



## Trinity Family Devotional Advent, 2014

As we plunge into the business and noise of the holiday season, my hope is that this devotional will do two important things:

I hope it keeps the story of Jesus' birth at the center of all your family's holiday experiences so that all the disconnected festivities, performances, gifts and parties have deeper meanings, as they are grounded in the miracle of the first Christmas.

I hope it helps your family pray, read Scriptures, and talk about faith together. As Christ is born into a family, family is most often the birthplace of our faith, and the faith-centered conversations we have with our kids are oftentimes worth ten sermons or Sunday school lessons. Please use this resource to reflect on Jesus' birth as a family, and if you live alone, may it be a helpful guide as you journal or do the reflections with a friend or a prayer partner in person or over the phone.

Blessed reading and reflecting.

Love in Christ,

*Julia*

*These Family devotions are designed to be used with the figurines from your family's nativity set. The format lends itself to the time following a meal or before your family's bedtime rituals and there is reflective devotions for each day of Advent.*

### WEEK 1: The Annunciation

#### The Angel Gabriel Appears to Mary

*Set out the figures of Mary and Angel on a table. Read **Luke 1:26-38** using the text provided from **The Message** or use your favorite translation.*

<sup>26-28</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to the Galilean village of Nazareth to a virgin engaged to be married to a man descended from David. His name was Joseph, and the virgin's name, Mary. Upon entering, Gabriel greeted her:

*Good morning!  
You're beautiful with  
God's beauty,  
Beautiful inside and out!  
God be with you.*



<sup>29-33</sup> She was thoroughly shaken, wondering what was behind a greeting like that. But the angel assured her, "Mary, you have nothing to fear. God has a surprise for you: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son and call his name Jesus."

*He will be great,  
be called 'Son of the Highest.'  
The Lord God will give him  
the throne of his father David;  
He will rule Jacob's house forever—  
no end, ever, to his kingdom."*

<sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, "But how? I've never slept with a man."

<sup>35</sup> The angel answered,  
*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the  
power of the Highest hover over you;  
Therefore, the child you bring to birth  
will be called Holy, Son of God.*

<sup>36-38</sup> "And did you know that your cousin Elizabeth conceived a son, old as she is? Everyone called her barren, and here she is six months pregnant! Nothing, you see, is impossible with God."

And Mary said,

*Yes, I see it all now:*

*I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve.  
Let it be with me  
just as you say.*

Then the angel left her.

### REFLECTION

**Day 1:** Read the entire text slowly once or twice & discuss which word or phrase stood out to you? (For kids, "What is your favorite part of the story?")

**Day 2:** Read the text. How are you like Mary? How are you like the Angel?

**Day 3:** Read verses 26-28. What do you think the angel's face looked like when he said this? How did it feel for Mary to hear it? Practice saying that to each other. How does it make you feel?"

**Day 4:** Read verses 29-33. Why do you think Mary might have been afraid? What makes you afraid? Pray for God to remind you of his presence, when you are afraid.

**Day 5:** Read verses 29-33. Sometimes we want to know everything before it happens. But without surprises, life might not be as much fun. When have you been surprised lately? Share the story & thank God for good surprises.

**Day 6:** Read verse 35. The Holy Spirit is a powerful presence of God, God's help and inspiration. Where do you need God's help and the power of God's Holy Spirit?

**Day 7:** Read verses 36-38. In what way do you think God might want you to serve Him today or tomorrow?

## **WEEK 2: Joseph's Dream**

### An Angel Appears to Joseph

Set out the figures of Joseph and Angel. Read **Matthew 1:18-24** using the **New Living Translation** provided or choose your favorite translation.

<sup>18</sup> This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

<sup>20</sup> As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was



conceived by the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus,<sup>[i]</sup> for he will save his people from their sins."

<sup>22</sup> All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet:

<sup>23</sup> "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel,<sup>[i]</sup> which means 'God is with us.'"

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife.

## **REFLECTION**

**Day 1:** Read the entire text slowly once or twice & discuss which word or phrase stood out to you? (For kids, "What is your favorite part of the story?")

**Day 2:** Read the text: How are you like Joseph? How are you like the Angel?

**Day 3:** Read verse 21. The name Jesus means "to rescue" or "to deliver". What does your name mean? How did your parents choose it?

**Day 4:** Read the text. Jesus was born to save us from our sins. What are some of your own sins that you experienced recently? Pray together thanking God that, because of Jesus, we are forgiven.

**Day 5:** Read verse 23. What does it mean that God is with us? What difference does it mean to know that?

**Day 6:** Read verse 23. Joseph did something difficult because God asked him to do it. What are some hard things that God asks us to do?

**Day 7:** Read the first part of verse 18. This is Matthew's retelling of Jesus' birth story. Share your birth stories. God is present in them as He is in the story of Jesus. Thank God for your birth stories.

