

JESSE TREE: GOD'S BIG ADVENT STORY



WELCOME!

If family life during ordinary days is busy (and it is!), family life during Advent is busy times two. There are special events to attend, decorations to hang, gifts to purchase, meals to make, people to serve, and more. It's challenging to find time to pause, reflect, and wait with wonder to celebrate God's long-ago messiah promise come true.

We had your family in mind as we put together this Jesse Tree devotional version of our popular [God's Big Story cards](#) boxed set (available from FaithAliveResources.org). We've purposely kept the steps simple to give you a fuss-free and fun way to nurture faith during Advent as you remember God's faithfulness and celebrate Jesus' birth together. Each day involves four easy steps: *Breathe, Read, Wonder, Pray*. No busyness required!

What Is a Jesse Tree?

A Jesse Tree is a centuries-old way of illustrating how God's story leads to Jesus. A series of ornaments show symbols that represent important people and events in God's Big Story. Each day in Advent you hang another symbol on a tree and explore the story behind it through devotional readings and activities.

Making the Jesse Tree Symbols

We've provided you with 25 story symbols from God's Big Story Cards. Download them at <https://tinyurl.com/DwellAdventSymbols>, then print them out in one of these two ways:

- **Print the symbols on white cardstock.** Then simply cut them out, punch a hole at the top, and add a yarn loop for hanging.
- **Print the symbols on sticker paper.** Our symbol pages are compatible with Avery's 2-inch diameter round labels ([Template #22817](#)), or you can print the symbols on any full-sheet sticker paper and cut them apart. Then stick the symbols to cardstock or wood circles. Punch or drill a hole for a yarn loop for hanging.

Choosing a Tree

When your symbols are assembled, decide where to hang them:

- Place a small tree branch in a flower pot filled with sand, and hang the symbols on it.
- Purchase a small real or artificial Christmas tree, and hang symbols on it.
- Hang the symbols on your family Christmas tree with your other ornaments.

How to Use the Devotions

Use the four steps below as a framework for your time together. Hang the symbol for each day's story when it works best for your family to do so.

BREATHE: Step away from the busyness of the season and calm your head, heart, and hands as together you slowly breathe in . . . and out. (Adjust the length of this time according to your children's attention spans.)

READ: Spend time in God's Story by reading the suggested passage from the Bible or from a children's story Bible. Some days the selections are longer than others. One way to keep all ages engaged is by including them in the telling of the story. You can invite pre-readers to make up an action to do each time they hear a particular word or name. Or assign readers a section of the story to read aloud or have them read the lines of a character as you narrate the story.

WONDER: Use the questions to reflect on the story. We've provided you with "wondering questions" because they work well with all ages, they have no right or wrong answers, and they result in deeper thinking about God and about the lives of the people in the story. Encourage kids to use their imagination as you wonder together about these stories. You might want to end this time by asking, "What do you wonder about this story?"

PRAY: Close your time with prayer using the provided suggestions or your own words and ideas.

We hope that the Jesse Tree will become a beloved yearly ritual in your home. Let us know how it goes! You can reach us at info@dwellcurriculum.org to share your experiences or ask questions.

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DAILY DEVOTIONS





DAY 1

GOD'S PROMISE

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Isaiah 11:1-4a

WONDER: Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, God told a prophet named Isaiah to tell God's people that Someone was coming to save the world. That Someone was Jesus, God's Son. He would be born into the family of Jesse and was described as a new branch growing out of a tree. How do you think God's people felt when they heard about this promise of a Savior?

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for telling Isaiah to announce your promise to send a Savior. Please be with us these next 25 days as we explore your story, learning how you prepared the way for your Son, Jesus, to rescue the world. Amen.



DAY 2

GOD CREATES THE WORLD

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Genesis 2:4-9

WONDER: Imagine a place where there is nothing at all. Wonder about how that might look and sound and feel. Wonder how God could create the whole world just by speaking.

PRAY: Spend time sharing your favorite animals, plants, flowers—anything from God's creation that you love or find beautiful. As each person shares, shout in unison, "Thank you, God!"



DAY 3

THE FALL

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Genesis 3

WONDER: Why would Adam and Eve disobey God? Wonder if Adam and Eve thought God wouldn't love them anymore after they disobeyed. Have you ever had a time when everything seemed to be going wrong, but then God sent someone or something to give you hope and make things better?

PRAY: Dear God, you made us in your image. Help us to do the things you ask us to do and to not do things that are wrong. Thank you for sending your Son to crush the head of the serpent Satan and save us from our sins. Amen.



