

New Living Translation

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December 1

Today's Topic: Advent



Watch the Video for December 1

Read the following:

Isaiah 40:3-5

Listen! I hear the voice of someone shouting, "Make a highway for the LORD through the wilderness. Make a straight, smooth road through the desert for our God. Fill the valleys and level the hills. Straighten out the curves and smooth off the rough spots. Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The LORD has spoken!"

Matthew 3:1-3

In those days John the Baptist began preaching in the Judean wilderness. His message was, "Turn from your sins and turn to God, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near." Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness: `Prepare a pathway for the Lord's coming! Make a straight road for him!' "

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What are some things you would like to do as a family to prepare for the coming of Christmas?
2. What do these two passages tell you about Christmas?

December 2

Today's Topic: Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer



Watch the Video for December 2

Read the following:

Isaiah 53:3-6

He was despised and rejected--a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God for his own sins! But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all.

John 1:10-14

But although the world was made through him, the world didn't recognize him when he came. Even in his own land and among his own people, he was not accepted. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan--this rebirth comes from God. So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Was there anything in the story of Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer that surprised you? What was it?
2. How does today's reading remind you of the story of Rudolph?

December 3

Today's Topic: Holly and Mistletoe



Watch the Video for December 3

Read the following:

Psalms 51:1-3, 7

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my shameful deeds-- they haunt me day and night. . . Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Romans 5:6-9

When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's judgment.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Can you think of any other plant that is associated with Christmas?
2. Red and green are Christmas colors. Red can remind us of what Jesus did for us in dying for our sins. What does the color green make you think of?

December 4

Today's Topic: Handel's Messiah



Watch the Video for December 4

Read the following:

Isaiah 9:6-7

For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His ever expanding, peaceful government will never end. He will rule forever with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David. The passionate commitment of the LORD Almighty will guarantee this!

Luke 2:8-14

That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terribly frightened, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Savior--yes, the Messiah, the Lord--has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David! And this is how you will recognize him: You will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth!" Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others--the armies of heaven--praising God: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to all whom God favors.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Look over the names Isaiah uses for Jesus. How is each of these important to you?
2. What are some of your favorite Christmas songs that talk about Jesus?

December 5

Today's Topic: Gift of the Magi and The Fourth Wise Man



Watch the Video for December 5

Read the following:

Proverbs 14:31

Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who help the poor honor him.

Matthew 25:34-40

Then the King will say to those on the right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.' "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?' And the King will tell them, 'I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What does the story of Della and Jim teach you about the true nature of Christmas giving?
2. According to the passage in Matthew, what are some ways we can serve God by helping others?

December 6

Today's Topic: Saint Nicholas



Watch the Video for December 6

Read the following:

Proverbs 19:17

If you help the poor, you are lending to the LORD--and he will repay you!

Luke 6:31-38

Do for others as you would like them to do for you. "Do you think you deserve credit merely for loving those who love you? Even the sinners do that! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, is that so wonderful? Even sinners do that much! And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, what good is that? Even sinners will lend to their own kind for a full return. "Love your enemies! Do good to them! Lend to them! And don't be concerned that they might not repay. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to the unthankful and to those who are wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate. "Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. Stop criticizing others, or it will all come back on you. If you forgive others, you will be forgiven. If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving--large or small--it will be used to measure what is given back to you."

Family Discussion Questions:

1. How was the real Saint Nicholas like Santa Claus?
2. In what ways can you be like Saint Nicholas this Christmas?

December 7

Today's Topic: WW1 Christmas Peace



Watch the Video for December 7

Read the following:

Jeremiah 29:11-13

For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me in earnest, you will find me when you seek me.

2 Corinthians 13:11

Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Rejoice. Change your ways. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Can you think of someone you can give the message of peace to this Christmas?
2. In the midst of battle, the story in today's video tells us that some found peace in singing *Silent Night*. What are some songs you know that bring you comfort and peace?

December 8

Today's Topic: The Candy Cane



Watch the Video for December 8

Read the following:

Jeremiah 17:7-8

"But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit.

Titus 2:13-14

While we look forward to that wonderful event when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing what is right.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What are some ways the candy cane can be used to teach people about Jesus?
2. What are some of your favorite Christmas treats?

December 9

Today's Topic: The Nutcracker



Watch the Video for December 9

Read the following:

Isaiah 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, because the LORD has appointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to announce that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the LORD's favor has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies. To all who mourn in Israel, he will give beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning, praise instead of despair. For the LORD has planted them like strong and graceful oaks for his own glory.

Luke 4:16-21

When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll containing the messages of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him, and he unrolled the scroll to the place where it says: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come." He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue stared at him intently. Then he said, "This Scripture has come true today before your very eyes!"

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What surprised you about the story of the Nutcracker?
2. What do these verses teach you about what Jesus can do?

