
Jesse Tree
AN ADVENT FAMILY
DEVOTIONAL

The Jesse Tree: An Advent Celebration

Many families mark the days of advent with a traditional advent calendar, opening a tiny door for each day leading up to Christmas. The Jesse Tree Advent tradition also marks each day from the first Sunday in Advent to Christmas. But instead of little doors, the Jesse Tree uses ornaments to highlight moments in the Biblical storyline from Creation to Cross. In our home, the Jesse Tree is a tiny foot and a half discount store Christmas tree. On it, we hang a laminated paper ornament for each day of Advent.

We all have a family tree–branches filled with mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Jesus has a family tree as well. In Isaiah 11:1 we read, "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." Jesse was the father of David, Israel's greatest king. And it was from David's lineage that Jesus came.

The Jesse Tree is a way we can remember Jesus's family heritage. Each ornament on the tree represents the story of a person in Jesus' family line. As the symbol is hung on the tree, a Bible passage is read. The stories help us remember Jesus's family and our place in it. As we read the Word, we remember that Jesus came to save his family. We remember our adoption into God's family. And as we teach the next generation, we pray that God will include them in this family as well by giving them living faith.

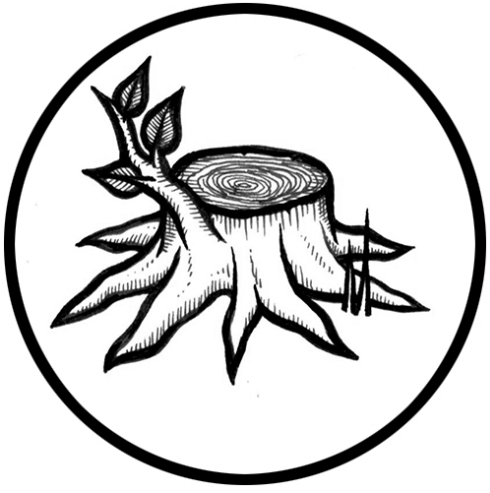
How to use this project packet and devotional guide

1. Decorate the circular ornaments. You can use colored pencils or markers or crayons. Be creative and have fun!

2. Each night during advent, hang one ornament on the tree.

Read the verses referenced on that ornament and the devotional text included here. If you start after December 2, that's ok! Just catch up by doing more than one per night.

Adapted for Sojourn Community Church from "Jesse Tree Family Devotions" Reformed Church in America.
Accessed at https://www.rca.org/resources/jesse-tree-family-devotions



December 2: The Stump of Jesse
Read: Isaiah 11:1-9

Can you name some of the people who are part of your family tree? Who is the Branch that will grow on Jesse's tree? It's Jesus!
What does this passage say that Jesus would be like when he came? Why is Jesus better than anyone who came before him.

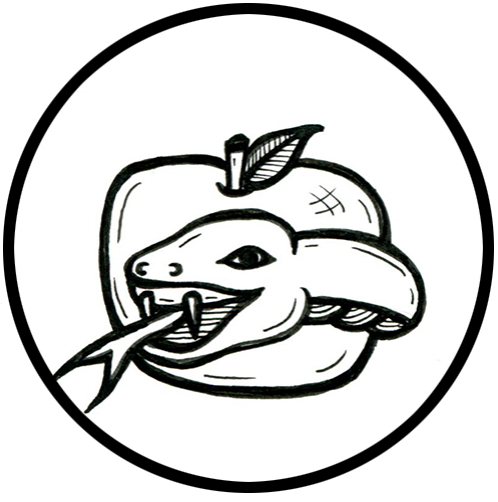


December 3: The World
Read: Genesis 1:26-31

What were the first people like? Being made in God's image means that people get to show the whole world —all the creatures and all creation—what God is like.

Can you name some of the creatures in these verses?

How can we show the whole world God's kingly love?



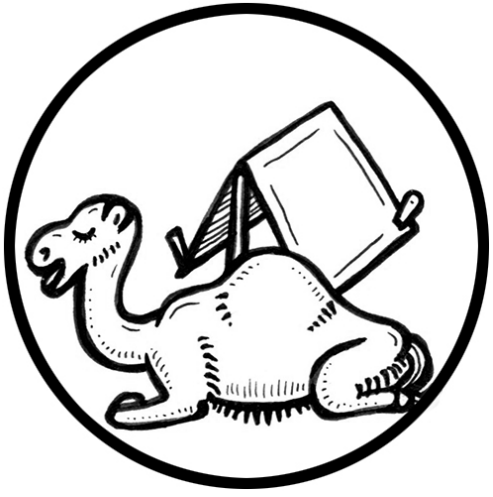
December 4: Snake and Fruit
Read: Genesis 3:1-19

God made a beautiful garden for the man and woman. He showed them his love by giving them everything they needed. But Satan tempted them to eat the one fruit that would kill them. Why was the fruit so tempting? How are you tempted to sin against God? Pray that God will help you remember his goodness and love when you are tempted. Pray that he will help you obey him.



