



Rediscovering the Christmas Season

Plan Overview

Start a new Christmas tradition with a non-traditional twist on the season of Advent. An ideal start date for this adventure is December 1st, while an earlier start allows a more relaxed pace. Includes reflection questions and action steps to center each day on Christ. Great for individuals, families, or small groups.

We'd like to thank Good News Publishers for their generosity in providing the structure for the Literary Study Bible reading plan. To learn more about Good News Publishers, visit their website at <http://www.crossway.org>.

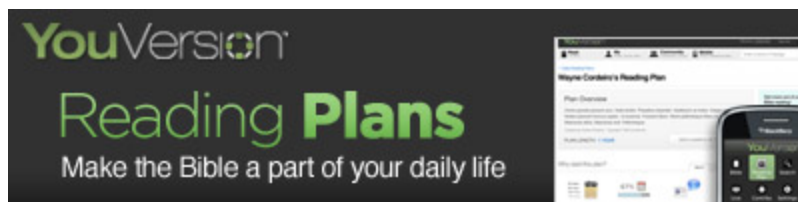


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December 1

a total of 1 readings for today

Luke 2:21-40

21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.**22** And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;**23** (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)**24** And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.**25** And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.**26** And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.**27** And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,**28** Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,**29** Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:**30** For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,**31** Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;**32** A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.**33** And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.**34** And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;**35** (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.**36** And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;**37** And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.**38** And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.**39** And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.**40** And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

Additional Content

A Preface to This Adventure

What Is Advent? Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus* meaning arrival or coming. The Hebrews looked forward to the coming of a Savior or Messiah—the First Advent. Now, we are waiting expectantly for His return to sweep His bride off of our feet—the Second Advent. The Church has been waiting for Him to come back from the moment He left the first time.

Why Should I Participate in Advent? So, what does Advent have to do with celebrating the arrival of Jesus? Traditionally, Advent counts down the four weeks leading up to Christmas. Practically, Advent reminds us to look forward to His return every day. This season is about resetting Jesus Christ at the center of our lives. After all, when He comes to take us home forever, we want to be ready. Expect to be inspired, challenged, refocused, broken, motivated, unified, encouraged, and most of all, expectant.

How Do I Use This Reading Plan? Each day provides daily reflection questions and often a suggested activity to help you center that day on Jesus. You can go in order or you can skip around and pick a day that you feel would be the most beneficial. You can go through the plan as an individual, but think of ways to do them in groups or as a family. Some activities will be things that you may already do during the Christmas season, but will suggest a Christ-centered way to think about it. Other activities will be things that you have never done before, so be open-minded and willing to try something new. Each day will include

Exposure, Exploration, Expression, and Experience. You may find that you want to read the Additional Content each day before the scripture to guide what you're looking for.

Exposure: Read the account of two people who waited every day in the Temple for Jesus' arrival. To add a traditional element, look up information about Advent wreaths and set up something like it in your home to use during this time. Yours can be as simple as four candles arranged in a circle.

Exploration: Discuss or journal about these two people who were blessed by seeing God's Savior with their own eyes. How can your life reflect this kind of anticipation?

Expression: Think about how you anticipate Christmas. How much of this feeling of excitement is centered on the arrival of Christ?

Experience: Before you dive into this 25-day journey, spend some time in prayer. Ask God to open your eyes so your vision of Jesus becomes clearer than it has ever been. Ask God to make you more aware of what it means to live your life with the expectation of the Advent of Jesus. Even on a personal level, when Jesus comes, life truly is an ADVENTure. Let's experience it fully this Christmas season!

December 2

a total of **1 readings** for today

Matthew 1

1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.**2** Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;**3** And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;**4** And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;**5** And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;**6** And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;**7** And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;**8** And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;**9** And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;**10** And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;**11** And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon;**12** And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;**13** And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;**14** And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;**15** And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;**16** And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.**17** So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.**19** Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.**20** But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.**21** And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.**22** Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,**23** Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.**24** Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:**25** And knew her not till she had brought

forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Additional Content

The Announcement

Exposure: Read the opening chapter of the New Testament—the account of Joseph, the earthly father God chose for His Son.

Exploration: Consider how the weight of generations of expectations affected Joseph's ability to step into such an awesome role. What do you think was going through Joseph's mind when the angel showed up and told them about Jesus?

Expression: How would you have felt if you were Joseph? Discuss with a friend or journal about what this announcement meant to Joseph and to all of us.

