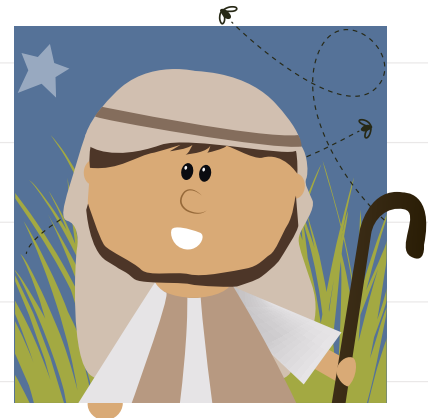




25 Days of the Christmas Story



An Advent **Family** Experience



Dr. Josh and Christi Straub

Illustrations by Jane Butler

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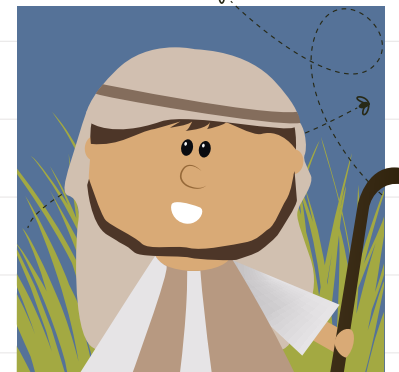
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B&H
kids
Nashville TN



Introduction

Our children love hearing stories about the day they were born. When we show them pictures of when Christi was pregnant, they ask all kinds of questions. And every time, their questions remind us of another story that happened prior to, during, or in the days following their birth.



The same is true with stories of adoption. Our family friends who adopt celebrate “Gotcha Days” and “Homecoming Days.” The questions kids ask about their adoption days also lead to forgotten or untold stories.

If we don’t share or write down our birth and adoption stories, important memories can easily be forgotten. This is one reason we tell as many stories as we can. It’s also fun to see how each individual story contributes to the grander story of our child’s place in our family: the significance of his or her name, how their siblings and relatives responded to their arrival, and more.

Celebrating the details of each individual story makes for an even more meaningful birthday each year.

That’s why our family throws Jesus a birthday party on December 25. This is not just a birthday party we put together at the last minute. Instead, we prepare for it during each of the twenty-four days leading up to Christmas.

This is the heart behind *25 Days of the Christmas Story: An Advent Family Experience*. The word *advent* means “coming.”



In the weeks leading up to Christmas, we want your family to take the time to remember and experience the people, places, and things related to the day Jesus came into the world as a baby.


On each day of December, we introduce a new story in chronological order of the events of Christmas. While this book is designed for families with children ages four to eight, feel free to tailor the stories, activities, and experiences to fit your family. Use as little or as much of the material as possible, depending on the time you have.

You do not have to add anything more to your day. This Advent family experience intentionally helps you talk about the Christmas story during times you already spend with your kids. For example, you could read the Bible verse and story in the morning, pray during a car ride, do the family activity after dinner, and discuss the questions at bedtime.

Whatever you do, make it your own, and have fun! Remember, this book is for your family to experience together.

Our kids grow up so quickly, and Christmases come and go. But the memories can be cherished for a lifetime. That’s why we included pages in the back of the book to record answers to the Family Time Questions and memories you shared doing the Family Activity.

Our prayer is that this book serves as a keepsake—that the stories prepare your family’s hearts to celebrate Jesus’ coming and the memories bring you joy for years to come.



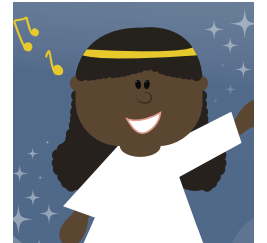
Merry Christmas!
Josh + Christi

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Day
2

David

Character
Trait:
**Faith-
Filled**



David and the Christmas Story

Not only is Jesus God's Son, but He also had parents during His time on earth. Jesus' dad, Joseph, adopted Him into the family lineage of David, and His mom, Mary, was also of the bloodline of David. In case you wondered, this is David, the same shepherd boy who defeated Goliath! Can you believe it? Jesus became a long-distance grandson (twenty-eight generations) of David, fulfilling a prophecy spoken hundreds of years earlier about the coming Messiah as a descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

People who lived when Jesus was born knew who David was. He had grown up to become a king and write the book of Psalms. But even more important, David's faith grew, and he became known as "a man after [God's] own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14).

Whenever Jesus was called "the Son of David" in the Bible, it was by people who had faith that Jesus was the promised Messiah, or the long-awaited Deliverer. They believed Jesus had the power to deliver them from suffering and illness. So when He arrived, they exploded with hope and joy.

Life Lesson:
God is my deliverer.

Family Activity

Prepare a special dessert ahead of time, but don't tell your kids! First, blindfold them. Then lead them through a list of sensory tasks. Before you begin each task, ask them if they still trust you. Grab a candle or other aromatic item and ask what it smells like. After that, lead them into the bathroom where they will wash their hands. Last, lead them into the kitchen. Ask them to open their mouths. Stick a bite of their favorite dessert inside! Then remove the blindfold.

