

The Jesse Tree

*Then a shoot will spring from
the stem of Jesse and a branch from
his root will bear fruit. And the Spirit
of the Lord will rest upon Him.*

Isaiah 11:1-2

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What is a Jesse Tree?

The Jesse tree is a symbolic tree that is decorated each week, usually by the children, with ornaments or objects that represent Old Testament events from Creation to the Birth of Jesus. The ornaments are traditionally handmade, and are added one each day of Advent, or a group on each Sunday, with explanations of the symbols and a brief verse of Scripture from the story represented. The Jesse Tree is named from Isaiah 11:1: "A shoot will spring forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots." It is a vehicle to tell the Story of God in the Old Testament, and to connect the Advent Season with the faithfulness of God across 4,000 years of history. The branch is a biblical sign of newness out of discouragement, which became a way to talk about the expected Messiah (e.g., Jer 23:5). It is therefore an appropriate symbol of Jesus the Christ, who is the revelation of the grace and faithfulness of God.

The devotionals that join the construction of the Jesse Tree are designed to be used each day during the month of December, except for the Sundays of Advent. The lessons are in chronological order from God the Father to Adam and his sons continuing through to the birth of the Son of God. Although not all of the characters are in the direct line of Jesus, they are all part of his national family and each foretold something about the promised Messiah. To reinforce these lessons, a symbol of each devotional may be hung on your own Jesse Tree (a bare branch, a tiny evergreen or on the Christmas tree itself.) Instructions for making these twenty ornaments are included.

The Biblical History of the Jesse Tree:

The Israelites through the descendants of Abraham were chosen by God to be a light to the nations. When they were imprisoned by the Egyptians, they cried out to God for deliverance from their oppression. And God responded: "I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their cry . . . I have come to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them to a good land" (Exod 3:7-8). And so He entered history in a marvelous way to deliver them and bring them into a place where they could worship God and serve Him in peace and joy instead of serving Pharaoh in hard service. God promised to be with them and to be their God, and they would be His people. But as they settled into the land that God had given them, "they forgot God, their Deliverer, who had done great things in Egypt" (Psa 106:21). As they grew secure in the land, they began to believe that "my power and the strength of my own hand have gotten me these things" (Deut 8:17). Even though God had raised up godly leaders like David, later kings and religious leaders served their own interests, and the people began to worship the false gods of the land. They even gave offerings to the idol ba'al, supposedly the god of rain and fertility of the land, thanking him for the prosperity they enjoyed.

But God grieved because "she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished upon her silver and gold that they used for baal" (Hos 2:8). God had "planted [them] as a choice vine from the purest stock" (Jer 2:21) and had expected them to grow and flourish and carry out His purposes in the world. But they had degenerated into a wild bush with worthless fruit. Because they had forgotten God, they also forgot the call of God to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:8). God sent prophets to warn them of the consequences of failing to be His people. Amos warned them to "seek me and live" (5:4). Through Jeremiah, God promised them that if they would turn from their wicked ways He would bless them and be with them in the land (7:5-7). But he also said: "Take heed, O Jerusalem, or I shall turn from you in disgust, and make you a desolation" (6:8).

Some of the people longed for new leaders, a new "anointed" (Heb: meshiach; Eng: messiah) shepherd king like David who would help them to become what God had called them to be. But most of the people would not listen. They continued to worship the idols of Baal. They continued to cheat the poor, steal from each other, neglect the needy, and do all manner of evil. So God let them go their own way and suffer the consequences of their choices. The Babylonian armies came and destroyed the temple, the city of Jerusalem, the land, and took the people into slavery. The choice planting of God that had such promise, that God had tended so carefully and encouraged to grow, was cut down and became a mere stump (Isa 5:1-10). But God did not give up on this people! Even though they had disobeyed, even though they had forsaken God for other gods, even though they had miserably failed to be His people and to let Him be their God, the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob still loved them. He had made a commitment to these people that He would not allow to be undone even by their rejection of Him.

