Merry Christmas!

Christmas is my favorite time of year! Everyone is looking forward with anticipation to the times of celebration that come during this season. However, due to the heavy commercialization and extreme busyness of the Christmas season, it is possible to wake up on December 26 and realize you missed the point.

The cliche, “Jesus is the Reason for the Season” is true, but with so many activities vying for our attention, we must be intentional about keeping the focus of our hearts where it should be during this time of year. Gifts, decorations, television specials, and parties all have a place in the midst of this season of celebration. But let us never forget the reason for our joy, the source of our hope, the fulfillment of God’s promise…King Jesus!

To help you keep your focus this year, we have created the “Christmas Presence Devotional.” The devotional covers the four weeks of December. Inside you will find one devotion per week to be used for personal study and one devotion per week for family discipleship time. Each week has a passage of scripture to consider, a devotional thought to read, and some questions for reflection. Each one was written and developed by a
Colonial Heights ministerial staff member and coincides with Interim Pastor, Stan Buckley’s sermon plan for the month.

You will also find appendices that provide additional resources, suggested activities, and additional scripture passages for use during your “quiet time” this season.

Our prayer is that through the use of this devotional, your heart and home will find its focus upon our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Rest in Jesus,

Andy Beal, Discipleship Pastor
WEEK 1: November 30 - December 6
Looking Forward - Personal Study.........................1
What a Baby - Family........................................5

WEEK 2: December 7 - December 13
Here I am...Willing to Serve - Personal Study........10
Incredible News: Mary’s Obedience - Family........13

WEEK 3: December 14 - December 20
Immanuel...“God with Us” - Personal Study........17
A Savior isBorn: Shepherds, Angels and Immanuel - Family.........................................................21

WEEK 4: December 21 - December 27
The Wise Men Visit: Worship - Personal Study........25
The Visit of the Magi: Worship Him! - Family......32

APPENDIX A: Additional Activities for Families....36
APPENDIX B: Additional Resources......................41
APPENDIX C: Additional Scriptures.....................43
Week 1: *Looking Forward*

Isaiah 9:6

NOVEMBER 30 - DECEMBER 6

**Personal Study**

We look forward to so many things in life and we seem to give special attention to these "firsts" in life. Parents watch for their child's first tooth, first word, first step; teens often seek out that first love, that first kiss; young adults have that first job. Then there are those seasons in life that we just love to see come around again; football season, hunting season, birthdays, and of course Thanksgiving and Christmas. Often it seems everything in our life is looking forward to what is coming next.

Sadly this mentality has created a generation of people who believe everything is about us and our pleasure and our entertainment. We constantly seek out the next high and the next item to give us pleasure and give us value in life. Perhaps the time of year in which this is the most prevalent is during the Christmas season. Everything is about looking forward to the opening of gifts on Christmas morning. Children provide lists to their
parents of all the items they "deserve" that will make them "happy". Stores are packed with shoppers, most of whom are going into debt, buying everything on the list in an effort to make everyone happy. Quite honestly we have lost sight of what should bring us true happiness.

We see throughout the Bible, accounts of people acting much like we do today, people seeking to find meaning in life in some idol or some object of affection. But in Isaiah 9 God gives us a clear picture of what we should really be seeking.

The words of Isaiah were in many ways confusing to the people of the day. Isaiah 9:1 says that, "in the future He will honor Galilee of the Gentiles." The Jewish nation had to ask how it could be that God would bless a Gentile. In the following verses, God expresses the stress and burden the Gentiles were experiencing and in verse 6 provides the answer to their suffering.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6
Have you ever considered each of these names for Christ?

**Wonderful Counselor:** The word translated wonderful was often used to mean supernatural. Thus this phrase refers to the Messiah as the supernatural Counselor who would bring words of eternal life.

**Mighty God:** The term only used in application to Yahweh and a foreshadow of the victory of Messiah over evil.

**Everlasting Father:** Messiah will eternally Father His people as guardian, supplier, and care giver.

**Prince of Peace:** He will bring peace in the fullest sense of wholeness, prosperity, and tranquility.

**REFLECTION:**

1. How has Christ served as your "Wonderful Counselor" this year?

2. How has Christ served as your "Mighty God" this year?
3. How has Christ served as your "Everlasting Father" this year?