Experience: Have you had an experience where God asked you to do something that seemed ridiculous? Make a plan this Christmas season to do something ridiculous that you know God wants you to do.

December 3

a total of **1 readings** for today

Luke 2:1-20

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.**2** (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)**3** And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.**4** And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)**5** To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.**6** And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.**7** And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.**8** And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.**9** And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.**10** And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.**11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.**12** And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.**13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,**14** Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.**15** And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.**16** And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.**17** And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.**18** And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.**19** But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.**20** And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Additional Content

Terrified

Exposure: Read the account of the shepherds who became witnesses to Jesus' arrival.

Exploration: Wonderful and terrifying at the same time! What do you think was going through the shepherd's minds when the angels appeared?

Expression: How would you have felt if you were given this news? Discuss with a friend or journal about your reflections of this miraculous scene.

Experience: Have you had an experience where God interrupted your life with an important message? How was that a combination of terrifying and wonderful? Take time to pray—not to say anything to God, just to listen.

December 4

a total of **1 readings** for today

Mark 9:33-37

33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?**34** But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.**35** And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.**36** And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,**37** Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

Additional Content

Servant of All

Exposure: Read Jesus' remarks to His disciples about being a servant. In the next 24 hours, live this out by serving someone. Especially think of a way you welcome a little child in Jesus' name.

Exploration: Why do you think Jesus took a child into His arms for this remark? What does it say about Jesus' ministry that a little child was already nearby?

Expression: Who do you think was blessed more? You the server or the people being served?

Experience: Take an inventory of how you spend most of your days. Is your life characterized more by being served or serving? Is it any different during Christmas time?

December 5

a total of **3 readings** for today

Matthew 4:12-17

12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; **13** And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: **14** That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, **15** The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; **16** The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Isaiah 9:1-3

1 Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. **2** The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. **3** Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

Matthew 5:14-16

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. **15** Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. **16** Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Additional Content

Lights

Exposure: Read these passages about Jesus being the light. Research the beginnings of the tradition of Christmas lights. Drive around town with a group of friends or family and look at the different expressions of lights.

Exploration: How is Jesus the light of world? Think about the scientific facts you know about light. In what ways is light the perfect illustration God created from the beginning to illuminate who Jesus is?

Expression: Why do you think Jesus refers to His followers as the light of the world? What would that mean for your life to be a light in your relationships and situations?

Experience: How has your life been a light to those around you? Make a point to be light during this season.

December 6

a total of **2 readings** for today

Acts 20:35

35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

1 John 4:10

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Additional Content

The Gift

Exposure: Read these verses about giving. Go Christmas shopping for someone that is not a part of your immediate family like a patient in a nursing home or hospital, your mail carrier, your garbage collector, or a foster child.

Exploration: What is the real point of giving a gift? How is Jesus the best gift you have ever received?

Expression: How generous are you with your time, treasures, and talents? Do you live as if it truly is more blessed to give than receive? How can you live this out more fully this Christmas season?

Experience: Discuss with friends or family or journal about a time when you blessed someone with extreme generosity or a time where you were blessed by someone else's extreme generosity. Spend time praying asking God to help you become more generous by better comprehending the gift of love He has given us.

December 7

a total of **1 readings** for today

Exodus 25

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,**2** Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.**3** And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass,**4** And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair,**5** And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,**6** Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense,**7** Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate.**8** And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.**9** According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

10 And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.**11** And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.**12** And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it.**13** And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood,

and overlay them with gold.**14** And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.**15** The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it.**16** And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee.**17** And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.**18** And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.**19** And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof.**20** And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.**21** And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.**22** And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

23 Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.**24** And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about.**25** And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about.**26** And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof.**27** Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table.**28** And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them.**29** And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them.**30** And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway.

31 And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same.**32** And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side.**33** Three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick.**34** And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers.**35** And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick.**36** Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold.**37** And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it.**38** And the tongs thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, shall be of pure gold.**39** Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels.**40** And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.

Additional Content

Decorations

Exposure: Read God's detailed instructions for the decoration of the Tabernacle. Go though your home and examine the Christmas decorations you have. If you haven't decorated, take this time to decorate to celebrate this important season.

Exploration: Why do you think God was so specific about how to decorate the temple? What significance or symbolism do you think these decorations must have had?

Expression: Discuss with friends or family or journal about the meaning and significance of your existing decorations. How can your decorations speak to the focus you've placed on Christ?