December 10

Today's Topic: Truth or Tradition?



Watch the Video for December 10

Read the following:

Micah 5:2

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village in Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past.

Luke 2:1-7

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, his fiancé, who was obviously pregnant by this time. And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Was there anything in today's video that you thought was truth but was really tradition? What was it?
2. Why is it important to distinguish truth from tradition?

December 11

Today's Topic: Traditional Christmas Foods



Watch the Video for December 11

Read the following:

Psalms 34:8-10

Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who trust in him! Let the LORD's people show him reverence, for those who honor him will have all they need. Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the LORD will never lack any good thing.

Philippians 4:4-9

Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again--rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. And now, dear brothers and sisters, let me say one more thing as I close this letter. Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Different types of Christmas foods were mentioned in today's video. What one is your favorite? Is there one you would like to try?
2. Food is often associated with rejoicing. Why do you think this is so? What food makes you rejoice?

December 12

Today's Topic: Angels



Watch the Video for December 12

Read the following:

Psalms 41:1-2

Oh, the joys of those who are kind to the poor. The LORD rescues them in times of trouble. The LORD protects them and keeps them alive. He gives them prosperity and rescues them from their enemies.

Hebrews 13:1-3

Continue to love each other with true Christian love. Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! Don't forget about those in prison. Suffer with them as though you were there yourself. Share the sorrow of those being mistreated, as though you feel their pain in your own bodies.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What are some stories about angels from the Bible?
2. The video suggested some ways in which we can act like angels by helping others. What is something you would like to do this Christmas to help others?

December 13

Today's Topic: Christmas Trees



Watch the Video for December 13

Read the following:

Jeremiah 31:3

Long ago the LORD said to Israel: "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.

John 3:14-17

And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so I, the Son of Man, must be lifted up on a pole, so that everyone who believes in me will have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Did you learn something that you did not know about Christmas trees from the video? If so, what was it?
2. Name at least one thing about Christmas trees that you like best.

December 14

Today's Topic: Nativity Scenes



Watch the Video for December 14

Read the following:

Psalms 2:7

The king proclaims the LORD's decree: "The LORD said to me, `You are my son. Today I have become your Father.

Luke 2:15-20

When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Come on, let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." They ran to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. Then the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, but Mary quietly treasured these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their fields and flocks, glorifying and praising God for what the angels had told them, and because they had seen the child, just as the angel had said.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. If you could be part of a Nativity scene, who would you like to be and why? If you have enough members of your family present, act out a nativity scene right now.
2. The shepherds first saw an angel of the Lord, then a great number of angels, and then finally the Lord Jesus. They then told others what they had heard and had seen. What are some of the things you think they might have said to others about what they had just experienced?

December 15

Today's Topic: Go Tell It On The Mountain



Watch the Video for December 15

Read the following:

Isaiah 55:11-12

It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it. You will live in joy and peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song, and the trees of the field will clap their hands!

Acts 10:34-36

Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God doesn't show partiality. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. I'm sure you have heard about the Good News for the people of Israel--that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What did you learn from the video?
2. Why is it important to understand that God considers everyone the same regardless of their race, education, sex, age, where they live, or how much money they may or may not have? How should this affect the way we view others?

December 16

Today's Topic: A Christmas Carol



Watch the Video for December 16

Read the following:

Psalms 51:7-10

Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me--now let me rejoice. Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me.

2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Whatever we do, it is because Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for everyone, we also believe that we have all died to the old life we used to live. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves. Instead, they will live to please Christ, who died and was raised for them. So we have stopped evaluating others by what the world thinks about them. Once I mistakenly thought of Christ that way, as though he were merely a human being. How differently I think about him now! What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!

Family Discussion Questions:

1. The heart of Ebenezer Scrooge was changed. Why do you think Christmas has such an effect on people?
2. Scrooge said that he would honor Christmas and "keep it all the year." What is something you can do to keep the spirit of Christmas burning in your heart all year long?

December 17

Today's Topic: Christmas Trivia



Watch the Video for December 17

Read the following:

Hosea 11:1

"When Israel was a child, I loved him as a son, and I called my son out of Egypt.

Matthew 2:13-15

After the wise men were gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up and flee to Egypt with the child and his mother," the angel said. "Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is going to try to kill the child." That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "I called my Son out of Egypt."

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Can you name something about Christmas that was not covered in the video?
2. According to the above passage, why did Joseph take Mary and the baby Jesus into Egypt? Can you think of anyone else from the Bible who was also "called out of Egypt" to serve God?

December 18

Today's Topic: Gifts



Watch the Video for December 18

Read the following:

Esther 9:22

He told them to celebrate these days with feasting and gladness and by giving gifts to each other and to the poor. This would commemorate a time when the Jews gained relief from their enemies, when their sorrow was turned into gladness and their mourning into joy.