4. How has Christ served as your "Prince of Peace" this year?

5. In light of these answers, how will your anticipation of Christmas be different than the past?
Week 1: *What a Baby!*

**Isaiah 9:6**

NOVEMBER 30 - DECEMBER 6

**Family Discipleship Time**

Prophecies Proclaiming the Coming of Messiah.

Mark these verses in your Bible. As each is mentioned, be ready to read it or help your children to read it.

Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:2-4, Deuteronomy 18:15

Have you ever had to wait for something you really wanted? Maybe there is something you really want now that you have heard about on TV. Maybe you have already asked your parents for something for Christmas. Is it hard to wait for something you really want? Maybe you've wanted something for a long time, but so far you haven't gotten it. *(Each family member should share about waiting for something. Express how it feels to wait for something.)*

The Israelites had been waiting for something very important to happen, too. But they had been waiting for so long that a lot of them had forgotten what they were waiting for!
Their fathers and grandfathers had told them about a wonderful and exciting promise God made long before. God told them that He was going to give them a Messiah, a Savior, a King.

After God made the promise, hundreds of years went by, but the Savior still had not come. Throughout the Old Testament, however, is the message, “He is coming! He is coming!” Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, God promised that it would happen!

God used a special way to tell the world about His wonderful promise. How do you think He told the world? Over the radio? By television? No! Those things hadn’t even been invented then. God spread His Word through special helpers called prophets. A prophet is someone who has a special message from God. God would tell the prophet things and the prophet would tell the people. Prophets were God’s messengers and preachers. Some prophets also wrote down God’s messages and these are a part of the Bible.

The Old Testament is the part of the Bible where even today we can read the messages God told the world through His prophets. *(Take time to look at a Bible and together and explore the Old Testament.)*

Moses had told them over a thousand years earlier that God would raise up an even greater Man than himself.
“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to Him.” (Deuteronomy 18:15 HCSB)

(Help children read the verse, then ask them what Moses said about the promised Messiah.)

The Prophet Isaiah told the Israelites about Jesus about 700 years before His birth. He told them that He would be named Immanuel and be conceived by a virgin.

Isaiah 7:14 says, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Isaiah also told the people that Jesus would be a great ruler. Read Isaiah 9:6.

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

(Have older children read these verses, and ask them what Isaiah had to say about the promised Messiah.)

And the Prophet Micah told them exactly where their king would be born. Open your Bible and read Micah 5:2,
“The Lord says, ‘Bethlehem, you might not be an important town in the nation of Judah. But out of you will come a ruler over Israel for me. His family line goes back to the early years of your nation. It goes all the way back to days of long ago.’” (NIrV)

All of these promises were recorded by God’s men called prophets. The messages have been saved for hundreds of years. Now we can read the messages in our very own Bible. We are so blessed to have God’s Word, the Bible, to tell us about Jesus.

God kept every promise He made to His people in the Old Testament! Aren’t you glad God kept His promise of Jesus?

You can want lots of things; you can even get them all, but nothing you will ever get will be greater than the gift of Jesus!

REFLECTION:

1. What is a prophet? How did God use prophets?

2. Name two of the Old Testament Prophets who prophesied about Jesus. How did their words get saved?
3. What is a promise?

4. What promise had God made to His people? Did God keep His promise?

5. How did God keep His promise?

6. What does that tell us about our God?

**FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION:**
Challenge older children to discover more prophecies about Jesus and then find the scripture which fulfills each of those prophecies. Some good prophecies to begin with may be found in Isaiah 53:12, Isaiah 40:11, Psalm 22:16, Zechariah 9:9, Joel 2:32, and Daniel 7:14-15.
Week 2: Here I am…willing to serve.”