Experience: Create a new ornament or decoration that can represent how you feel about your relationship

with Jesus this year.

December 8

a total of **1 readings** for today

Matthew 25:31-46

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:**32** And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:**33** And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.**34** Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:**35** For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:**36** Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.**37** Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?**38** When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?**39** Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?**40** And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**41** Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:**42** For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:**43** I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.**44** Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?**45** Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.**46** And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Additional Content

The Least of These

Exposure: Read Jesus' teachings about the final judgment. Think of someone you know of that probably falls into the category of "the least of these." You may have to think outside your normal circles. Invite them to a meal with you. Learn their story. Pray for them.

Exploration: How would you treat people differently if you really saw Jesus in their face? What are some changes you could make in your lifestyle that would fall into the sheep category?

Expression: Post a sticky note with the person's name on it somewhere you'll see it every day. Begin to pray for them regularly. Be open to how God may ask you to help them further.

Experience: What did you learn from your experience? How would your life be different if you were purposeful about spending time with those who are struggling?

December 9

a total of **3 readings** for today

Isaiah 9:6-7

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.**7** Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Revelation 19:1-16

1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:**2** For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.**3** And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.**4** And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.**5** And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.**6** And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.**7** Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.**8** And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.**9** And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.**10** And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**11** And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.**12** His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.**13** And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.**14** And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.**15** And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.**16** And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, .

1 Timothy 6:11-16

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.**12** Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.**13** I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;**14** That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:**15** Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;**16** Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Additional Content

His Names

Exposure: Read the passages about Jesus' first coming and His second coming. Listen to the "Hallelujah Chorus" or "For Unto Us a Child Is Born" from Handel's "Messiah"—both are easy to find online.

Exploration: Notice how prominent names of Jesus are in these verses. How important is your name to

you?

Expression: What does each name of Jesus mean to you specifically? Discuss with friends or family or journal about how Jesus expresses Himself in these various ways in your life.

Experience: How have you experienced Jesus as a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace? How is He a King of Kings and Lord of Lords? Now read the charge to Timothy about how to live ready to meet our King.

December 10

a total of **3 readings** for today

Matthew 1:22-23

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, **23** Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Isaiah 7:10-15

10 Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, **11** Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. **12** But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. **13** And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? **14** Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. **15** Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

John 1:14

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Additional Content

Immanuel

Exposure: Read the passages about Immanuel. Make a sign that reminds you that God is with you and hang it up somewhere that you see often.

Exploration: Immanuel means "God with us." How is Jesus still "God with us" even now that He's not walking on the earth?

Expression: How is God "for" us different than God "with" us? What are some ways you sense God with you?

Experience: Discuss with friends or family or journal about a time in your life when you felt the closest to Jesus. Make plans to do something today to get closer to God. How important is it to seek to experience that closeness all the time?

December 11

a total of 3 readings for today

Genesis 1

1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.**2** And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.**4** And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.**5** And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.**s**

6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.**7** And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.**8** And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.**s**

9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.**10** And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.**11** And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.**12** And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.**13** And the evening and the morning were the third day.**s**

14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:**15** And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.**16** And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.**17** And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,**18** And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.**19** And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.**s**

20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.**21** And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.**22** And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.**23** And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.**s**

24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.**25** And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.**27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.**28** And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.**s**

29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.**30** And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.**31** And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Isaiah 1:18

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Psalms 51:1-10

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.**2** Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.**3** For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.**4** Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.**5** Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.**6** Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.**7** Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**8** Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.**9** Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.**10** Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Additional Content

Snow

Exposure: Read the account of creation from Genesis. Create a snowman. Use real snow if you have it, or find a creative way to make a snowman. You can use cotton balls, wadded up paper, or just draw one.

Exploration: How is shaping a snowman much like what God does with us—at creation originally, but also in our daily walk with Him?

Expression: Tell God how thankful you are that He continually shapes us to look more and more like Jesus. Describe a time in your life when you knew for sure that God was shaping you to become like Jesus.

Experience: Read the passages about snow. Depending on your climate, you may not associate snow with Christmas. But these passages associate Jesus' forgiveness with snow. Discuss with friends and family or journal about your thoughts about being made white as snow.

December 12

a total of **2 readings** for today

Revelation 2:1-5

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;**2** I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:**3** And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.**4** Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.**5** Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

1 John 3:1-3

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.**2** Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.**3** And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Additional Content

True Love

Exposure: Read the warning against turning from your first love. Look up the lyrics of The Twelve Days of Christmas. Find at least one other person to sing it with you.

