

CHRISTMAS FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

WEEK 1: JESUS IS THE MESSIAH! HE IS OUR HOPE!

BIG IDEA

JESUS IS THE MESSIAH, WHO CAME TO EARTH TO SAVE US FROM OUR SINS. HIS WAY OF LIFE DOESN'T MATCH EVERYONE'S EXPECTATIONS, BUT IF WE BELIEVE JESUS IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS, PUT OUR HOPE IN HIM, AND ASK HIM TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS, WE GET TO PART OF GOD'S FAMILY.

EXPECTATIONS FOR MESSIAH

FROM THE BEGINNING, GOD PLANNED THAT JESUS WOULD COME TO EARTH AS THE MESSIAH TO SAVE US FROM OUR SINS. THE JEWISH PEOPLE HOPED FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS THAT HE WOULD COME AND RESCUE THEM. HAVE YOU EVER HOPED FOR SOMETHING THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN? OR IT DID HAPPEN, BUT NOT THE WAY YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD? HOW DID THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?



A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO WERE WAITING FOR THE MESSIAH DIDN'T THINK JESUS COULD BE THE ONE. HE DIDN'T MATCH THE TYPE OF PERSON THEY HOPED FOR. WITH A BIBLE, COMPARE WHAT MANY JEWS AT THE TIME THOUGHT THE MESSIAH WOULD BE LIKE AND WHO JESUS REALLY IS.

THEY HOPED FOR A MILITARY LEADER TO FREE THEM FROM THE ROMANS.

THEY HOPED FOR A LEADER WHO WAS ALREADY POWERFUL AND WELL KNOWN.

THEY HOPED FOR A PERSON WHO WOULD MAKE THEM LOOK BETTER THAN OTHER PEOPLE.

WHO WAS JESUS?
(ISAIAH 53:2 AND PHILIPPIANS 2:7-8)

HOW DID JESUS START HIS LIFE ON EARTH?
(LUKE 2:7)

WHO DID JESUS MAKE FRIENDS WITH (MATTHEW 4:18-22), HANG OUT WITH (MATTHEW 9:10-12; JOHN 4:7-10), AND STICK UP FOR? (JOHN 8:1-11)

EVEN THOUGH JESUS WAS THE MESSIAH, HIS OWN PEOPLE REJECTED HIM. SOME PEOPLE TODAY STILL REJECT HIM BECAUSE HE ISN'T WHAT THEY HOPED FOR OR EXPECTED. WHAT ARE SOME THINGS PEOPLE MAY WANT JESUS TO BE THAT HE ISN'T? REMEMBER, JESUS LOVES YOU AND WANTS TO BE YOUR HOPE. WHEN YOU HOPE IN JESUS AS YOUR SAVIOUR, YOU BECOME PART OF HIS FAMILY TOO!

PRAY

"JESUS, MESSIAH, THANK YOU FOR COMING TO EARTH TO SAVE US FROM OUR SINS. THANK YOU FOR BEING WITH US HERE, NOW, AND PROMISING TO COME BACK TO EARTH SOMEDAY. WE'RE SO GLAD WE CAN HOPE IN YOU, NOW AND FOREVER. AMEN."

WEEK 1 FAMILY FUN ACTIVITIES

COUNT THE DAYS UNTIL CHRISTMAS:

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GET UNDER THE CHRISTMAS TREE? WHAT ARE OTHER THINGS WE HOPE FOR THAT ARE BIGGER THAN PRESENTS?

DECORATE THE CHRISTMAS TREE TOGETHER:

TALK ABOUT HOW THE EVERGREEN TREE SYMBOLIZES LIFE IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER EVEN AS JESUS IS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. THE TWINKLING LIGHTS REMIND US THAT JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, AND HE CALLS US TO SHINE HIS LIGHT AND LOVE IN THE DARKNESS. EVEN IF YOU'VE ALREADY DECORATED THE TREE, YOU CAN STILL SNUGGLE UP BY IT AND TALK ABOUT WHAT IT REPRESENTS.

CELEBRATE OTHERS:

BAKE COOKIES FOR THE PEOPLE IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD WHO REGULARLY SERVE YOU WITH LITTLE THANKS, LIKE THE MAIL CARRIER OR GARBAGE/RECYCLE/COMPOST COLLECTORS. MAKE A CARD CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF THE KING OF KINGS, WHO WAS BORN TO BE THE HOPE FOR EVERYONE.