Luke 1:26-38
DECEMBER 7 - DECEMBER 13

Personal Study

Luke 1:38 And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”

An angel had just told Mary that she had been specifically chosen by God to conceive and bear God’s son. Her response seems so child-like! “Here I am… willing to serve.”

She did question how could this even be possible. That is the response many of us have when we have the flash of an idea that God might be calling us to do something for Him. How could we possibly do what God wants us to do? Surely this service idea could not be from the Lord, because we are neither qualified nor equipped to accomplish the task. Surely God would want to ask someone else to do this task.

The call of God for any of us can withstand any and all questions and excuses that we throw at Him except the
one that simply refuses to surrender in faith and humility to whatever He calls us to do. That is what happened with Mary. She first questioned in disbelief, and then surrendered in faith and the impossible happened through a young girl that had no experience or skill to be the mother of Jesus.

One other thought to consider is this: What God asked Mary to do is exactly what God’s call is to everyone of His children. God asked her to deliver Christ to the world, and she did. God asks each of us to do the same thing. The world that you touch and influence needs a Savior delivered into it, and He wants you to be available to be a part of that effort.

REFLECTION:

1. What skills and abilities do you have that, until now perhaps, have gone unused for Kingdom work? (Don’t just think church involvement.)

2. What are your interests? What are you good at? What activity brings you the greatest joy and fulfillment?
3. How can these things be used to deliver Christ to the people with whom you come in contact?

4. Who do you know that needs Christ?

5. What would be the best way to begin the process of bringing them face to face with Christ?
Week 2: Incredible News: Mary’s Obedience


DECEMBER 7 - DECEMBER 13

Family Discipleship Time

Think of a time that someone asked you to do something that was very difficult or didn’t make sense to you. (Examples might be: a teacher asking you to sit with a student in your class who has been very mean to you and help him to get his work done, your parents asking you to give up a favorite toy for someone who has no toys, etc. Each family member should have an opportunity to share and then answer the questions that follow.)

Was it easy to obey something that was so hard to do?

How did you feel as you were doing it?

How did you feel after doing it?

Have you ever offered to do something very hard or something that would not make sense to others?

A girl named Mary lived in Nazareth. She was engaged, but not yet married, to a man named Joseph. One day an angel named Gabriel appeared to Mary and said to her, “Rejoice, favored woman! The Lord is with you.”
Mary was surprised and a little frightened, too. She did not understand what was happening to her. Then the angel encouraged her:

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Now listen: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.” Luke 1:30b-33

Mary was still somewhat confused, so she asked Gabriel, “How can this happen?” The angel explained that the Holy Spirit would make it all possible. Then he told her that her baby would be the Son of God! Mary gave this humble reply to Gabriel:

“I am God’s servant. May it happen just as you said.” Luke 1:38

Joseph learned that Mary was going to have a baby. He was upset when he found out. He was a good man and wanted to do the right thing, but was not sure what that was. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying,

“Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and
you are to name him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.” Matthew 1:20b-21

Joseph woke up and the angel was gone! And Joseph obeyed, doing exactly what the angel told him to do.

Mary and Joseph listened to the incredible news of angels sent by God! The words did not make sense, but they believed that God was speaking to them, so they gladly obeyed. They did not care what anyone else thought. Because they were willing to obey, God had a way to send us His Son, our Savior!

REFLECTION:

1. How did Mary and Joseph each find out that Mary was going to give birth to a baby?

2. What made this news difficult for Mary and Joseph to understand?
3. How did each of them respond to the news?

4. Because Mary and Joseph were willing to obey God’s plan for them, what would happen?
Week 3: *Immanuel…“God with us”*

**Matthew 1:23 and Luke 2:1-20**

DECEMBER 14 - DECEMBER 20

**Personal Study**

*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). Matthew 1:23*

God wants to be with you. This is not a illusive, passive or accidental encounter by the God of ALL creation. In Genesis 1, the very beginning of God’s love letter to us, He begins making a safe place for His created to walk in the fullness of comfort, satisfaction, supply and ultimately relationship with Him. Adam and Eve walked in the Garden of Eden in the presence of Almighty God. Amazing! As we see quickly in Genesis, Adam and Eve pursue their own plan, thinking that it was better than God’s. There was a breach of unity and connection with holy God and there were consequences. God, in His unfailing love and pursuit, doesn’t leave Adam and Eve (and ultimately us) with only the result of consequence for disobedience. He has a plan. It is a plan of grace, redemption, rescue and relationship. God foretells of that coming savior, Jesus, in Genesis 3.
Throughout the Old Testament (and eventually the New Testament) we see the ongoing cycle of man’s propensity toward self-centeredness and godless endeavors. At the same time we see God’s repeated pursuit and intentionality to be in relationship with His creation. While God would be completely justified in abandoning or even destroying rebellious people, that is not His heart. It would be “nice” to know that God has an “open door” policy to those who would come to Him, however he doesn’t stop there. He calls, He pursues, He rescues. We broke relationship with God yet He takes the responsibility and makes the effort to repair it. You may be aware that the Old Testament had a system of animal sacrifice designed to grant the avenue to be in right relationship with God...or was it only that? Was it a bigger picture that even our best attempts at service or sacrifice don’t suffice in righting our wrong?

The prophet Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 7:14

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”

Notice who is providing the bridge, Jesus, to right our relationship with Him...The Lord Himself. Fast forward to the New Testament. Mary, the soon to be mother of Jesus, was engaged to Joseph. Mary learns that she is
going to birth the Messiah, the promised one. Joseph would naturally have concern over the immaculate conception of this Baby. An angel of the Lord comes to Joseph in Matthew 1:23 and shares

> “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.”

As Jesus (God) is birthed, grows and becomes a man, He shares countless life changing points with us. One is found in John 14:6.

> Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

Jesus (God’s plan, God’s pursuit, God’s grace) is God’s avenue for everlasting right and complete relationship with Him. The old cliche shares that “Jesus is the reason for the season”...and He is. Remember that this season, Christmas, is a result of God’s pursuit to have a great relationship with you. It is God’s heart to be with you. What is your response?

**REFLECTION:**

1. What must it have been like to actually walk with God in the garden?
2. Why does God want a relationship with you?

3. What does it mean to walk with God during our life on earth?

4. What will it be like to live with God forever in Heaven?
Week 3: A Savior is Born; Shepherds, Angels, and Immanuel
Luke 2:1-20
DECEMBER 14 - DECEMBER 20

Family Discipleship Time

Read Luke 2:1-20

What is the very best gift you have ever received in your whole entire life? When you got it, what did you do? Did you keep your special gift a secret or did you run around telling everyone all about it?

( Everyone in the family should take a turn sharing their own answers.)

Mary and Joseph had received very good news but, for a while, they kept the news to themselves. It would not be long before hundreds of people would know!

The ruler of the kingdom where they lived was named Caesar Augustus. He made a law that everyone must be counted. Each person had to go to his home town. So, Joseph and Mary packed up and traveled to a small town called Bethlehem, because that was the hometown of
Joseph. It was a very long and tiring trip because Mary was pregnant.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, there were no more rooms available in any of the hotel-like places, called inns. So Mary and Joseph were invited to stay in a stable with the animals. On that very night, in that stable, Mary gave birth to her baby, Jesus. She wrapped Him in cloth and put Him in the feed box where the animals ate their food. Mary and Joseph called their new Son Immanuel, which means “God with us.”

At that same time there were shepherds out in the fields taking care of their flocks of the sheep. Bursting into the middle of the dark, night sky, an angel of the Lord appeared to them and they were scared to death. The angel told them not to be afraid and explained the great news about Jesus’ birth. They were very joyful and excited about the birth of the Savior!

All of a sudden, a very large group of angels appeared in that same sky and sang songs to God for His gift of Jesus. They were so excited and happy about the birth of Jesus, too! They sang with such joy in their hearts!

The shepherds were so amazed that they went to see Jesus. They found Him
just as the angels said. What a wonderful day! They spread the joyful news to others about Jesus’ birth.

After that, the shepherds went back to their sheep. They praised God for all the things they had heard and seen.