Exploration: Who is your first love? Think back to how your feelings of love change over time. In what ways can you relate to the Ephesian church?

Expression: Write lyrics to your own version of the song as an expression of what you would like to give to Jesus—your true first love. Include in your song the pieces of your life that He wants, the changes He wants you to make, and the things He wants you to take action on.

Experience: Read the passage from 1 John about his great love for us. What gifts has our True Love already given to you?

December 13

a total of **1 readings** for today

Psalm 150

1 Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.**s2** Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.**3** Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.**s4** Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.**s5** Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.**6** Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

Additional Content

Concert

Exposure: Read the passage. Make arrangements to go watch a Christmas concert or play. Go outside your normal circles and attend one at a church you've never visited or in a part of town you don't often drive through.

Exploration: What part of the concert or play meant the most to you? What did you learn just from the setting and the people you watched it with?

Expression: How is God like a conductor or director? How can you apply the discipline of rehearsal to improve your relationship with God?

Experience: Discuss with friends or family or journal about a time in your life when you were completely in tune with what God wanted for your life. What are some spiritual disciplines that you need to rehearse more regularly to get back in sync with God?

December 14

a total of **1 readings** for today

Acts 15:22-31

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:**23** And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:**24** Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:**25** It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,**26** Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**27** We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.**28** For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;**29** That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.**30** So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the

epistle:**31** Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

Additional Content

Christmas Cards

Exposure: Read the passage about an encouraging letter. Most of the New Testament is made up of letters. Buy or make a Christmas card for someone who has really been a blessing to you this year. Spend some additional time expressing to them what they mean to you. If a card won't hold all you need to say, write out a whole letter like the early church did.

Exploration: Think of how meaningful letters like this must have been in the first century. What kinds of communications do you most often use to express these kinds of thoughts to those in your life?

Expression: How do you think your card will make this person feel? Why do you think there is so much power in expressing love to someone?

Experience: Jesus wrote us a really long letter called the Bible expressing His love for us. What has been the most meaningful part of His letter to you?

December 15

a total of **2 readings** for today

Luke 1

1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,**2** Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;**3** It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,**4** That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.**6** And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.**7** And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.**8** And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,**9** According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.**10** And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.**11** And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.**12** And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.**13** But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.**14** And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.**15** For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.**16** And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.**17** And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**18** And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.**19** And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.**20** And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.**21** And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the

temple.**22** And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.**23** And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.**24** And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,**25** Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.**26** And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,**27** To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.**28** And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.**29** And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.**30** And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.**31** And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.**32** He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:**33** And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.**34** Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?**35** And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.**36** And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.**37** For with God nothing shall be impossible.**38** And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.**39** And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;**40** And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.**41** And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:**42** And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.**43** And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?**44** For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.**45** And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.**46** And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,**47** And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.**48** For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.**49** For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.**50** And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.**51** He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.**52** He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.**53** He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.**54** He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;**55** As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.**56** And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.**57** Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.**58** And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.**59** And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.**60** And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.**61** And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.**62** And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.**63** And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.**64** And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.**65** And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judæa.**66** And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.**67** And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,**68** Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,**69** And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;**70** As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:**71** That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;**72** To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;**73** The oath which he swore to our father Abraham,**74** That he would grant unto us, that we

being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,**75** In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.**76** And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;**77** To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,**78** Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,**79** To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.**80** And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

Jeremiah 32:17

17 Ah Lord God ! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:

Additional Content

Impossible

Exposure: Read the passage about the arrival of an improbable baby and an impossible baby. God is setting the stage in this dramatic way for the advent of Jesus Christ—who would be characterized by doing the impossible.

Exploration: Why do you think God delights in doing the impossible?

Expression: Is God asking you to believe something that seems impossible right now? Write down something you want to ask Him for this Christmas that seems impossible.

Experience: Discuss with friends or family or journal about a time in your life when you had to depend on Jesus to do the impossible. Read the verse about our God of the impossible out loud wherever you are.

December 16

a total of **1 readings** for today

Matthew 2:1-12

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,**2** Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.**3** When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.**4** And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.**5** And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,**6** And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.**7** Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.**8** And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.**9** When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.**10** When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.**12** And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they

departed into their own country another way.

Additional Content

The Nativity

Exposure: Read about the kings who came to worship Jesus. Look at the pieces of a nativity set and consider the features the artist used to show that the scene is centered on Christ.