MAKE CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR PEOPLE IN LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES, WHO MAY BE LONELY THIS TIME OF YEAR, OR FOR FAMILIES IN THE NICU, WHOSE HOLIDAY SEASON IS FILLED WITH WORRY AND GRIEF. PRAY THAT JESUS, THE ONE WHO IS NEAR TO THE BROKENHEARTED, MAY FILL THEIR HEARTS WITH HOPE.

CHRISTMAS FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

WEEK 2: JESUS IS THE LORD OF LORDS! WE PREPARE FOR HIM!

BIG IDEA

JESUS IS NOT JUST A LORD, BUT THE LORD OF LORDS. ONE DAY, ALL PEOPLE WILL SEE HIM FOR WHO HE IS, BUT FOR NOW, WE CAN PREPARE OUR HEARTS AND MINDS AND ALLOW HIM TO BE OUR LORD.

PREPARATION FOR THE LORD OF LORDS

LONG BEFORE JESUS WAS BORN, PROPHETS OF GOD WERE GIVEN MESSAGES TELLING THE PEOPLE TO PREPARE FOR HIS ARRIVAL EVEN WHEN THERE WERE IN A HOPELESS SITUATION. USING A BIBLE, READ ISAIAH 40:3 AND 5. WHILE THIS MESSAGE WAS GIVEN TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, IT IS ALSO A REMINDER THAT JESUS IS THE SAVIOUR OF ALL PEOPLE.



ISAIAH 40:3 & 5

WHAT IS A LORD?

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, LORDS WERE RULERS WHO HAD POWER AND AUTHORITY OVER OTHER PEOPLE. NO ONE COULD DISAGREE WITH THEM AND EVERYONE HAD TO OBEY THEM. SOME LORDS WERE GOOD, BUT OTHERS WERE BAD AND TREATED PEOPLE UNKINDLY.

WHO IS THE LORD WHO CAME TO EARTH AS A BABY?

JESUS IS GOOD AND RIGHTEOUS. HE ISN'T JUST A LORD, BUT THE LORD OF LORDS. THAT MEANS HE ISN'T JUST ONE OF MANY RULERS, BUT THE RULER OF EVERYTHING IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH. UNLIKE EARTHLY RULERS, JESUS IS ALWAYS RIGHT, FAIR, AND LOVING.

WHEN WE DECIDE TO MAKE JESUS OUR LORD, HE BECOMES THE RULER OF OUR LIFE AND WE BECOME HIS FOLLOWERS. HE LOVES US AND CARES ABOUT THE VERY BIG AND VERY SMALL THINGS IN OUR LIVES.

PRAY

"JESUS, YOU ARE THE LORD OF LORDS, BUT YOU STILL CAME TO EARTH AS A TINY BABY. YOU DID THAT TO SAVE US FROM OUR SINS. ONE DAY, YOU'LL COME TO EARTH AGAIN, AND YOU WANT US TO PREPARE OUR HEARTS. I WANT YOU TO BE LORD OVER EVERYTHING IN MY LIFE. AMEN."

WEEK 2 FAMILY FUN ACTIVITIES

COUNT THE DAYS UNTIL CHRISTMAS:

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOUR FAMILY PREPARES FOR CHRISTMAS?

MAKE SNOWFLAKES:

MAKE SNOWFLAKES BY FOLDING WHITE PAPER AND CUTTING OUT PATTERNS. ON ONE SIDE, WRITE OUT A PRAYER FOR YOUR FAMILY, COMMUNITY, OR THE WORLD. ON THE OTHER SIDE, WRITE OUT A BIBLE VERSE THAT SPEAKS TO THE PRAYER. HANG THEM AROUND A CENTRAL ROOM AND PRAY EACH TIME YOU GO INTO YOUR OWN WINTER WONDERLAND.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS:

SING GOSPEL-CENTERED CHRISTMAS CAROLS. YOU MAY NEED TO TEACH THEM TO CHILDREN OR MAYBE EVEN LEARN SOME YOURSELF. CHOOSE WHICHEVER ONES YOU LIKE, BUT SOME GOOD OPTIONS ARE JOY TO THE WORLD, HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING, O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL, SILENT NIGHT, THE FIRST NOEL, AND AWAY IN A MANGER.