Ask your kids what it felt like to go on that journey blindfolded. Were they scared? Did they trust you? Use this exercise to discuss putting your faith in God even when you don't know where He's leading you.

Family Time Questions

- What does it mean to put your faith in someone?
- Can you think of an example of when you put your faith in Jesus and He delivered you?

Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant.—Luke 2:4–5



Lord Jesus, build our faith in You no matter what we face. Help us trust that You, the Son of David, will be our Deliverer.

Day
4

Elizabeth



Character
Trait:
Teachable

Elizabeth and the Christmas Story

Elizabeth was Zechariah's wife and an older relative of Mary, Jesus' mother. God used Elizabeth's pregnancy as a way to provide comfort to Mary. As a woman not yet married and still a virgin, Mary was scared when Gabriel told her that she would give birth to Baby Jesus. She knew it was unacceptable to be pregnant before marriage. That's why the angel Gabriel comforted Mary by telling her that Elizabeth, her much older relative, was six months pregnant with a child she also did not expect.

The Bible says that Mary hurried to Elizabeth's house when she heard the news. We can only imagine the comfort and guidance Mary was looking for. She needed someone to talk to, someone to help her through her pregnancy. And what did Elizabeth do when Mary arrived? She welcomed her with open arms! As Mary's older relative and a woman Mary looked up to, Elizabeth invited Mary to stay with her for three months. Together, Elizabeth and Mary celebrated the miraculous baby boys God had given them.

Life Lesson:
Seek godly mentors.

Family Activity

Grab a picture frame with as many slots as you have family members. Then, as a family, talk about *mentors* and what it means to be *teachable*. A *mentor* is a godly person we can look up to and trust when we need help. Being *teachable* means having ears to listen to the wisdom mentors share. Invite everyone in the family to brainstorm a list of possible mentors. These mentors can be older family members, pastors, coaches, teachers, or neighbors. Over the next month, each family member will find or take a picture with one of the people and put it in one of the slots. Hang the picture frame in your house as a reminder of those who love and support your family.

Family Time Questions

- Name three people you know personally that you want to be like when you grow up.
- What is it about them you admire?

“And consider your relative Elizabeth—even she has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called childless. For nothing will be impossible with God.”—Luke 1:36–37



Father, help us be teachable and find godly mentors. Provide men and women who will encourage us to walk in Your ways.

Day
15

Angels

Character
Trait:
Strong

The Angels and the Christmas Story

In the Bible, we often read about angels sending messages to God's people. Remember Gabriel? His messages to Zechariah and to Mary sparked the Christmas story as we know it. Besides Gabriel, Michael is the only other angel whose name we know. But many more exist! The Bible tells us millions upon millions of angels worship God, serve Him, and carry out His instructions. Sometimes you might meet an angel without knowing it (Hebrews 13:2)!

However, angels aren't necessarily the sweet, gentle, winged beings we often see portrayed in nativity scenes. The Bible describes angels as having "great strength" and obeying God (Psalm 103:20). Perhaps that's why, when the shepherds saw the angel in the field surrounded by the glory of God, they were terrified. Yet the angel said, "Don't be afraid" (Luke 2:10). Then, all of sudden, many more angels lit up the night skies above the shepherds as the first messengers to proclaim the birth of the Savior to the world. Coming in strength, the angels delivered a message unlike any other: The light of the whole world—God's Son, Jesus—had come! His power would defeat the darkness of sin, once and for all.

Life Lesson:
Walk in the light.

Family Activity

Not only did the angels praise God, but they lit up the night sky above the shepherds. They proclaimed victory over the dark forces of evil with the birth of the promised Messiah.

Tonight, everyone put on Christmas pajamas. Pop some popcorn. Pile into your car. Drive around eating popcorn and looking at the decorated houses lighting up the night sky in and around your neighborhood. Talk about how the bright Christmas lights have the strength to pierce the darkness and light up the houses. In a similar way, when we follow Jesus, who is the “light of the world,” we have the strength to “never walk in the darkness” because we “have the light of life” shining inside of us (John 8:12).

Family Time Questions

- What do you think it means to “walk in the light”?
- Why do you think we need to pray for strength to do so?

Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!”—Luke 2:13–14



Father, send Your angels to minister to and protect our family so we can walk strongly in the light.

Experience the Christmas story in a whole new way!

A keepsake in the making, *25 Days of the Christmas Story* brings your family together for an experiential journey through the season of Advent. This family devotional helps kids and parents engage with the Christmas story in a unique way—one person, place, or part of the Christmas story at a time! From the prophet Isaiah to Baby Jesus to the gift of frankincense, all devotions take you on a chronological journey with an easy-to-read story, character trait, family activity, and more. Simply read each day's story or go deeper with the additional features.

This gift book also includes pages in the back to record fun memories and sweet moments to look back on. With *25 Days of the Christmas Story*, your family is sure to enjoy celebrating the season of Advent together year after year!

Dr. Josh and Christi Straub lead Famous at Home, a company equipping families, leaders, and organizations in emotional intelligence and family wellness. Authors, speakers, TV cohosts, marriage and family coaches, and cohosts of the Famous at Home podcast, they have three sweet children and a feisty golden doodle named Copper.