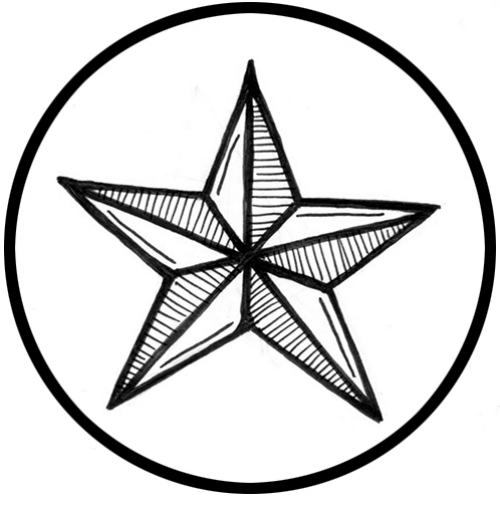
December 5: The Rainbow
Genesis 6:11-14; 7:17-8:3; 9:8-13

Why did God decide to flood the entire earth? Why did he choose to save Noah and his family? Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. It was not because of his obedient life. What did God use to save Noah's family? What did God put in the sky to help Noah remember the promise?
Pray that God will help us remember his promises.



December 6: Abraham's Tent
Genesis 12:1-7

Have you ever had to move to a new house or a new city? What would it feel like to leave your old place, your school, and your friends? How old was Abraham when God asked him to move? How do you think Abraham felt? What did God promise to Abraham?
Pray that God will help us trust and follow him even when it is difficult.



December 7: The Star
Genesis 15:1-6

God promised to give Abraham a child in his family for every star in the sky. Can you count all of the stars? How many do you think there are? Did you know that Jesus was a part of Abraham's family? Did you know that God makes everyone who trusts in Jesus to be a part of Abraham's family too? He does.
Thank you, God, for making us a part of your big family.



December 8: The Crib
Genesis 21:1-7

What do you want more than anything else? Sarah wanted a baby, and gave it to her. God doesn't give us everything we want, but he gives us all we need—and more! Sarah was so happy with her new baby that she laughed, and she said, "All my friends will laugh too." Thank God for all of the wonderful gifts he has given to you.



December 9: The Ram
Genesis 22:1-14

Have you ever had to give away something that you really loved? What did God ask Abraham to give up in this story? Did Abraham kill Isaac? No! God provided a substitute sacrifice. Did you know that God provides a substitute sacrifice for us? God loved the world in this way. He gave his only son, Jesus, so that whoever believes him would not die but have eternal life.



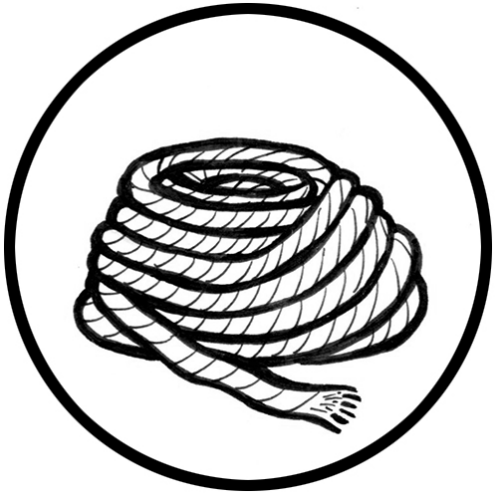
December 10: Joseph's Coat
Genesis 37:1-36

How was Joseph mistreated by his brothers in the story? Do you ever feel like others bully you or treat you badly? The good thing is that Jesus knows all about being betrayed and mistreated by the people closes to him. But he still loves people like Joseph's brothers. Thank Jesus for forgiving sinners.



December 11: The Law
Deuteronomy 5:1-22

What rules helps your family live together and be happy? God gave rules to his family to help them live together in harmony. Can you name all ten of the commandments? Can anyone keep God's law? No one but Jesus can keep God's law perfectly.
Thank you, Jesus, for your perfect obedience. Give us your Holy Spirit to help us obey your law and love others.