He had already told them this through the prophets, but they had not understood then. Jeremiah had promised a day when God would again plant and build (31:28). And Isaiah had spoken of a time when God would cause a new shoot, a new king, to spring from the cut-off stump of the lineage of Jesse, David's father (11:1). During the Exile, suffering under the consequences of sin, they had little reason to suppose that God would do anything new. Still, the old promises echoed across the years, even if they could not believe them or even understand them.

In spite of their failures, in spite of their inability to envision a future beyond exile, there came a time when the prophets again announced a new thing, proclaiming "good tidings" to the people: "Here is your God!" (Isa 40:1-11). The Exile was ended! God would bring back to life a nation that was already dead (Eze 37). Long ago they had been slaves in Egypt, with nothing they could do to change their condition, and yet God had chosen to deliver.

So now, in the midst of their failure and hopelessness, God had again entered history as Deliverer. They would have another chance to be His people, not because they had earned it, no more than they had deserved it the first time; but simply because God in His grace had chosen to forgive. They returned to the land. But across the years, they again struggled to obey and live up to their calling. They would never again slide into the worship of false gods. They had learned that lesson. But the great kingdom that they dreamed of restoring remained only a dream. They had hoped for a new king like David to lead them into a glorious future in which they would rule the world. They hoped to throw off the control of the Greeks and later the Romans and become a great nation. But it didn't happen. And they became disillusioned and discouraged. So, they again hoped for God to raise up a new king, a new messiah, to deliver them from the oppression of the world. They longed for peace and deliverance from the tyranny of a sinful world. The prophets again brought the word of God to them, and promised a newness. Even though they struggled to understand and believe, they held onto the hope that the same God who brought slaves out of Egypt, and who brought exiles out of Babylon, could bring Messiah into the world!

We know the rest of that story. God was faithful to that promise, and a new King was born in Bethlehem. So we can exclaim with the old man Simeon: "My eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared before all people, a light of revelation to the nations, and for glory to your people Israel!" (Luke 2:30-32).

But we also know that the world is still with us. Even though we can have Peace and Joy through the presence of Jesus Christ, we still long for deliverance from the oppression of sin in the world. We long for the full reign of the King, and the Kingdom of Peace that He will bring. So, while we celebrate the birth

of the Branch, the new shoot from the stump of Jesse, we still anticipate with hope the Second Advent, and await the completion of the promise.

The Jesse Tree helps us retell this story, and express this hope.

Who was Jesse?

Jesse was a wealthy Bethlehem farmer. He was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth and the father of 8 sons and 2 daughters. His youngest son was David, the second king of Israel. We know little about his life except that he sometimes sent David to watch the sheep, or to take supplies to his older brothers who were fighting the Philistines, or to play his harp for the tormented King Saul. When Samuel came to anoint one of his sons king of Israel, Jesse was surprised that not one of his 7 eldest sons were chosen. In fact, David was still out tending the sheep. In his later years, Jesse and his wife were given shelter among the Moabites lest Saul strike out at them in his anger at David.

Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would come from the family of Jesse and usher in a kingdom of peace, justice, and rest. He also foretold that the Gentiles would be included in this kingdom. He wrote, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots....And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious" (Is 11:1, 10). Because of these prophecies a symbol known as the Jesse Tree became popular among Christians. In pictures and statues Jesse is shown at the base of a tree or bush. At the top of the tree is Jesus and Mary. In between are pictures of various ancestors of Jesus or important events in the Bible. Jesse Trees are often put up at Christmas time. Ornaments which depict important Biblical events or characters may be hung on a regular Christmas tree to remind us of God's faithfulness.

