



Christmas at Shades
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PROMISES ADVENT GUIDE





Blessing

WEEK ONE | NOVEMBER 28

ACTIVITIES

Preschool/Children

- Begin by playing a game of house-wide hide and seek. Allow everyone to be “it” once. Then, transition by saying something like:

“Playing hide and seek is always fun! It can be hard to stay hidden in our home because we all know the best places to hide. We know where to go to win! But what if you were playing at church or your friend’s house? Would you know where to go? In our story tonight, God makes a man named Abram a promise – but doesn’t tell him where he’s going. Let’s look together!”

Students/College

- Begin by playing two truths and a lie. Have everyone share three statements about themselves, two of which are true, and one is false. Others in the group will guess which is false. Then, say something like:

“Two truths and a lie is much easier for us as a family because we know each other well. We know where we’ve been, what we’ve done, and have done a lot of it together. We know and trust each other. But this game becomes much more challenging when you don’t know each other well. It’s hard to know what we can and can’t trust when it comes to someone we don’t know. In the passage tonight, a man named Abram is going to meet God for the first time – and God is going to make him a promise. Will he trust a voice he doesn’t know?”

Single Adults

- Think about your first job. What nerves, insecurities, and/or excitement did you experience? You likely didn’t fully know what you committed to – but you committed none the less. You’re probably much more confident today than you were on day one. Imagine how Abram might’ve felt when God showed up in Genesis 12.

Married Couples

- Take a few minutes to look through your wedding pictures. Talk about the fun memories and sweet moments of that day. Then spend some time talking about the promises you made that day in your vows. What was significant about those vows/promises? How did you know they would hold true?

READ

- Find and read Genesis 12:1-3 in your Bible.
- Preschool + children turn to pg. 56 in the Jesus Storybook Bible or pg. 20 in The Beginner's Gospel Story Bible.

EXAMINE

Preschool/Kids

- What is a promise? Have you ever made a promise?
- What promise did God make to Abram in our story?
- Do you think it was hard for Abram to believe God's promise? Would it be hard for you to believe?

Teens & Adults

- What is God asking Abram to do in this passage? Why do you think God attached a promise to his instruction?
- What does it mean when God tells Abram "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"? Can you think of a way this points us to Jesus?

APPLY

- What is a blessing? How do we experience blessings from God?
- God promised to bless Abram so that he could be a blessing to others. Can you think of ways we can be a blessing to others this week?
- How do you think God's promise to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3 sets the table for the coming of Jesus in Christmas?
- Sing "[Promises](#)" together as a family.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, you are good and kind and true. Thank you for blessing us. Please forgive us for the times we focused too much on our own wants this week. Help us see ways we can be a blessing to our friends and neighbors this week. In Jesus's name, Amen.





Kingdom

WEEK TWO | DECEMBER 5

ACTIVITIES

Preschool/Children

- Begin your time together by measuring each person in your family on a door frame. Use a pencil to measure the height of each person and write their name. Then, say something like:

"Each of us in our family is a different height and size. It's part of what makes each one of us unique and special. Take a moment and look at the wall. If you were going to choose one person to be a king with their own castle, who would you choose? What if I told you that instead of choosing the biggest and the strongest to be the king, God made a surprising choice? Let's look together!"

Students/College

- Begin by sharing about everyone's favorite players on their favorite sports teams, or by asking each person to share their favorite band/artist and why. Maybe look up pictures of the athletes or listen to the artist for a few seconds on Spotify. Once everyone has shared their heroes, say something like:

"Each one of these people is uniquely gifted in what they do. Some are naturally athletic. Some are incredible singers and talented instrumentalists. But sometimes our favorite athletes or musicians aren't considered the best of all time. In our passage tonight, we will see that God chooses a surprising person to be the next king and to continue his promise which would lead to Jesus."

Adults

- Make a list of the five most influential people in your life today. Write down their strengths and what you love about them. Then write how these people complement and challenge you to grow because of their different gifts and personalities. Write a prayer of thanksgiving to God for how he's used these people in your life.

Make time this week to send a note of thanks to the five people you mentioned (whether a letter, text, email, or phone call).

READ

- Find and read 1 Samuel 16:1-13 & 2 Samuel 7:12-16 in your Bible.
- Preschool + children turn to pg. 116 in the Jesus Storybook Bible or pg. 112 in the Beginner's Gospel Story Bible – (we also encourage you to read 2 Sam. 7 in the ESV with your kids).

EXAMINE

Preschool/Children

- Why do you think God chose David to fight Goliath and to become the next King if David was the smallest of his brothers?
- If you were God, would you choose David or someone bigger/stronger?
- How does it make you feel that God can use someone who is small to win a battle?

Teens & Adults

- What is surprising about God's promise to David? Talk with one another about what's surprising and why.
- Why does God often choose what is weak and lacking to accomplish His purposes?
- Can you think of ways God's promise to David points us to Jesus?

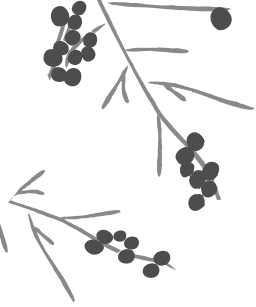
APPLY

- What can we learn about God's love and God's discipline from his promise to David?
- How does God's choice of a King point us to the Christmas story?
- Sing "[King of Kings](#)" together as a family.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, you have shown us amazing love. Thank you for loving us and correcting us when we disobey. Thank you for making the surprising choice of using the weak and small to make yourself known. Thank you for Jesus, our True King, who rules over all things and came as a little baby. Help us live with bravery and courage and obedience as we advance your kingdom this week. In Jesus's name, Amen





Peace

WEEK THREE | DECEMBER 12

ACTIVITIES

Preschool/Children

- Play a combination of the quiet game and follow the leader. Choose one person to be the leader. They will lead the family through the house doing silly things, and everyone must “follow the leader” without making any noise. Once everyone has been the leader, say something like:

“Follow the leader is already a hard game to play, but when you make it silent it becomes even harder! When we are distracted and being silly, it can be hard to stay quiet. In the same way, it can be hard to keep peace when everyone isn’t doing the right thing. In our story tonight, we will see that God’s people were not following Him. But God wanted them to know that He would still keep His promise and would bring peace in Jesus.”