## **WEEK 3: The Birth of Jesus**

### The Angels Announcement and The Adoration of the Shepherds

Set up the manger scene with figures of Mary, Joseph and the animals. Nearby set out the figures of the Shepherds, Sheep & Angels. Read **Luke 2:1-20** using the **New International Version** provided or choose another.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register.

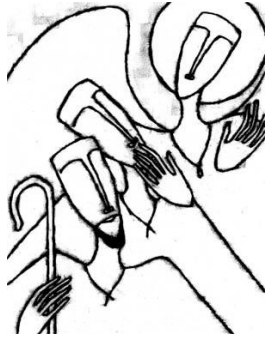
<sup>4</sup> So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

<sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news

that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."



<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

### WEEK 3: REFLECTION

**Day 1:** Read the entire text slowly once or twice & discuss which word or phrase stood out to you? (For kids, "What is your favorite part of the story?")

**Day 2:** Read the text: How are you like the shepherds? How are you like the angels?

**Day 3:** Read verses 1-5. What was the last trip you took? How do you think it was similar or different from Mary & Joseph's journey? Say a prayer for all travelers out on the road.

**Day 4:** Read verses 6-7. Jesus, the Son of God, was outcast and excluded from the very beginning. When have you felt excluded recently? Can you think of any people you know who might feel excluded? What can you do to help them feel that they belong?

**Day 5:** Read verse 8. Why do you think the shepherds were living out in the field? What do you think their life might have been like? Can you think of any people in today's time who live their life similarly to the shepherds? Pray for them in the challenges that they face.

**Day 6:** Read verses 9-12. Why do you think the birth of Jesus is "good news that brings great joy to all people"? Pray a prayer of thanks for the gift of Jesus.

**Day 7:** Read verse 19. As you hear the Christmas story this year, which parts of it do you want to remember and treasure the most? Which recent moments in your own life do you hope to remember and treasure for years? Pray a prayer of thanksgiving for those special moments.

### **Week 4: The Visit of the Wise Men**

Add the Wise Men to your manger scene. Read Matthew 2:1-12 using **the Living Bible** provided or choose your favorite translation.



Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem, in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. At about that time some astrologers from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, <sup>2</sup> "Where is the

newborn King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in far-off eastern lands and have come to worship him."

<sup>3</sup> King Herod was deeply disturbed by their question, and all Jerusalem was filled with rumors. <sup>4</sup> He called a meeting of the Jewish religious leaders.

"Did the prophets tell us where the Messiah would be born?" he asked.

<sup>5</sup> "Yes, in Bethlehem," they said, "for this is what the prophet Micah wrote:

<sup>6</sup> 'O little town of Bethlehem, you are not just an unimportant Judean village, for a Governor shall rise from you to rule my people Israel.'"

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod sent a private message to the astrologers, asking them to come to see him; at this meeting he found out from them the exact time when they first saw the <sup>7</sup> Then Herod sent a private message to the astrologers, asking them to come to see him; at this meeting he found out from them the exact time when they

first saw the star. Then he told them, <sup>8</sup>“Go to Bethlehem and search for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him too!”

<sup>9</sup>After this interview the astrologers started out again. And look! The star appeared to them again, standing over Bethlehem. <sup>10</sup>Their joy knew no bounds!

<sup>11</sup>Entering the house where the baby and Mary, his mother, were, they threw themselves down before him, worshiping. Then they opened their presents and gave him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>But when they returned to their own land, they didn’t go through Jerusalem to report to Herod, for God had warned them in a dream to go home another way.

## **REFLECTION:**

**Day 1:** Read the entire text slowly once or twice & discuss which word or phrase stood out to you? (For kids, “What is your favorite part of the story?”)

**Day 2:** Read the text: How are you like the Wise Men in this story?

**Day 3:** Read verse 1. The Wise Men were probably astrologers from other countries who wanted to worship Jesus. Do you know people who live, or lived, in countries or places different from yours? Thank God for His followers all over the world.

**Day 4:** Read verses 1-2 The star was leading the Wise Men to Bethlehem, but they ended up in Jerusalem. When is the last time you felt lost? Who helped you? Thank God for all the ways he helps us find the way when we feel lost.

**Day 5:** Read verse 6. Small towns, poor shepherds, an animal stable for the baby’s nursery... When in your life, or in the Bible, has God used those whom people find unimportant for His great purposes?

**Day 6:** Read verse 9. God sent a star to guide the Wise Men to Jesus. How does God guide us today?

**Day 7:** Read verse 11. 7. The Wise Men brought gifts to a poor family that couldn’t give them anything in return. Who have you blessed recently even though you knew they couldn’t pay you back? Who else could you bless this season?

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