Ruth 4:17, 22; I Sam 16:1-13; 17:12-19; Is 11:1,10; Rom 15:12; Mt 1:5; Lk 3:

Day 1. Jesse – A Family Surprise: Scroll

Meditation: Read Isaiah 11:1

Jesse's son, David, had been chosen as the head of a kingly family that would be like a wonderful, noble tree that would rule Israel. However, within a few hundred years, David's descendants no longer were on the throne. There was only a stump left of Jesse's family tree, but Isaiah also promised that the throne would be regained by one of David's descendants. The branch that would someday grow out of the roots of that family tree would be the greatest King of all, the Messiah, Jesus. (Rev.22:16)

Young Children: Explain that we will learn about Jesus's family from the Jesse Tree. Help them to understand that Jesse was King David's father and Jesus came from that family.

Bible Study: The gospel is centered in God's Song, a descendant of David by human genealogy" ...declared the Song of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness....among whom you also are called of Jesus Christ." (Romans 1:2-6) Read Luke 3:31-32, 37,38. Name the following relatives of King David: great grandson; grandson; son; father; grandfather; great grandfather. The Jesse Tree is named after David's father!

QUESTIONS: Of whom was Jesus a descendant? How far back can you name your relatives? Read I John 3:1a. How are WE related to Jesus? Read Jon 3:1-6, 16-18. How are YOU born into God's family.

Family Activity: Draw and fill in your own family tree and/or your version of a Jesse Tree which includes the name of children of God in your household. Make scroll ornament.

Day 2. God –The First Father: Earth

Meditation: The concept of a family existed in eternity. In creation God extended Himself after the heavenly “family” of the Trinity. The wonderful understanding of father love, obedience, oneness and fellowship being the essence of “home” came from the heart of God and has been imprinted on human life since the beginning of creation. Even today our homes are usually the places of our greatest joy or deepest sorrow depending on how well we fulfill God’s concept of a family. In Psalm 68 the Heavenly Father promises to be a father to the fatherless, to give justice to the widows and to give families to the lonely. Our families are important to God.

Young Children: Read or tell the story of the creation of Adam and Eve. Emphasize that God made the earth as a beautiful gift for His children.

Bible Study: Read Genesis 1:26-31 The Heavenly Family (Trinity) was involved in creation. Who are the members of the Heavenly Family? Can you think of some way God is like a good father? (Psalm 103) Read Genesis 2:18-23. Give two reasons from verse 18 why God gave Adam a wife. Make earth ornament.

Day 3. Adam and Eve-Disobedience Brings Death: Fruit

Meditation: Here is a seldom-sung verse of Hark, the Herald Angels Sing that expresses our desire to be obedient like Jesus and not disobedient like Adam and Eve:

Come, Desire of the Nations, come:
Fix in us The humble home;
Rise, the woman’s conquering seed,
Bruise, in us the serpent’s head,
Adam’s likeness now efface,
Stamp Thine image in its place,
Reinstate us in The love.
Hark, the herald angels sing,
Glory to the newborn King.

Young Children: Read or tell the story of the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Emphasize God’s grief over their disobedience, their punishment and God’s love and forgiveness.

Bible Study: Read Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-19. What did God say about the fruit in the garden of Eden? What did Satan say to Eve? Did Eve believe Satan or God? Who else disobeyed God? Whom did Adam blame for his disobedience? Whom did Eve blame? What came into the world when Adam and Eve

disobeyed God? Read Romans 5:12, 18, 19; I Cor. 15:22. What was the result when Jesus gave His life in obedience to God? In John 14:15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." How does God want us to show that we love Him? Make fruit ornament

Day 4. Cain and Abel – God’s Way or Our Way? Altar

Meditation: Sin had entered the world and every child born in the world would be born a natural sinner. This was true even of the first children, Cain and Able. As they were growing up, surely Adam and Eve told them about their own disobedience and the consequences: how God had to kill an animal (to shed blood) to cover their nakedness after they had been exposed by sin.

God required an animal sacrifice so we would understand the deadliness of sin. It also pictured the final complete sacrifice Jesus would make for the sins of the world. As Cain and Abel brought their offerings to God, they came with different offerings and different attitudes. Abel’s offering and heart attitude were acceptable to God, but Cain came with an unacceptable offering and a rebellious heart attitude.