THE NATIVITY STORY:

ACT OUT THE NATIVITY STORY, AS A PLAY, MUSICAL, PUPPET SHOW, OR WITH A NATIVITY SET. YOU COULD PRACTICE LEADING UP TO CHRISTMAS AND PERFORM FOR THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS YOU GATHER WITH TO CELEBRATE.

CHRISTMAS FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

WEEK 3: JESUS IS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST! HE FILLS US WITH JOY!

BIG IDEA

JESUS IS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST AND BECAUSE OF HIS SACRIFICE, THERE IS NO LONGER A WALL SEPARATING US FROM GOD. WE CAN APPROACH GOD WITH CONFIDENCE AND JOY, KNOWING THAT WE ARE FORGIVEN AND HE LOVES US.

BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS

THE ISRAELITES KNEW GOD, BUT THEIR SINS KEPT THEM SEPARATED FROM HIM. THEIR SINS WERE LIKE THE TALLEST, WIDEST, AND THICKEST WALL, BLOCKING THEIR DIRECT ACCESS TO GOD.

THE ISRAELITES HAD A HIGH PRIEST, WHO ACTED AS A GO-BETWEEN FOR THE GOD AND THE PEOPLE. HE WAS THE ONLY PERSON WHO COULD GO INTO A SPECIAL ROOM IN THE TEMPLE CALLED THE HOLY OF HOLIES, AND EVEN THEN, ONLY ONCE A YEAR ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT AFTER MANY RITUALS, WEARING SPECIFIC CLOTHING, AND OFFERING A SPECIAL SACRIFICE FOR GOD TO FORGIVE THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE.

BUT WHEN JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS FOR US, HE BECAME THE SACRIFICE FOR ALL SINS FOR ALL TIME. JESUS IS ALSO THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST SO, THROUGH HIM, WE ARE NO LONGER SEPARATED FROM GOD. JESUS BROKE DOWN THE SIN WALL THAT DIVIDED US FROM GOD. WE CAN PRAY AND TALK TO GOD ANYTIME WE WANT TO.

HOW IS JESUS DIFFERENT FROM HUMAN HIGH PRIESTS?

HUMAN HIGH PRIESTS ARE SINFUL PEOPLE JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.

JESUS WAS TEMPTED IN EVERY WAY WE ARE TEMPTED, BUT HE NEVER SINNED.

HUMAN HIGH PRIESTS ARE JUST PEOPLE WHO WILL DIE SOMEDAY.

JESUS IS GOD. HE SUFFERED, DIED, AND ROSE AGAIN. HE IS ETERNAL AND WILL BE OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST FOREVER.

KNOWING THAT JESUS IS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST CAN FILL US WITH JOY. WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS OF HAVING JESUS AS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST?

PRAY

"JESUS, THANK YOU FOR BREAKING DOWN THE WALL OF MY SIN. SIN SEPARATES EVERYONE FROM BEING NEAR GOD, BUT YOU CAME TO THE WORLD AS A BABY. YOU DIED ON THE CROSS FOR US AND ROSE AGAIN. WE DON'T NEED A HIGH PRIEST ANYMORE. WE JUST NEED YOU, OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST. WE CAN COME TO YOU RIGHT NOW AND WHENEVER WE WANT TO. THAT FILLS US WITH JOY! AMEN."

WEEK 3 FAMILY FUN ACTIVITIES

WATCH A MOVIE ABOUT THE NATIVITY OF JESUS AND TALK ABOUT WHAT STOOD OUT TO YOU THIS YEAR THAT YOU MAY NOT HAVE NOTICED BEFORE.

ASK SOME OLDER PEOPLE, MAYBE GRANDPARENTS OR OLDER PEOPLE IN YOUR CHURCH, TO SHARE A MEMORY FROM A CHRISTMAS THAT STILL BRINGS THEM JOY. ASK THEM WHAT CHRISTMAS WAS LIKE WHEN THEY WERE KIDS. TALK ABOUT WHAT IS THE SAME AND WHAT IS DIFFERENT AND CONSIDER HOW THE JOY OF JESUS'S BIRTH HAS BEEN A CONTINUOUS CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION YEAR AFTER YEAR, EVEN IF SOME TRADITIONS MAY CHANGE.