God did a special miracle that day. He sent His only son Jesus into the world because He loved us. God gave us the best gift ever...the gift of Jesus. He is the only way we can be with God in Heaven.

Do you have joy in your heart like the angels and shepherds? They were excited because they knew that God had sent His Son into our world. Let’s be joyful as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior, our Lord, our Immanuel!

**REFLECTION:**

1. Why did Joseph and Mary go from their home in Nazareth and walk all the way to Bethlehem?

2. Can you find the verses in Luke chapter 2 that tell where Jesus was born?
3. How do you think Mary and Joseph felt about spending the night in the place where all the animals were kept?

(This would be a good time to stop and, as a family, create a likeness of that scene, using crayons, blocks, cardboard, or any other materials you may have handy. Include the angels, the shepherds, Mary, Joseph, and the baby. Imagine the expressions on each face. Take pictures as you work together as a family to record your joy remembering the birth of Immanuel.)

4. Jesus, the Savior of the whole world, wasn't born in a beautiful palace like other kings? Why do you think that was?

5. What did the shepherds do after they saw Jesus for themselves? What do you think God wants you to do?
Week 4: The Wise Men Visit: Worship!
Matthew 2:1-12
DECEMBER 21 - DECEMBER 27

Personal Study

Some of my earliest memories of Christmas involve the annual trek to my grandparents’ house. Because we lived in another state most of my childhood, we would make the annual pilgrimage, “over the river and through the woods.” Since we live in the south, there were never any sleighs involved – but lots of Christmas carols, much food, and many gifts. In fact, as a child so much of Christmas centered, for me, around the gifts. Not only what I would receive, but what I would give. I can still remember very clearly an exquisite, lovely bright red and gold “S” key chain that I so lovingly and painstakingly picked out for my mom. I’m sure my dad paid for it. It cost me nothing, but for some reason I still remember it. I thought it was a great gift. Beautiful AND practical. Something that would show my mom how much I loved her.

Looking back, that was a pretty pitiful gift. It probably didn’t cost more than a dollar or two. The “gold” faded
quickly. But, do you know why I remember that gift so much? Because for what seemed like years, that was the key ring that my mom used. It was an everyday fixture in her life and mine. Not such a bad gift after all, huh? Not if it got that much use and served as a daily reminder of a child’s affection for his mom.

Fast forward to today. You and I probably spend too much time at Christmas focused on the gifts, what we will give as well as what we will receive. And as we hear the deeply religious pontificate about how we should feel guilty about putting so much emphasis on the gifts, we will find ourselves feeling guilty. Guilty for spending too much. Guilty for wasting too much time. Guilty for wanting too much. Guilty for everything, really.

I can’t say that I disagree with that mentality altogether. We certainly live in a modern culture of misplaced priorities. We are needlessly extravagant and wasteful.

But, just for now, let’s set that aside. And let’s think about the nature of our gifts and gift-giving. What if those gifts were true, heart-felt expressions of our love and thankfulness for those special people God has placed in our lives. What if our care, concern, time, and expenses all added up to a worthless trinket given to someone that somehow was transformed into an incredibly powerful
expression of our love? What if God took and used our simple, silly gifts to bless someone and show them how much they mean to us? What if we took this lesson about Christmas gifts and gift-giving and learned to apply it to our everyday lives?

Now…rewind the clock 2000 years. The Christ-child was born and an entourage of men traveled from hundreds of miles away to pay their respects. They probably spent weeks of time and an untold amount of energy and expense to get there. They saw a star. They knew something was going on. Some people probably thought they were crazy. Some, no doubt, saw their trek as extravagant and wasteful. But, not the wise men.