December 12: The Scarlet Rope
Joshua 2:1-21

Did you know that there were people in Jesus's family tree that were not Israelites? Why was Rahab included in God's family? Rahab trusted God, and she helped the Israelite men when they came to spy out the land. What did Rahab hang from her window so that the Israelites would remember to protect her?

Tell about a time when you had courage to help someone.



December 13: Gathering Grain
Ruth 1:15-2:3

Why did Ruth choose to stay with Naomi and help her? Because she loved her. 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. Ruth could have stayed in her own country with her own family, but she chose to go to Bethlehem with Naomi. She chose to follow Naomi's God, the true God. Who loves you and chooses to take care of you? Thank them, and thank God for sending Jesus to love and care for us.



December 14: The Anointing Oil
1 Samuel 16:1-13

Why did God choose David to be king? Was it because he was the biggest and strongest? No. God chose David to be king because he was getting his people ready for an even greater King. King Jesus would not look like much at first. He would be born in a stable and not a palace. He would be laid in a manger and not a crib with lots of toys. Father, help us to remember that you have chosen the weak and poor things of this world as your own. Help us not to brag about our bigness but only about Jesus. Amen.

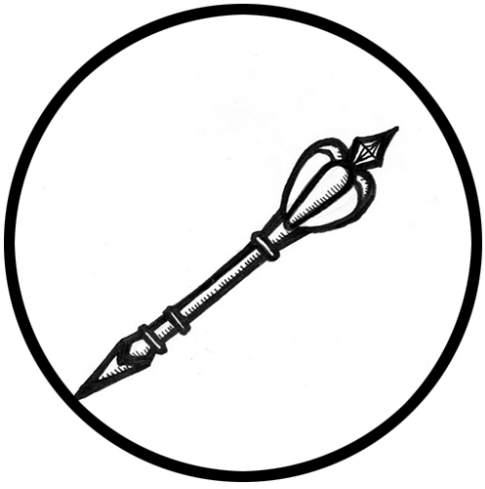


December 15: The Altar

1 Kings 18:17-24, 36-39

The people of Israel had forgotten to worship God. What was the name of the gods that they worshiped instead? Who was the prophet God sent to remind the people about the true God? What happened in the story? Our God is a great God and the only true God.

Father, help us to praise you as the only true God.



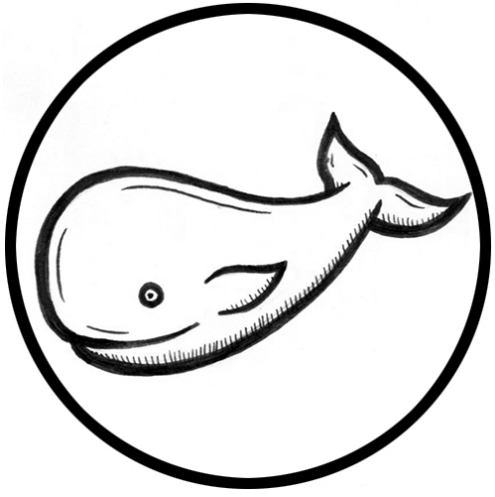
December 16: The Royal Scepter
Esther 4

Why was Esther afraid to go before the king at first? Can you think of a time when you needed to brave? Esther bravely talked to the king in order to save her people. Jesus prays for us and talks to God the Father in heaven. Thank you, Jesus, for being our perfect representative.



December 17: The Wolf and the Lamb
Isaiah 11:6-9

Before Adam and Eve sinned, all of the animals got along with each other. There was no danger. God created a peaceful kingdom, but sin changed things. Someday God will restore peace to the world. There will be no hunger or fear, and all of the animals will get along again. They will not hurt each other, and we will not hurt them. In a peace-ful world, all of God's children will be at peace too. There will be no more war and no more pain. What a wonderful world that will be! Come Lord Jesus and bring peace to your creation.



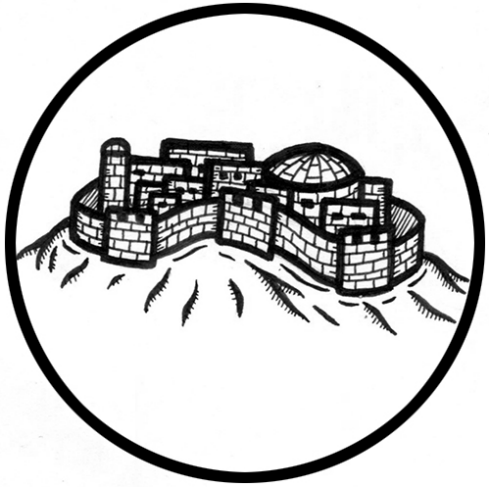
December 18: Jonah and the Great Fish
Jonah 3:1-5

Jonah had a hard time believing that God wanted to save the people of Nineveh. They were Israel's enemies. But Jesus tells us to love our enemies. And when Jonah finally preached to the people of Nineveh, they turned away from their sin.
Father, help us to love all people—even our enemies. Amen.