GO CAROLING IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, IN A LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY, HOSPITAL, OR SHELTER TO BRING THE JOY OF JESUS'S BIRTH TO YOUR COMMUNITY. IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE LONG AND COMPLICATED. A FEW GOSPEL-CENTERED SONGS ON JOY-FILLED LIPS CAN MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE IN SOMEONE'S LIFE.

CHRISTMAS FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

WEEK 4: JESUS IS OUR GOOD SHEPHERD! HIS LOVE FOR US NEVER FAILS!

BIG IDEA

JESUS IS OUR GOOD SHEPHERD WHO KNOWS, CARES, LEADS, AND LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR US. HIS LOVE FOR US ALLOWED HIM TO SACRIFICE HIS LIFE SO THAT WE COULD BE SAVED.

KNOWING, CARING, AND LEADING

HOW DO PEOPLE SHOW LOVE TO OTHERS? HOW DOES GOD SHOW HIS LOVE FOR US? HE SHOWED HIS LOVE FOR US WHEN HE SENT JESUS TO BE BORN IN A MANGER. ON THE NIGHT JESUS WAS BORN, WHO WERE THE FIRST PEOPLE ANGELS VISITED TO ANNOUNCE HIS BIRTH WHILE THEY WERE TENDING SHEEP IN A FIELD?

JESUS CALLS HIMSELF THE GOOD SHEPHERD. HE COMPARED HIMSELF TO THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED HARD AND DANGEROUS LIVES. THEY DRESSED IN SIMPLE CLOTHES. THEY PROBABLY DIDN'T SMELL VERY GOOD. AND THEY SPENT MOST OF THEIR TIME WITH ANIMALS.

SO, HOW IS JESUS LIKE A SHEPHERD?

A GOOD SHEPHERD KNOWS HIS SHEEP.

JESUS KNOWS YOUR NAME, JUST LIKE A GOOD SHEPHERD KNOWS THE NAME OF EACH OF HIS SHEEP.

A GOOD SHEPHERD CARES FOR HIS SHEEP.

JESUS CARES FOR YOU EACH DAY. HE PROVIDES WHAT YOU NEED.

A GOOD SHEPHERD LEADS HIS SHEEP.

JESUS LEADS US BACK TO HIM ANY TIME WE WANDER AWAY AND HE ALWAYS LEADS TO A PLACE WHERE WE CAN BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS.

A GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS SHEEP. WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT MEANS? IT MEANS A GOOD SHEPHERD IS WILLING TO DIE FOR HIS SHEEP.

JESUS IS OUR GOOD SHEPHERD BECAUSE HE SHOWED HIS LOVE FOR US, HIS SHEEP, BY DYING ON THE CROSS TO SAVE US FROM OUR SINS. BUT HE DIDN'T STAY DEAD. HE ROSE AGAIN SO THAT WE CAN BE WITH HIM FOREVER!

PRAY

"JESUS, YOU ARE THE GOOD SHEPHERD. YOU ARE MY SHEPHERD. THANK YOU FOR LAYING DOWN YOUR LIFE TO SAVE ME FROM MY SINS. YOU KNOW MY NAME AND EVERYTHING ABOUT ME. HELP ME TO TRUST YOU TO CARE FOR ME. HELP ME TO OBEY WHEN YOU LEAD ME. I WILL FOLLOW YOU ALL MY LIFE. AMEN."

WEEK 4 FAMILY FUN ACTIVITIES

PLAY HIDE AND SEEK, EXCEPT THE SEEKER IS THE SHEPHERD AND THE HIDERS ARE THE SHEEP.

BAKE A BIRTHDAY CAKE FOR JESUS, THE SON OF MAN, WHO LEFT THE SPLENDOR OF HEAVEN TO TAKE ON HUMAN FLESH. ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN TO THINK OF WAYS THEY MIGHT SAY "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" TO JESUS BY SHOWING LOVE TO SOMEONE AROUND THEM.

SHOVEL A NEIGHBOUR'S DRIVEWAY OR DO SOME UNEXPECTED YARD WORK, PRAYING FOR THEM AS YOU WORK. IF THEY JOIN YOU OUTSIDE, ASK THEM TO SHARE THEIR OWN FAVOURITE CHRISTMAS MEMORIES AND TRADITIONS. CONSIDER SHARING WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED FROM THIS ADVENT FAMILY DEVOTIONAL AND LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SPEAK THE TRUTH OF JESUS'S LOVE INTO THEIR LIVES.