In proud disobedience Cain offered the fruit, of his labor, and harbored envy and hate in his heart. His great, great, great grandson became a murderer also, as the unrepentant Cain passed his attitude on to his children and grandchildren. Abel offered a blood offering and an obedient heart which was pleasing to God. Abel lost his earthly life because of his righteousness, but gained eternal life. God gave Adam and Eve another son to take Abel’s place. That son, Seth, began a line of children that proclaimed the name of the Lord. Jesus said, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Abel’s life and death were the first to bear the fruit of righteousness. The life of Jesus also bore fruit: we are part of that fruit.

Young Children: Read or tell the story of Cain and Abel from Genesis 4:1-6. Emphasize that Cain was angry because God wouldn’t let him do something his own way. Abel wanted to obey God and that made Cain so angry that he killed Abel. God had to punish Cain but he still loved him.

Bible Study: Read Genesis 4:1-16. Hebrews 9:22 says that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. What kind of offering did Cain bring to the Lord? Was it a blood offering? What kind of offering did Abel bring to the Lord? Did Abel shed blood in order to give his offering? What do you think God saw in Cain’s heart? (I John 3:10-12 and I Samuel 16:7) Read I John 3:7-20. Do these verses give you any ideas of the kind of offering we can give that would be a Christmas gift for Jesus? What does Jesus say we should do before offering Him a gift? (Matthew 5:23,24) Make altar ornament.

Day 5. Noah - Way of Escape: Rainbow.

Meditation: This powerful story pictures for all time God’s judgment on a sinful world and His tender care for those who trust Him. There are many lessons for families today but perhaps the most encouraging is the assurance of God’s love and care in the midst of a world system under divine

judgment. How important it is that every member of the family be in the place of safety that God has provided in Christ.

Young Children: Tell or read the story of Noah and the ark. Emphasize that God planned a way for His children to be safe from the flood.

Bible Study: Read Genesis 6:5-10. Describe the people of Noah's day. Why did Noah find favor in God's eyes. (See verse 9) Read Genesis 6:11-22 and draw a picture of the people, animals and the ark. While the family is drawing, one person can read chapter 7 out loud. Read chapter 7:1-5. How could anyone be saved from drowning in the flood? The flood was punishment for the world's sin. How can we be saved from God's punishment for our sin? (See Acts 16:31) Make rainbow ornament.

Day 6. Abraham - Blessed to be a Blessing: Stars.

Meditation: There were three parts to God's promise to Abraham: Canaan would belong to Abraham and his descendants, Abraham would have a son, and all the nations would be blessed by the One coming from Abraham. All God asked of Abraham was trust and obedience. Even when Abraham failed to trust God, God remained faithful when Abraham failed to trust God, God remained faithful and kept His promise. Abraham was great in God's eyes because of his faith. Be encouraged if your faith sometimes falters. God sees the overall leanings of our heart and forgives and forgets our failings and remains true to His promises.

Suggested Advent Hymn: Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus.

Young Children: Tell the story of Abraham found in Genesis 12:1-5; 15:1-6, 12-15. Emphasize God's promise to give a home and a special son to Abraham and the fact that God kept His promise.

Bible Study: Find Ur of Chaldees on a Bible map. This is where Abraham was born. What did God tell Abraham to do in Genesis 12:1 and 15:5? List the promises God gave to Abraham in Genesis 12:2,3. Did God keep His promises to give Abraham a son? (Genesis 21:1-7) The rest of the promise given in Genesis 15:5 would take many more years to fulfill. In fact, Abraham would not live long enough to see the great nation come from Isaac. However, God kept His promise to give him a son. He would surely keep the rest of His promise to bless all the nations. Read Matt. 1:1,2 to see how God kept that promise. How were the nations blessed? How was the birth of Jesus a blessing to the world? Make stars ornament.

Day 7. Isaac & Rebekah – God Chooses: Rings

Meditation: Probably no decision we make (apart from asking Christ to save us) is as important as deciding whom we will marry. Today's story gives us a wonderful example to follow. Even though customs have changed today we can still find helpful principles here. God cares about our homes and wants us to seek His guidance!