December 19: Lions
Daniel 6

Have you ever chosen to do something you knew was right even though you knew it might be difficult? Daniel worshiped and prayed to God even though it might cost him his own life. It was against the law for Daniel to worship God, but Daniel knew that God is the only true God, and he would not stop praying to Him.
Lord, help us to always obey you even when it may hurt.



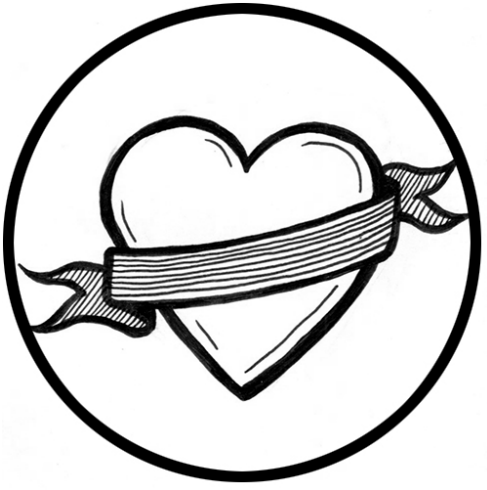
December 20: Little Town of Bethlehem
Micah 5:1-5

Do you like surprises? God does things that surprise us. God chose the small town of Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus. In Bible times, most rulers in important families were born in big cities, but Jesus was born into an ordinary family in a small village.
What does the prophet Micah tell us about the prophet who will come from Bethlehem?



December 21: Zechariah and Elizabeth
Luke 1:5-25

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. What did the angel say to Zechariah? Why was it hard to believe? Sometimes it is difficult to believe God's good news.
Father, prepare our hearts to believe the good news about your Son.



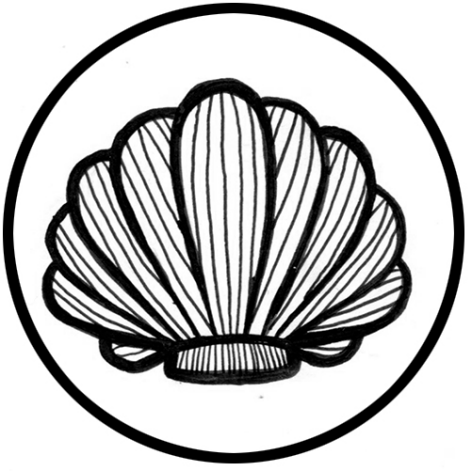
December 22: Mary (Heart)
Luke 1: 26-38

It didn't seem possible! Mary was just a young girl, but the angel announced, "You will be a mother, and the baby will be God's son." Mary was not chosen because she was good, smart, or strong. God showed great grace and kindness to Mary by choosing her for this important job. Father, give us great grace and turn our hearts toward you. Help us to pray like Mary: "Let it be according to your will."



December 23: Joseph (Carpenter Tools)
Luke 2:1-5

Jesus had an earthly father named Joseph. He was a carpenter. God sent an angel to talk to Joseph in a dream. The angel explained that God had chosen Mary, and that Mary's baby would be very special. When Joseph woke up, he knew that he and Mary were a part of God's great rescue plan. The angel promised, "The baby will save his people from their sins." God has come near to bring salvation. Father, help us to trust you as our Savior.



December 24: John the Baptist (Shell)
Matthew 3:1-6

Zechariah and Elizabeth'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 before. He wanted them to be ready to believe in Jesus. John wanted the people to remember God, and he baptized them in the river if they confessed their sins and turned away from them.

Father, forgive our sins. Help us to trust and follow Jesus.



December 25: Jesus is Born!!!
Luke 2:6-21

Our waiting is over! Jesus is born! The star is shining, the angels are singing, the shepherds are worshiping. Our savior is here!

Mary was happy to have her beautiful baby, but she knew that not every day would be as special as his birth day. She knew that raising God's son was going to be a challenge. But for the moment she tried to enjoy all the amazing things that had happened.

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 the promise is fulfilled.