Ephesians 4:7-12

However, he has given each one of us a special gift according to the generosity of Christ. That is why the Scriptures say, "When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people." Notice that it says "he ascended." This means that Christ first came down to the lowly world in which we live. The same one who came down is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that his rule might fill the entire universe. He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ,

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What were some Christmas gifts that you received in the past?
2. Think of a spiritual gift that God has given to you. What is it?

December 19

Today's Topic: Birthday Cakes for Jesus



Watch the Video for December 19

Read the following:

Psalms 18:46

The LORD lives! Blessed be my rock! May the God of my salvation be exalted!

Colossians 1:12-18

Always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God's holy people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and he has brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son. God has purchased our freedom with his blood and has forgiven all our sins. Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before God made anything at all and is supreme over all creation. Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him. He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together. Christ is the head of the church, which is his body. He is the first of all who will rise from the dead, so he is first in everything.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What would you put on a Birthday cake for Jesus? Why not make one and do it?
2. Can you think of some other things you can do to celebrate Jesus' birthday?

December 20

Today's Topic: X-mas



Watch the Video for December 20

Read the following:

Deuteronomy 29:29

"There are secret things that belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our descendants forever, so that we may obey these words of the law.

Romans 11:33-36

Oh, what a wonderful God we have! How great are his riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his methods! For who can know what the Lord is thinking? Who knows enough to be his counselor? And who could ever give him so much that he would have to pay it back? For everything comes from him; everything exists by his power and is intended for his glory. To him be glory evermore. Amen.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. The passage in Deuteronomy teaches us that God will make some things known to us. What are some things God has revealed to you?
2. Before you watched today's video, did you know that "X" stood for Christ? How does this information make you feel about the phrase "Merry X-mas"?

December 21

Today's Topic: Season of Light: Christmas-Hanukah-Kwanzaa



Watch the Video for December 21

Read the following:

Psalms 27:1

The LORD is my light and my salvation--so why should I be afraid? The LORD protects me from danger--so why should I tremble?

John 1:1-5; 8:12

In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. He was in the beginning with God. He created everything there is. Nothing exists that he didn't make. Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to everyone. The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it . . . Jesus said to the people, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't be stumbling through the darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Do you like the various lights we see at Christmas time? What are some of your favorites?
2. What did you learn about Hanukah or Kwanzaa that you did not know before?

December 22

Today's Topic: We Three Kings of Orient Are



Watch the Video for December 22

Read the following:

Psalms 72:11

All kings will bow before him, and all nations will serve him.

Matthew 2:1-8

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We have seen his star as it arose, and we have come to worship him." Herod was deeply disturbed by their question, as was all of Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law. "Where did the prophets say the Messiah would be born?" he asked them. "In Bethlehem," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote: `O Bethlehem of Judah, you are not just a lowly village in Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'" Then Herod sent a private message to the wise men, asking them to come see him. At this meeting he learned the exact time when they first saw the star. Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"

Family Discussion Questions:

1. The wise men gave gifts to Jesus. What is something you can give to Jesus this Christmas?
2. From either the Bible or tradition, what are some other things you have been taught about the wise men?

December 23

Today's Topic: The Star of Bethlehem



Watch the Video for December 23

Read the following:

Numbers 24:17

I see him, but not in the present time. I perceive him, but far in the distant future. A star will rise from Jacob; a scepter will emerge from Israel. It will crush the foreheads of Moab's people, cracking the skulls of the people of Sheth.

Matthew 2:9-12

After this interview the wise men went their way. Once again the star appeared to them, guiding them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house where the child and his mother, Mary, were, and they fell down before him and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But when it was time to leave, they went home another way, because God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Which of the various explanations of the Star of Bethlehem do you think is more likely?
2. Can you think of a poem, rhyme or verse that uses the word "star" in it?

December 24

Today's Topic: The Twelve Days of Christmas



Watch the Video for December 24

Read the following:

Proverbs 2:6

For the LORD grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

James 1:17

Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above, who created all heaven's lights. Unlike them, he never changes or casts shifting shadows.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Can you name or sing the gifts of the Twelve Days of Christmas?
2. Do you think *The Twelve Days of Christmas* was really a secret code or just an urban legend? Why?

December 25

Today's Topic: Was Jesus Born on December 25?



Watch the Video for December 25

Read the following:

Isaiah 7:14

All right then, the Lord himself will choose the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel--
'God is with us.'

Matthew 1:18-25

Now this is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiance, being a just man, decided to break the engagement quietly, so as not to disgrace her publicly. As he considered this, he fell asleep, and an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to go ahead with your marriage to Mary. For the child within her has been conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All of this happened to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and he will be called Immanuel (meaning, God is with us)." When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord commanded. He brought Mary home to be his wife, but she remained a virgin until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Does it really matter what day we celebrate the birth of Christ? Why?
2. Think of something you can do today that would make Jesus happy. What is it? Why not do it?