Exploration: What do you think it would have been like to be right in the middle of that? What stance or position would you take in that scene?

Expression: The wise men worshiped Jesus by kneeling. Get on your knees and express to Him right now how much you love Him. How does just being in that position change the position of your heart?

Experience: The wise men also worshiped by offering their best gifts. Think of a creative way to offer worship today that has nothing to do with singing.

December 17

a total of **1 readings** for today

Galatians 4:1-7

1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;**2** But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.**3** Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:**4** But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,**5** To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.**6** And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.**7** Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Additional Content

Adopt a Family

Exposure: Read the passage about how we have been adopted as children of God through Christ. Many people adopt a family to help during Christmas. Find someone who needs a family this Christmas and make plans to be that family for them.

Exploration: What is the difference between adopting a family to help at Christmas and literally adopting a child into your family? What does this language communicate about God's commitment to loving us?

Expression: What rights and privileges do children of royalty have? What are some ways you don't fully live as if you were a child of God?

Experience: Find someone who has been adopted and talk to them about what it means in their life. Journal about what their experiences reveal to you about living as a child of God and loving others in that same way.

December 18

a total of **2 readings** for today

Isaiah 58

1 Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.**2** Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

3 Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.**4** Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.**5** Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?**6** Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?**7** Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?**8**

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward.**9** Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;**10** And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:**11** And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.**12** And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:**14** Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Matthew 6:16-18

16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.**17** But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;**18** That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Additional Content

Fast

Exposure: Read the passage about fasting. Christmas is generally a time of feasting. Take at least a day to fast from something.

Exploration: Why do you think Jesus asked us to fast? What kind of fasting does Isaiah say the Lord requires?

Expression: Why do you think it is so difficult for people to make this a habit? How can you incorporate fasting into your regular habits of worship?

Experience: Journal about your experiences with fasting. What did you learn? How did it change you? Consider joining a large group of believers who set aside the first 21 days of the New Year to fast.

December 19

a total of **1 readings** for today

Luke 11:1-13

1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.**2** And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.**3** Give us day by day our daily bread.**4** And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.**5** And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;**6** For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?**7** And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.**8** I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.**9** And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.**10** For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.**11** If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?**12** Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?**13** If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Additional Content

Pray

Exposure: Read the passage about Jesus teaching His followers how to pray. Use the Lord's Prayer as a pattern to write down a prayer that has some of those same ideas in it.

Exploration: What parts of Jesus' prayer pattern do you often leave out of the times you pray? How was writing down your prayer different from just saying it?

Expression: Read your prayer out loud. Ask someone you trust to pray along with you.

Experience: Discuss with friends or family or about a time in your life where God answered an important prayer.

December 20

a total of **1 readings** for today

John 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**2** The same was in the beginning with God.**3** All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.**4** In him was life; and the life was the light of men.**5** And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.**7** The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.**8** He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.**9** That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.**10** He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.**11** He came unto his own, and his own received him not.**12** But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:**13** Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.**16** And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.**17** For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.**18** No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?**20** And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.**21** And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.**22** Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?**23** He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.**24** And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.**25** And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?**26** John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;**27** He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.**28** These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**30** This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.**31** And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.**32** And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.**33** And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.**34** And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

35 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;**36** And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!**37** And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.**38** Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?**39** He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.**40** One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.**41** He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.**42** And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.**44** Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.**45** Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.**46** And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.**47** Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!**48** Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto

him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.**49** Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.**50** Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.**51** And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Additional Content

The Word

Exposure: Read the first chapter of the Apostle John's account of Jesus' life. If you made an Advent wreath spend some time just reflecting and looking at the candlelight.

Exploration: This chapter is known for being written in almost a mystical style yet it also tells the narrative of how God prepared the world for the arrival of His Word. What was your favorite part about the chapter?

Expression: What is significant about understanding that Jesus is The Word and that He has been God since the beginning?

Experience: "Follow me" is a statement you find in John 1. What was it like when Jesus asked you to follow Him?

December 21

a total of **1 readings** for today

John 21:25

25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

Additional Content

The Greatest Story Ever Told

Exposure: Christmas is getting closer! It will be easy to lose focus on Him as the season gets busier. Read the last verse of the Gospel of John. Gather some friends or family and watch the 1965 movie classic The Greatest Story Ever Told. It's available on DVD or online.