In his gospel, Matthew tells us:

“When they saw the star, they were overjoyed beyond measure. Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and falling to their knees, they worshipped Him.” Matthew 2:10-11

The journeyed so far. And they finally found Him. The One. The King of the Jews. Now, these wise men were Gentiles, mind you. They were not Jews. But, somehow, they got it. They knew this Child was of profound importance to the world.
So, how did these non-Jews who lived hundreds of miles away even know about the coming of the promised Messiah? Some speculate that Daniel, while living in exile as a servant to the King of Persia shared the ancient Jewish prophecies with the wise men of Persia. Some think that possibly God spoke to them in a dream, compelling them to follow the star. We really don’t even know how much they knew about Him. But, their actions speak far louder than their words. When they saw Him, “they worshipped Him.”

The Bible does not tell us exactly how old Jesus was when these strange men from a distant land arrived. We assume that He was less than two years old (because of Herod’s actions in Matthew 2:16-18). What the wise men did next is interesting. They had found the newborn king. Their quest was complete. They bowed to worship the King. And, they felt compelled to give him a gift. Sounds like they’re from the South, right? If my wife was with them, she would probably refer to these gifts as a “happy.” A gift that just says, “I care about you.” Well, apparently, these wise men didn’t have any “J” key rings for Jesus like I found for my mom. Matthew goes on to tell us:
Those must have seemed like strange gifts for a child. A block of gold, some incense, and embalming fluid. What?! I know I didn’t live 2000 years ago, but I can’t imagine anything like that on any child’s Christmas list, even then! These were not exactly useful trinkets or toys for a child. And, yet these men and their gifts serve as a great reminder and encouragement to us today.

First of all, these wise men represent the first Gentiles to worship the newborn King. This King was for everyone…the whole world. And, just as the wise men were willing to risk everything on a perilous journey to worship the King, we too should see His value and be willing to risk it all to follow Him. God used their gifts to remind us that even as a Child, Jesus was the King (gold), to be worshipped (incense), who would one day suffer and die for our sins (myrrh). Jesus came with a mission. His sacrificial death on the cross was on purpose. God knew the price that must be paid for our redemption, and He sent His one and only Son to pay that price.

God protected the wise men from the harm that Herod had in store for them. He warned them in a dream to go
back home by a different route (Matthew 2:12). And after that, we never hear of these guys again. We never hear of what became of them or their gifts. But, to this day, we are inspired by their example to present gifts to the One we love and to the other loved ones in our lives.

Sure, sometimes our gifts may seem silly or worthless. But what if God takes them – no matter how silly or worthless they are – and uses them to bless someone, to build relationships, to create awesome memories, or to open up an opportunity to share the greatest gift of all – Jesus.

**REFLECTION:**

1. Is there a special Christmas gift you remember giving as a child? To whom?

2. Why do you think that particular gift stands out in your mind?

3. Do you know someone in your life who needs a key ring (insert the name of your favorite extravagantly
gorgeous worthless item here) this Christmas? Write their name(s) here.

4. Now, what is it that they really need?

5. The gifts of the wise men had great significance. What do those gifts mean to you?

6. What should be the focus of our gift-giving this Christmas?

7. What about your worship? Would you be willing to follow in the footsteps of the wise men?

8. What needs to change about your life for you to be considered one of the “wise men” of today?
Week 4: The Visit of the Magi: Worship Him!

Matthew 2:1-12

DECEMBER 21 - DECEMBER 27

Family Discipleship Time

Read Matthew 2:1-12, Psalm 105:3, 1 Chronicles 16:29, and Jeremiah 29:13

Who is a famous person you would love to meet? What would you like to know about that person? Why do you want to meet them? What would you say as soon as you met that person you admire so much? Would you be speechless? Would you hug them or be shy? Would you jump up and down or scream with joy? What questions would you ask that person? And when you leave that person to go home, what would you always remember?

Matthew tells the story of some men who wanted to meet the newborn King of the Jews. They had seen a star in the East and remembered the prophecies from the Old Testament prophets. They traveled to Jerusalem and soon the old and wicked King Herod heard that the wise men were in town. Herod knew they were looking
for a newly born king named Jesus and he acted as if he wanted to see Jesus as well. But Herod was so mean that he began to make plans in his heart to kill Jesus! By this time, Jesus had grown and was probably a toddler under 2 years old.