DAY 4

GOD SAVES NOAH

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Genesis 6:13-19; 7:13-8:1; 9:11-15

WONDER: God could have destroyed everything, but God chose to save Noah and his family and two of every animal. Why do you think God did that?

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for promising to never again destroy the world with a flood. Thank you for sending Jesus to take away our sins instead. We're sorry for times when we are mean and selfish. Please forgive us through Jesus. Amen.



DAY 5

ABRAHAM AND SARAH

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Genesis 12:1-9

WONDER: Wonder what Abraham and Sarah thought about on the day they began their big move. How do you think they felt when God told them to leave their home and go to a new, unknown land?

PRAY: Tell God about something new that you will be doing. Thank God for being with you everywhere!



DAY 6

THE BIRTH OF ISAAC

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-7

WONDER: Is it hard to wait all through Advent for Christmas to arrive? How does our “breathing” time make you feel? How do you think Abraham and Sarah felt as they waited for God’s promise to come true? Do you think other Old Testament people felt like that as they waited for Jesus?

PRAY: Close your time by thanking our promise-keeping God for sending Jesus.



DAY 7

JACOB'S LADDER

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Genesis 28:10-17

WONDER: Imagine Jacob's dream. How do you think he felt when he woke up? Wonder why Jacob said the place he was in must be "the house of God."

PRAY: The name "Immanuel" is often used for Jesus at Christmas because it means "God with us." Have one person at a time name the places they plan to go later today or tomorrow. After each place is named, say to that person: "Immanuel! May God be with you and watch over you!"



DAY 8

GOD PROTECTS JOSEPH

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Genesis 37:1-36; 39:1-2

WONDER: Wonder what Joseph thought about when he was in the bottom of the pit. Do you think his brothers ever felt sorry for what they did to him? Do you think Joseph knew that God was still with him and would protect him?

PRAY: Do you know people who are in a hard or difficult place? Pray that they will know God is with them.



DAY 9

THE BURNING BUSH

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Exodus 3:1-15

WONDER: What would have surprised you the most—a bush on fire or a voice coming out of a bush? Wonder what this story tells you about God. What do you think Moses felt when God promised to be with him? How would you feel?

PRAY: Think of something you have to do or are worried about doing. Ask God any questions you have and talk to God about your fears. Ask for help.



DAY 10

THE RED SEA

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Exodus 14:5-31

WONDER: Wonder how the people felt when they saw that Pharaoh and the Egyptians were coming after them. Do you think they still trusted that God would take care of them? How do you think they felt when they saw the amazing way that God saved them?

PRAY: Have everyone share something that they are thankful for with a simple prayer, “God thank you for. . . .” Close by telling everyone in your family, “Remember that God will always care for you, _____.”



DAY 11

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Exodus 19:16-20; 20:1-17

WONDER: Wonder what the people thought was happening when they heard the sounds and saw the smoke near the mountain. How do you think Moses felt when he went all alone to talk to God? How would you have felt?

PRAY: In the old days, people spoke to God through other people, like Moses and priests. But today, we can talk directly with God, because Jesus is the bridge between God and people. As a reminder, finish your prayer today with “in Jesus’ name.” Tell God about your needs and thank God for the commandments.



DAY 12

GOD SAVES RAHAB

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Joshua 2

WONDER: Rahab had faith that God was powerful enough to save her and her family. And God did! God was faithful to Rahab’s family (she was the great-great-great grandmother of David, who fought Goliath) and God has been faithful to your family too. Wonder about the ways God has taken care of your family. Tell a story about one of those ways.

PRAY: Take turns thanking God for the ways he has been faithful to your family. As each person shares, respond together by proclaiming, “Thank you God, for taking care of us!” After everyone has shared, have one person close by praying, “Thank you God, for all these ways you have been faithful to us. Thank you for saving us through Jesus. Amen.”



DAY 13

RUTH'S BLESSINGS

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Ruth 2:1-13, 4:13-17

WONDER: How did God provide for Ruth? Can you think of a time when God provided for you by sending someone to care for you like Boaz cared for Ruth? Tell about that time.

PRAY: Offer a popcorn prayer of thanksgiving for all the ways God provides for you.



DAY 14

DAVID IS ANOINTED

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

WONDER: What do you think it was about David that made the Lord choose him— even though he was the youngest of his brothers? Wonder what it means that God doesn't see us the way people do.

PRAY: The Jesse in this story is where we get the name "Jesse Tree." Because Jesus is a descendant of David and David was Jesse's son, Jesus is like a new tree growing from the stump of Jesse's family tree. Thank God for Jesse and for his son, David. Thank him for sending Jesus through the family of David.