Students/College

- Ask your student about the different things people argue about on social media. What topics constantly cause conflict? Once they’ve named a few of those topics, say something like:

“It’s not hard for us to see that the world is not at peace. People will fight about everything today. And some days, it only feels like it gets worse with each passing day. Christmas speaks to the unrest of today. Let’s read Isaiah 9 together.”

Single Adults

- Grab a journal and write down all the ways you encounter conflict or restlessness or lack of peace in your daily life. This could include unfulfilled longings, unmet expectations, roommate frustrations, politics, co-workers, religion, social media. When you reflect on these things, what emotions arise? Why? How does the promise of peace at Christmas speak directly to the unrest or conflict in your life?

Married Couples

- Conflict is normal in any marriage. What little things create conflict in your relationship (unfolded laundry, dishes left on the counter, toilet seat left up, annoying morning alarm)? How do we find peace in the bigger conflicts and issues of life? The promise of God through Jesus’ arrival in the Christmas story reassures us of coming peace. Read the passage together.

READ

- Find and read Isaiah 9:6-7 in your Bible.
- Preschool + children turn to pg. 144 in the Jesus Storybook Bible or pg.132 in the Beginner's Gospel Story Bible.

Note: If you read the BGSB, the story focuses on Jeremiah (not Isaiah). But, the story helps us understand conflict and the promise of peace. Be sure to also read Isaiah 9:6-7 with your kids.

EXAMINE

Preschool/Children

- What is peace? How do we find peace?
- What do you think about when you hear these words: wonderful, mighty, everlasting, prince of peace? Jesus is all of those things for us!
- Which person does Isaiah mention is the great-great-grandfather of the "prince of peace" Jesus?

Teens & Adults

- Talk about each of the names in verse 6. How does each name reveal something about Jesus?
- Read verse 7 again closely. It's an amazing verse with an incredible picture of Jesus's kingdom. Which aspect of Jesus's kingdom is most amazing to you?

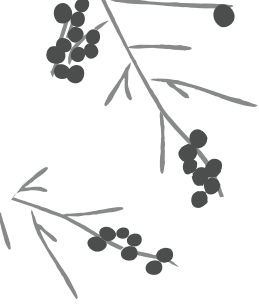
APPLY

- Where does our world lack peace? How can we bring peace to our community?
- How does the promise of peace in the coming of Jesus at Christmas alter our attitudes, behavior and response to a world in conflict?
- Sing "[Come Thou Long Expected Jesus](#)" together.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, you have promised us a kingdom which cannot be shaken. Make our hearts long for your everlasting kingdom of peace, justice, and righteousness. Give us eyes to see people around us who need peace and hope this week. Help us tell people about Jesus, our Prince of Peace. In Jesus's name, Amen.





Joy

WEEK FOUR | DECEMBER 19

ACTIVITIES

Preschool/Children

- Begin by having a staring contest between each member of your family until there is only one person standing. Then, say something like:

"It's so incredibly hard not to smile when someone else is smiling at us! There's something about happiness and joy that is contagious - when we smile, we make others smile too! In our story tonight, the joy of the angels as they sang about the birth of Jesus was contagious to all who saw it! Let's read about it together."

Students/College

- Share about a time you laughed so hard you cried. Try to encourage your student(s) to remember a time like this when you were altogether as a family. Try to relive that moment and remember as much as you can. Then, say something like:

"Sometimes we laugh uncontrollably not because of the level of humor but because others are laughing with us. Joy and laughter really are contagious - they spread from one person to another. The same was true the night Jesus was born. The joy of the angels filled the shepherds, and they were overcome by joy. Let's read the passage together."

Adults

- Write the story of one of the happiest moments of your life. It is good for us to remember the time and places God has given us joy. As you write, try to remember all the details: who was there, what it was like, what the room looked like, and how it felt. What is it about joy that is so contagious?

READ

- Find and read Luke 2:8-20 in your Bible.
- Preschool + children turn to pg. 184 in the Jesus Storybook Bible or pg. 164 in the Beginner's Gospel Story Bible.

EXAMINE

Preschool/Children

- What is joy? How is joy different than happiness?
- What do you think it would've been like when the angels appeared to the shepherds?
- Read the passage again and have the kids act out the story as you read it.

Teens & Adults

- Talk about how the people in this story respond to this "good news of great joy." What's important about each response?
- How does joy as seen in this passage differ from happiness?
- How does this story tie each reading from the previous weeks together? Does it make you love Jesus more?

APPLY

- How do you respond to the good news of Jesus, especially at Christmas?
- Is it challenging for you to be joyful at Christmas?
- How can we find joy in the Christmas holiday even if our experiences have been painful or feel empty?
- Sing "[Angels We Have Heard on High](#)" together.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, you are worthy of all glory and honor and praise. Forgive us for times when we are bored by Jesus. Create in us fresh joy and wonder at the good news of Jesus. Help us to publicly give you praise and glory for all you've done. In Jesus's name, Amen.