Young Children: Tell the story of Isaac and Rebekah. Emphasize God's working plan to bring them together AND God's planning for bringing your family together too.

Bible Study: Children often say to their parents, “Tell about how you met each other.” The Bible tells us a very interesting story about how Abraham’s son, Isaac, met his bride, Rebekah. Read the story in Genesis 24. What was the first thing the servant did in finding a wife for Isaac. (vs. 7) What did the servant do after he met Rebekah? (v.48) Describe the meeting between Isaac and Rebekah. How did your mother and father meet each other? Make rings ornament.

Day 8. Jacob – God’s Ladder: Ladder.

Meditation: God descended to earth at Christmas time. The first line of Joy to the World pictures a musical ladder, a scale, on which the Lord comes down to man. The next phrase pictures what our response should be as our hearts ascend toward heaven to receive the King.

“Joy To The World! The Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room.
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and heaven and nature sing.”

Young Children: Read from a Bible storybook the story of Jacob’s dream of a ladder between heaven and earth. Emphasize God’s desire to communicate with us.

Bible Study: Read Genesis 27. It may be read as a play. Read Genesis 28:10-22. Whom did Jacob see in his dream? What promise did God make to Jacob? How have all the nations of the earth been blessed through Jacob and his descendants? Which descendant’s birthday are we about to celebrate? Jesus explains Jacob’s dream to Nathaniel in John 1:51. Who did Jesus say would be the ladder between heaven and earth? Make ladder ornament.

Day 9. Joseph – Humbled and Exalted: Coat of Many Colors.

Meditation: Joseph must have given God much pleasure. His faults are hard to find and his response to the circumstances of his life give us a picture of a godly spirit. All of the beautiful character qualities seen in Joseph are also seen in Jesus. Like Jesus, Joseph was very special to his father and was sent to his brothers to help them. They rejected him and sentenced him to death. At least they thought he was dead. And like Jesus, Joseph forgave his brothers and, when he had been raised to a place of power and authority, he saved his brothers from death and provided for them. Hebrews 5:8 tells us that Jesus learned obedience through the things He suffered, and Joseph also gained obedience, patience, humility and a serving, forgiving, tender heart through his suffering during his early years in Egypt.

Suggested Carol: O Come All Ye Faithful

Young Children: Read the story of Joseph from a Bible storybook and emphasize Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers.

Bible Study: The Bible gives us many details about Joseph's life. There are many ways in which Joseph's life parallels Jesus' life. Look up the following references to Jesus and find something similar in Joseph's life found in Genesis, Chapters 37-45.

Matthew 3:17	Genesis 37:3, 39:2-4
John 1:11	Genesis 42:8
Matthew 26, 15	Genesis 37:28
Philippians 4:19	Genesis 41:56
Philippians 2:20	Genesis 41:38-43

What are the similarities? Make coat of many colors ornament.

Day 10. Aaron - Spokesman For God: Breastplate

Meditation: The High Priest was to carry the names of the twelve tribes of Israel close to his heart to remind him to be in constant prayer for them. I Peter 2:9 tells us that we are part of the priesthood. God has written on each of our hearts names of those for whom we are responsible: our children, our spouse, our family, our friends, etc. As we bring them one by one, "into the holy place" through prayer, we will become more and more aware of how each one is a valuable, unique gem in God's sight. One gift we can offer to Jesus on His birthday is to bring Him these jewels in our prayer.

Optional: For God's detailed pattern for making the breastplate, see Exodus 28: 5-30.

Young Children: Tell the story of Moses and the burning bush. Moses was afraid that he couldn't be a good leader because he wasn't a good speaker. Emphasize God's plan for Aaron, Moses' brother, to help Moses. Aaron was to be a priest who would tell the people what God had told Moses.