DAY 15

DAVID THE SHEPHERD

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: 1 Samuel 17:34-35, Psalm 23

WONDER: Why do you think sheep need a shepherd? How do you think sheep feel about their shepherd? How do you think the shepherd feels about the sheep? Why does Jesus want us to know he is like a shepherd?

PRAY: In the Bible, “green pastures” mean more than grass. They stand for all the good things God gives. Offer a popcorn prayer naming your “green pastures.” Close by thanking God for your many blessings and for sending Jesus, our great shepherd.



DAY 16

ELIJAH AT MOUNT CARMEL

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: 1 Kings 18:20-39

WONDER: Wonder what Elijah heard when he was preparing God’s altar. Do you think he closed his ears to any of the sounds or voices? Wonder what it would have been like to see the fire of the Lord fall from the sky.

PRAY: Place your fists on the table to represent the stones of Elijah’s altar. For each stone (fist), say thank you to God for showing Elijah, the people, and you that God is the one true God.



DAY 17

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: 2 Chronicles 36:11-21

WONDER: Wonder why God's people kept disobeying God over and over and over again. How do you think God felt when the people kept disobeying? What does this story show us about God?

PRAY: Spend some time silently praying about ways you disobeyed God in the past week. Close with this prayer: Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to take away our sins. Through every day, in all we do, Lord, please guide us to follow you. Amen.



DAY 18

GOD GIVES JONAH A MESSAGE

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Jonah, chapters 1 and 2

WONDER: Why might Jonah think a boat would be a good place to hide from God? Were you surprised that Jonah told the sailors the truth about who he was and what he had done? Wonder what it was like inside the fish.

PRAY: Make an echo prayer (repeating each phrase as it's read) from the last part of Jonah's prayer that he said just before the great fish vomited him back on shore: "I'm worshiping you, God, calling out in thanksgiving. I'll do what I promised I'd do. Salvation belongs to God" (from Jonah 2:9, *The Message*).



DAY 19

DANIEL AND THE LIONS' DEN

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Daniel 6:10-23

WONDER: Wonder what Daniel prayed during his prayer time after the new law was announced. What did Daniel do all night in the lion's den? Do you think he was scared?

PRAY: Dear God, help us to trust and obey you, even when it's not easy. Thank you for being with us wherever we go. Amen.



DAY 20

ESTHER SAVES HER PEOPLE

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Esther 3:13, 4:1-5:2

WONDER: Wonder how Esther felt as she put on her robes and got ready to go to the king. What do you think she said to God?

PRAY: Pray for people who live in places where it is not safe for them to be known as Christians.



DAY 21

HOME AGAIN

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Ezra 1

WONDER: Wonder how the people carried all the special temple dishes when they moved from Babylon to Jerusalem without moving vans, packing boxes, or even bubble wrap. How do you think the people felt when they arrived back home?

PRAY: Make up actions for the underlined words below, then echo this prayer: “Lord, move us toward you. Move our hearts. Move our actions. Move our words. Amen.”



DAY 22

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Luke 1:5-25, 57-66

WONDER: Zechariah and Elizabeth loved God and had been praying for many, many years for God to give them a baby. Wonder why Zechariah didn't believe the angel right away. Why do you think God waited so long to surprise them with a baby?

PRAY: Shady trees, juicy fruit, and great friends are just a few of the good surprises God gives us. What others can you think of? Give God a popcorn prayer of thanks for these things. Close by thanking God for sending John to prepare the way for Jesus.



DAY 23

THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE TO MARY

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Luke 1:26-38

WONDER: Wonder why God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother. Who did Mary tell first about the angel's visit? What would you do or say if God asked you to do something very surprising and unusual?

PRAY: Thank you, God, for keeping your promises. Thank you for sending Jesus, just like you promised.



DAY 24

JESUS IS BORN!

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Luke 2:1-7

WONDER: Look at the very first symbol you placed on the Jesse Tree. Remember God's promise to send a Savior? Jesus' name means Savior. He was God's promise come true! Wonder why God would plan it that Jesus was born among the animals instead of in a palace.

PRAY: Insert each of your names in these words: "God loved _____ so much that he gave his only Son, born as a baby so that _____ will have new and lasting life." Thank God together for the gift of Jesus.



DAY 25

GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY

BREATHE: Calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out.

READ: Luke 2:8-20

WONDER: What would have amazed you most if you had been with the shepherds that night? Wonder what you would have done when you found the baby Jesus.

PRAY: The shepherds spread the news about Jesus. Name people you'd like to tell about Jesus. Pray for them and ask God for ways to tell of your love for Jesus and your excitement about him.