Exploration: What is your favorite part about Jesus' life?

Expression: How did the movie help your understanding of Jesus' life? How did watching that with others open up opportunities for good discussion?

Experience: How has your story become a part of the greatest story? Journal about the role you have played in God's big story.

December 22

a total of **1 readings** for today

Psalms 100

1 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. **2** Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. **3** Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. **4** Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. **5** For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Additional Content

Joy

Exposure: Read the passage from Psalms. Get a group together and go Christmas caroling. If you don't know all the words, print out copies of the lyrics before you go out. You can go through your neighborhood or revisit one of the people you've met this month as you've reached out to serve.

Exploration: What were people's responses to your singing? What is your favorite Christmas caroling song? Why is it your favorite song?

Expression: Copy down in your own handwriting the lyrics to your favorite Christmas carol. Ask God to use this season to help you experience the joy and peace the song communicates in a new way this year.

Experience: What is your favorite memory of a Christmas carol?

December 23

a total of **1 readings** for today

Matthew 25

1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.**2** And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.**3** They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:**4** But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.**5** While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.**6** And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.**7** Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.**8** And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.**9** But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.**10** And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.**11** Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.**12** But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.**13** Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.**15** And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.**16** Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.**17** And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.**18** But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.**19** After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.**20** And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.**21** His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.**22** He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.**23** His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.**24** Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:**25** And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.**26** His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:**27** Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.**28** Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.**29** For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.**30** And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:**32** And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:**33** And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.**34** Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:**35** For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:**36** Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.**37** Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee

drink?**38** When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?**39** Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?**40** And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**41** Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:**42** For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:**43** I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.**44** Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?**45** Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.**46** And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Additional Content

He's Coming

Exposure: Read some parables Jesus told about when He would return.

Exploration: What do you think is the main point of the chapter? You've done a lot to get ready for Christmas. What can you do to be ready for the Second Advent?

Expression: How are you preparing for the return of Jesus? Discuss with friends and family or journal about what you want to do to be ready for that day.

Experience: How would your life be different today if you believed Jesus was returning at midnight? If something springs to mind that you would do differently, go do it now.

December 24

a total of **1 readings** for today

John 3:16

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Additional Content

So Loved

Exposure: Christmas Eve is the last day of Advent. One verse sums it up the best. Read John 3:16. Make a really huge poster or sign of it like you see at sports events or stadiums and post it outside your home.

Exploration: Do you feel so loved today?

Expression: Say this verse aloud. Memorize it if you haven't already. What has been your greatest moment of being a Jesus follower? What has been your worst moment as a Jesus follower?

Experience: Reflect on your experiences this Christmas season. Attend a Christmas Eve worship service with friends and family.

December 25

a total of 4 readings for today

Luke 1:26-56

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,**27** To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.**28** And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.**29** And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.**30** And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.**31** And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.**32** He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:**33** And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.**34** Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?**35** And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.**36** And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.**37** For with God nothing shall be impossible.**38** And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.**39** And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;**40** And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.**41** And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:**42** And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.**43** And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?**44** For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.**45** And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.**46** And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,**47** And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.**48** For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.**49** For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.**50** And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.**51** He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.**52** He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.**53** He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.**54** He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;**55** As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.**56** And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

Matthew 1:18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.**19** Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.**20** But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.**21** And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.**22** Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,**23** Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.**24** Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:**25** And knew her not till she had brought

forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Luke 2:1-40

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.**2** (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)**3** And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.**4** And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)**5** To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.**6** And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.**7** And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.**8** And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.**9** And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.**10** And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.**11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.**12** And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.**13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,**14** Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.**15** And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.**16** And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.**17** And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.**18** And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.**19** But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.**20** And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.**21** And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.**22** And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;**23** (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)**24** And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.**25** And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.**26** And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.**27** And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,**28** Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,**29** Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:**30** For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,**31** Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;**32** A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.**33** And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.**34** And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;**35** (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.**36** And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;**37** And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.**38** And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.**39** And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.**40** And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

Matthew 2:1-12

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came

wise men from the east to Jerusalem,² Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.³ When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.⁵ And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,⁶ And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.⁷ Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.⁹ When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

¹¹ And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.¹² And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Additional Content

Christmas has arrived—the day we celebrate the advent of our Savior Jesus Christ. Reflect on how this reading plan has helped you experience the Christmas season differently. Make a point to help friends or family members download the Bible App to their smart phones today and sign up for a reading plan as a way to offer a birthday present to Jesus.