Bible Study: Joseph's many brothers settled down in Egypt to live. Their many children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren were all called Israelites, after Jacob, whose name God had changed to Israel. The Egyptians, afraid of the Israelites because of their great number, made slaves of them. Moses was chosen by God to deliver them from their slavery. Aaron, Moses' brother, was also an important part of God's plan for the Israelites. Read Exodus 3-4:17. What fear does Moses express in Exodus 4:10-13? How does the Lord help him? (Ex. 4:14-17) Later, God gave Aaron an important position. What was it? (Ex. 28:1-4) Read Hebrews 5:1-4. What was the High Priest's main responsibility? We need a High Priest who can perfectly carry out his responsibilities. Read Hebrews 7:23-27. What kind of priest is Jesus? Make breastplate ornament.

Day 11. Moses – The Maker's Instructions: Ten Commandments

Meditation: When Jesus ascended to heaven, He told the disciples to go to Jerusalem to wait for His Father's promise. The promise which had been given through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled when

God sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. From that time on, God put the Holy Spirit within the heart of each believer to give us the power and desire to obey God. (Romans 2:13-16)

Young Children: Tell the story of God giving Moses the 10 Commandments. Emphasize that happiness comes from obeying God.

Bible Study: God told Moses to ask the Israelites to be His special possession. God wanted them to be willing to obey His laws so He could show the other nations how He wanted them to live. Israel was asked if they were willing to set an example by obeying God and letting Him be their king. Read Exodus 19:7-9. Did the people say they would obey God? Read Exodus 20: 1-17. What 10 laws did God give the people? How did Jesus summarize these laws in Matthew 22:37-39? The Israelites did not always keep God's laws and their nation was often in disgrace. Many years after Moses was dead, God sent another prophet, Jeremiah, to give the Israelites another message regarding His laws. Read that message in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Where was God going to put the law so the people would remember to keep it? How would God do this? Has God put His law in your heart? Do you want to obey Him? Make Ten Commandments ornament.

Day 12. Joshua – Success! Sandals.

Meditation: God's definition of success and prosperity is to have wisdom, strength and courage. God wants us to faithfully meditate on His laws and put them into practice. As God's wisdom, strength and courage become evident in our lives, we know that we are successful and prosperous in His eyes and that at the end of our lives we will hear God say to us, "Well-done, thou good and faithful servant."

Young Children: Tell the story of Joshua listening to God's instructions and being led safely through the Jordan River by following the Ark of the Covenant. Emphasize God's leading and provision of a way across the river

Bible Study: The Israelites, after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, had again reached the border of the land that God had promised to give Abraham, Jacob and Moses. Read Joshua 1:1-9. What did God promise He would give Joshua? What did God tell Joshua to do? What did God promise to do for Joshua? Make sandals ornament.

Day 13. Rahab – Rescued: Scarlet Cord.

Meditation: Rahab had heard of God's power and holiness and wanted to be one of His followers. She recognized her need of God and was willing to do whatever was necessary to be saved from the judgment coming upon Jericho. In Egypt God had required the Israelites to apply blood from the Passover lamb to their doorposts in order to escape His judgment. In the same way, Rahab, as an act of faith and obedience, was required to hang a scarlet cord from her window. Both of these acts symbolized their recognition that to be saved from God's judgment of sin would require an act of God that could in some way provide forgiveness and cleansing from sin. Little did they know that their acts of faith would picture for future generations the blood sacrifice of the Son of God.

Young Children: Tell the story of Rahab and how she was safe when Jericho was destroyed. Emphasize her desire to be a follower of God and her obedience to the instructions that saved her life.

Bible Study: Read Joshua 2. Why did Joshua send two men into Jericho? Where did Rahab hide the men when the king of Jericho wanted to find them? Why did she protect the men? (v.8-13) What kind of deal did the two men make with Rahab? What exact instructions did they give her? What report did the two men give to Joshua? (v.23-24) Read Joshua 6:15-25 to find out what happened to Rahab. Read Matthew 1: 15, 16. Whom did Rahab marry? What was her son's name? Whom did he marry? To whose family did they belong? Make Scarlet Cord ornament.

