make a string or yarn loop for hanging and tuck it into the fold. Tape or glue the ornament closed.

Ornament Questions

What does Isaiah say?

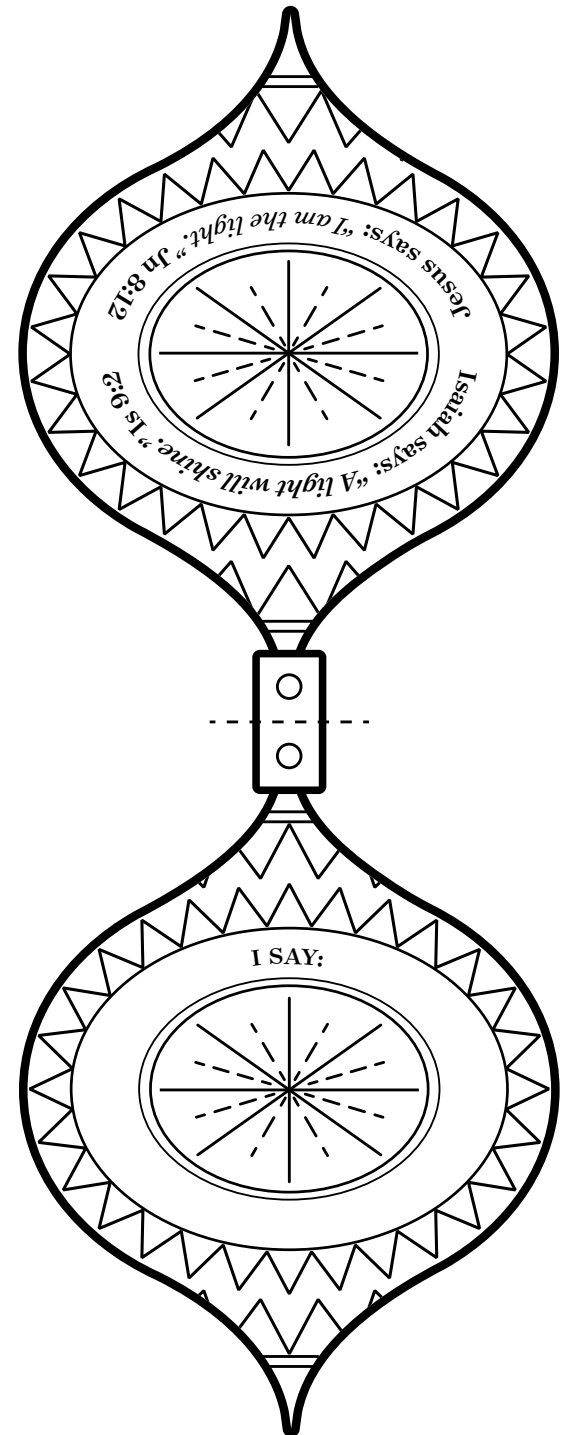
Answer: "A light will shine."

What does Jesus say?

Answer: "I am the light."

What do we say and believe?

Answer: "Jesus makes me see."



Other Activities

All of this week's activities involve light (e.g., stars, glow sticks, flashlights). In each one you'll have an opportunity to discuss how Jesus is the light of the world and makes us see.

Activity #1

Use this recipe, or one of your choice, to make Christmas cookies in the shape of stars. After the cookies are cooled, frost/decorate them.

Sugar Cookie Stars

Yield: 5 dozen

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups unsalted butter, softened
- 2 cups white sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt

Directions

1. In a large bowl, beat together butter and sugar until smooth and creamy. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Stir in the flour, baking powder, and salt until combined well.
2. Divide the dough in half and shape each half into a ball. Wrap the balls separately in plastic wrap and chill for at least one hour.
3. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. On a floured surface, roll out the dough, one ball at a time, ⅛- to ¼-in. thick. Cut into shapes with a star-shaped cookie cutter. Place cookies 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheets.
4. Bake 6 to 8 minutes in preheated oven. Cool completely.

Activity #2

Supplies You'll Need: flexible glow sticks

Glow Stick Ring Toss

Bend flexible glow sticks, which you can get at most stores, into circles. Then turn out the lights and play a "ring toss" game. Each person gets three chances to toss their glow-stick circle onto a door knob. (Or you could play tic-tac-toe using glow stick circles as "Os" and glow sticks taped into "Xs".

Activity #3

Supplies You'll Need: pen; paper; flashlight; small prize

Scavenger Hunt

Create a scavenger hunt, by writing short descriptions on pieces of paper and hiding them around your home (examples below). Then with everyone holding or sharing a flashlight, turn off the lights, and go from one clue to the next, letting your children guess where the next clue might be. You can have a special prize (like candy or a small gift or surprise) waiting at the end of the hunt.

Clue Examples:

- 1 **Start with this clue:** I'm the first clue, and I'm hiding in a place that's dark and cold.
- 2 **In the refrigerator/freezer:** I'm the next clue, but I'm working under cover.
- 3 **In someone's bed:** I'm the next clue, and I want to star in my own show.
- 4 **Near the television:** I'm the final clue, and I have a gift for you.
- 5 **The final clue is under the Christmas tree or in a Christmas stocking.**

Was Jesus Born in a Stable?

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:7

You might think Jesus was born in a stable because Luke 2:7 says baby Jesus was laid in a manger—a feeding trough for animals. People throughout church history have offered reasons why Jesus might have been born in a barn-like shed, an open-air barnyard, a cave, or even in a shepherd’s tower.

But none of these suggestions quite work. First, no one in Jesus’s world would have turned away even an unexpected guest (Luke 11:6). The word “inn,” really means “guest room” (Luke 22:11). There was no space for them in a guest room.

Joseph and Mary didn’t get turned away from the Bethlehem Hotel at the last minute. In fact, they hadn’t arrived at the last minute at all. Luke says, “And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth” (Luke 2:6). “While they were there”—not, “just as they skidded into town, barely making it in time!”

It seems that Joseph and Mary arrived in plenty of time. But the guest room was already occupied by others. So, where does that leave us? More to the point, where does that leave Joseph and Mary?

Ancient houses were sometimes split-levels, with an upper living area and attached guest room and a lower area to lodge animals at night (1 Samuel 28:24). (Even today, residents in rural areas of Switzerland for example, often house animals on the lower level of their homes—providing security for livestock and some additional warmth to the house.) And in this kind of house, mangers were often little holes carved into the edge of the floor right before it dropped off to the lower level.¹

So even if Jesus wasn’t born in a cave or a barn, he was born in a humble place. He’s a Savior for men, women, and children from all levels of society. And that is indeed “good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Luke 2:10).