The wise men had a star. God had placed in the hearts of those wise men not just a knowledge of the stars, but also the faith to believe that if they would pack up their tents, food and clothes; hop on their camels; and start traveling across a desert land, that star would eventually lead them to meet His Son. Before they even left home, they knew they would be in the presence of a King unlike any on earth they had ever known. Their trip would take months, but they did not mind. They even took with them wonderful gifts to represent how honored they would be to be in His presence. What great faith for men who had no idea that they would soon be meeting the Savior of the world, a baby born to die for their sins!

They had a star; we have His Word. We know much more about Jesus than those wise men did. We can read the story. We know He died and we know why. More importantly, we know He lives and that we can enjoy forgiveness and wisdom and peace and comfort and power and a very personal relationship with Him.
Just like the wise men prepared themselves to follow a star in the sky, we must prepare ourselves to follow Him. And just like they bowed and worshiped Jesus with the best gifts they had, we must also worship and give Him our best.

As a prayerful act of worship, each family member can bow and complete this sentence: “I will seek You and worship You, Jesus, because You are __________.”

**REFLECTION:**

1. Who was the king when Jesus was born? What kind of king was he? Why do you think Herod wanted Jesus to be found?

2. Who were the Magi? Where did they come from? How did the Magi know where to go?

3. Why did the Magi want to find Jesus?
4. Where did they find Him? What did they do when they found Jesus?

5. How did the Magi go home? How did they know to go home that different way?

6. Read Jeremiah 29:13. What does this verse say about finding Jesus?

7. Read Psalm 105:3 and 1 Chronicles 16:29. When we find Jesus, what should we do?
APPENDIX A: Additional Activities for Families

Week 1
NOVEMBER 30 - DECEMBER 6

Scroll - Adventures with God - Prophecy
covchurch.org
Materials: drawings, scissors, crayons, glue, 1 sheet of poster board (84 x 63 cm). Give each child a piece of paper. Have them write Isaiah 53:7-8 on the paper using markers or pens. Next have them roll the paper into a Scroll. Use ribbon to tie the scroll shut. Encourage students to read their scrolls each morning or night as a reminder of God’s love for them.

Matching Game

Week 2
DECEMBER 7 - December 13

Cone Angel
ministry-to-children.com
Prepare beforehand: roll up the ½ paper plates into a cone shape and staple and cut circles out of the construction paper for the angel’s face

“What was our Bible Story about today? (allow for responses) Yes, our story today was about the shepherds finding out about the birth of Jesus. Who told the shepherds about Jesus? (allow for responses) Right, an angel! Wouldn’t it be cool to see an angel? It would be so exciting and maybe a little bit scary too. At first the shepherds were scared, but then they were ok.

Rice Krispie Angels or Shepherd’s Staff
imagitek.com/xmas/crafts/rice.html
A recipe and a craft in one!
Using Rice Krispies or a generic rice cereal here it is.

**Ingredients:**
- 5 cups Rice Krispies
- 1/4 cup margarine or butter
- 4 cups mini-marshmallows or 6-10 oz. bag of regular marshmallows
- 10 - 12 regular size marshmallows
- Toothpicks
- Red cinnamon candies, M&Ms, or any other small colorful candies

**Directions:**
1. Melt margarine in a 3 qt. saucepan
2. Add 4 cups marshmallows
3. Cook over low heat stirring constantly till syrupy
4. Remove from heat
5. Add green food coloring till a fairly dark green color.
6. Add cereal and stir until well coated
7. Shape into forms with buttered hands (kids LOVE to do this part, but make sure the mixture is not too hot)
8. When cooled Decorate with colorful candies

Week 3
DECEMBER 14 - DECEMBER 20

Shepherds Candy Cane Poem
ministry-to-children.com
Hold up the candy cane and show the parts as you talk about them
Give each child a mini candy cane to eat while you are talking about the candy cane.
“We are going to talk about what this candy cane has to do with our Bible Verse. (hold the candy cane right side up) What does this look like? (allow for responses) If I was a shepherd, I would need a staff. A staff would help me to guide my sheep where they needed to go. This looks like a staff. This candy cane also has things about Jesus. If I hold it upside down, it looks like a “J” which is the first letter of Jesus’ name. The candy cane is white with red stripes. The white is for how pure we are with Jesus in our life and the red stands for Jesus’ blood that
He shed for us on the cross. Also, if you look closely, you will see 3 red stripes on this candy cane. These stand for the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.” Wow! This yummy candy has such a great meaning that we should share with our family and with others.