Day 14. Ruth – Love Provides: Sheaf of Grain.

Meditation: The beautiful story of Ruth is unique in all the Bible. How appropriate that she should be included in our Lord's genealogy and remembered at the Christmas season. She is a reminder to us that Gentiles who come to God in faith are to be part of His family.

Suggested Hymn: Praise to the Lord the Almighty

Young Children: Tell the story of Ruth emphasizing God's provision of her needs through Naomi and Boaz.

Bible Study: The story of Ruth is told in four short chapters. Read Ruth 1. What tragedy struck Naomi while she was in a foreign country? Why did Ruth remain loyal to Naomi? To whom else did Ruth remain loyal? (v. 16) Where did Ruth and Naomi settle? (v.19,22) Read Ruth 2. Who was Naomi's wealthy relative? Read Lev. 23:22. God made this law because He cares so much for the needy and strangers. How did Boaz keep the law? How did Boaz do more than the law required? Why was Boaz so kind to Ruth? (v. 11, 12) Read Ruth 4. How did Boaz care for Ruth and Naomi? God honored Ruth's and Boaz's faithfulness by giving them a son who would be King David's grandfather and ultimately an important link in the line of Jesus. Compare Ruth 4:10,17, 22 with Matthew 1: 5, 16. What qualities from Ruth and Boaz's life would God want you to make a part of your life? Make sheaf of grain ornament.

Day 15. David: The Eternal Kingdom: Crown.

Meditation: While David was king, the nation of Israel lived in peace. The kings that followed David were unable to keep the peace and Israel longingly waited for the promised "Son of David" (Matt 9:27) who would bring a kingdom of righteousness and peace.

Young Children: Tell the story (2 Samuel 7) of David's desire to build a temple for God and God's response. Emphasize God's better plan for David and his family.

Bible Study: Read 2 Samuel 7:1-17. What did David want to do God? Did God want David to do this for Him? What did God want to do for David? Read Luke 1:30-33. Who was David's Son whose kingdom would continue into eternity? Today, many do not know that the Prince of Peace has come with His kingdom of righteousness. That kingdom may be found wherever God's will is "done on earth as it is in heaven." Make crown ornament.

Day 16. Esther – Providence: Star of David.

Meditation: The Jews had been carried away from Israel and were held captive, exiled in Persia. At the mercy of an ungodly king, far from their spiritual home, the advent hymn, O Come, O come Emmanuel becomes a prayer. Although the name of God does not appear in the book of Esther, in the Hebrew His name is veiled in acrostic form as the first letter of each chapter. This is much like the way God works in our lives and families. As we get the whole perspective we see the subtle evidence of His presence.

Young Children: Tell or read the story of Queen Esther. Emphasize that God kept the Israelite nation (Jews) from being destroyed because He had promised that the Prince of Peace would come from that nation. (There is a Jewish tradition at the festival of Purim of reading the story of Esther aloud and having the children hiss and boo whenever Haman's name is read. Your children may want to respond as they would to a drama.)

Bible Study: The suspenseful story of Esther may be read as a drama using members of the family as narrator, King, Esther etc. Esther may also be read as a continuing serial at mealtime, divided into three sections: Chapters 1-3, 4-6, 7-10. List the circumstances that can be seen as the hand of God:

1. Esther 2:5-7
2. Esther 2:21-23
3. Esther 5:14, and 7:9-10
4. Esther 5:1-11

King Ahasuerus could not revoke the decree allowing all the Jews to be killed, because the law of the Medes and the Persians said that a king's word could never be changed. God provided a solution through Mordecai that would prevent the slaughter of the Jewish people. What idea for an addition to the decree did Mordecai suggest to Ahasuerus? (Esther 8:10-14) Make Star of David ornament.

Day 17. Jonah – God is Merciful: Fish and Prophet.

Meditation: Jonah's attitude is illustrated in two parables that Jesus told. In Luke 15, the prodigal son's elder brother was angry when his father wanted to celebrate his repentant prodigal son's change of heart. Like that elder brother, Jonah was angry and refused to rejoice with his Father over Nineveh's repentance. God invited Jonah to leave his miserable, uncomfortable place of sulking and join in the joy of fellowship between God and the spared city, but Jonah would not forgive Nineveh. This was because Jonah was much like the unmerciful servant found in Matthew 18. Jonah had been forgiven so much by his merciful Father, but he was unwilling to forgive Nineveh. We, too, have been forgiven much. Is there someone

that you need to forgive today? Wouldn't that be a wonderful Christmas gift? The Bible tells us that the angels rejoice when one sinner repents.

Optional Hymn: Angels We have Heard on High

Young Children: Tell or read the story of Jonah. Emphasize Jonah's disobedience and God's forgiveness and mercy.

Bible Study: Since the entire book of Jonah can be read in ten minutes, the family might like to take turns reading it. Other possibilities include a dramatization of the story or a pantomime by the children while adults read. How was Jesus like Jonah? Compare Jonah 1:17 with Matthew 12:38-41, Luke 24: 44-47 and Jonah 3:4 with Matthew 4:17. In what ways was Jesus NOT like Jonah? Compare Jonah 1:3 with John 17:4 and Jonah 3:10 -4:1 with Mark 6:34. Are you more like Jesus or Jonah? Make fish ornament

Day 18. Isaiah – Man of Sorrows: Lamb of God.

Meditation: Listen to: "Surely He Hath Borne our Grievs", "And With His Stripes" and "All We Like Sheep: from Part II of Handel's Messiah. While listening to "All We Like Sheep" notice the carefree, lighthearted sound of the sheep foolishly going their own way. Then suddenly the mood changes when, with dramatic strokes, Handel portrays the burden of our sin laid on the perfect Lamb of God.

Young Children: Tell the children about how the prophets of old (including Isaiah) were given great vision, dreams and inspiration from God to speak to the people. Explain how they often wrote things from God that even they could not yet understand, things that would happen many years in the future. Emphasize the importance of listening to God and sharing with others what God has said in the Bible.

Bible Study: Isaiah wrote many prophecies concerning the promised Messiah. Read one of these given in Isaiah 9:6. What would be some of the names given to this Messiah? Isaiah also prophesied the suffering of the coming Savior. Read Isaiah 53 and discuss the ways that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies. What wonderful gift did Jesus give us according to verse 6? Which verse do you like best? Why? Make lamb ornament.

Day 19. Micah – Birthplace: Bethlehem Silhouette

Meditation: Sing O Little Town of Bethlehem

Young Children: Explain that there was another prophet, Micah, living at the same time as Isaiah. God told Micah where His Son was going to be born and it happened just as He had said, hundreds of years later in Bethlehem. God kept His promise.

Bible Study: Micah was another prophet that God used to give the world a clue that would help them recognize Jesus as God's Son when He came. Read the clue in Micah 5:2. What was the name of the little

town where Jesus would be born? What other great person was from this town? (Luke 2:1-7)
Bethlehem means "house of bread". How appropriate the even in Jesus' birthplace we see a prophecy of His future ministry. (John 6: 35) Read Matthew 2:1-9. Who knew the prophecy about where Jesus would be born? What did they do with that knowledge? What do you do with your knowledge about Jesus?
Make Bethlehem ornament.

Day 20. Mary – Fulfillment: Angel Gabriel

Meditation: Sing Silent Night and Of the Father's Love Begotten

Young Children: Read or tell the Christmas story in Luke 1 and 2.

Bible Study: Read Luke 1:26-56. Whom did God send to Mary and what was his message? Read Matthew 1:10b-25. Who else heard from the angel? Compare the ministry of the Holy Spirit in Genesis 1:1; Luke 1:35 and Acts 2. How did Mary respond to the angel's message? After the angel left, where did Mary go? What is the Magnificat) v.45-56) Make up your own song of praise expressing the magnificent thing God has done for you through Jesus His Son. Make angel ornament.