The Christmas Candy Cane Poem about Jesus
Look at the Candy Cane
What do you see?
Stripes that are red
Like the blood shed for me
White is for my Savior
Who’s sinless and pure!
“J” is for Jesus My Lord, that’s for sure!
Turn it around
And a staff you will see
Jesus my shepherd
Was born for Me!

DIY Printable Nativity for Kids
www.tipjunkie.com/post/diy-printable-nativity-for-kids

Baby Jesus Snack
hubbardscupboard.org
Use a slice of peanut butter bread as the base, some pretzel sticks to make a stable, a graham cracker manger, and a marshmallow Baby Jesus!
Week 4
DECEMBER 21 - DECEMBER 27

Stars Using Corn Syrup Painting
http://ehow.com/info-tip_8684717_three-wise-men-art-activities
Colorful stars can be created using corn syrup and glitter. Cut out some large stars. Pour a small puddle of corn syrup in the middle and spread it outward to the points. Drop some food coloring onto the syrup and swirl it around with a toothpick or similar tool. If you like brush the colors around like paint or even add some glitter.

Find the Star Game
Cut out a star. Hide it. Then give kids one clue at a time and let them search until they find the star. Remind the kids that the wise men had clues from God and, by following the clues, they found Jesus.
APPENDIX B: Additional Resources

ADDITIONAL ADVENT OPTIONS AND WEBSITES:

biblewise.com/preview/archives/2009/december/ kids_korner/bible_characters/visitors

DIY Printable Nativity for Kids
www.tipjunkie.com/post/diy-printable-nativity-for-kids

Celebrating CHRISTmas: Daily Activities to Celebrate Christmas and the Birth of Christ. (hubbardsCupboard.org)

Happy Birthday Jesus Printable Advent Calendar which includes the Names of Jesus (jimmiescollage.com)

THE JESSE TREE
Ornament list and activities included in the blog post. http://missionalmotherhood.com/discipleship/jesse-tree/

The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name by Sally Lloyd Jones
Unwrapping the Greatest Gift: A Family Celebration of Christmas by Ann Voskamp

http://www.aholyexperience.com/category/jesse-tree/
*this also has free printable ornaments that go along with the book listed above. Kids can color them. Lots of resources on this page.

The Greatest Gift by Ann Voskamp (for adults)

More info on books here:
http://www.aholyexperience.com/thegreatestchristmas/

The Advent Jesse Tree: Devotions for Children and Adults to Prepare for the Coming of the Christ Child at Christmas by Dean Lambert Smith
APPENDIX C: Additional Scriptures for Study and Reflection

Advent is about Christ and His two comings—the first in humiliation, the second in glory; the first in condescension, the second in exaltation; the first for forgiveness, the second for judgment. The passages below speak to the person and work of Jesus in His first coming and the promise of His second. May the Lord strengthen, encourage, awaken and restore us as we behold Him in His Word.

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins. **ISAIAH 11:1-5**

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”

(which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. **MATTHEW 1:18-25**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without
him was not any thing made that was made. In him was
life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in
the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we
have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the
Father, full of grace and truth. **JOHN 1:1-5; 14**

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all
creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven
and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or
dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created
through him and for him. And he is before all things, and
in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the
body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from
the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For
in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and
through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on
earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his
cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in
mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his
body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy
and blameless and above reproach before him.

**COLOSSIANS 1:15-22**

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort
from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and
sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind,
having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as
much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. **HEBREWS 1:1-4**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” **REVELATION 21:1-5**

The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. **REVELATION 22:17**

He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! **REVELATION 22: 20**