

The Road to Bethlehem

A CHRISTMAS DEVOTIONAL
FOR FAMILIES



from Declaration Church

A Note from the Authors

This special little book is a gift to you from Declaration Church in Spring, Texas. We've arranged it into thirty separate devotions, enough to get you through the holiday season.

In these pages you will discover the true story of Christmas, and it's a tale that will change your life forever!

**Feel free to share this book
with your friends and loved ones.
Download as many copies as you like.
May God bless you this very special
Christmas season and may you always
remember that Jesus is the greatest gift
of all! And if you find yourself looking
for a church to visit in Spring, Texas,
check out Declaration Church. We meet
at Snyder Elementary on Sunday
mornings at 9:00 and 11:00.
For more information, visit
www.declaration.org.**

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DAY ONE

**What is
Christmas
Really About?**



DAY ONE

What is Christmas Really About?

And she will have a Son, and you shall name Him Jesus (meaning “Savior”), for He will save His people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21 TLB

Christmas presents under the tree. Twinkling lights and ornaments. Tinsel and bows. Hot cocoa and marshmallows. Stories of Santa and elves. These are just a few of the things we love about Christmas!

But wait, there’s more! Eating yummy foods, watching silly Christmas movies, and wrapping gifts with shiny paper and bows. . . what a blast! No wonder people say Christmas is the very best time of year!





In the middle of this jolly season there's another story we love to share. It's the true story of Christmas. This amazing tale begins with a girl named Mary, a boy named Joseph, and a very special baby who was born in a stable.

What does their story have to do with Christmas, you ask? Everything!

Before Santa, before hot cocoa, before Christmas cookies, and even before presents wrapped in colorful paper, this very special baby came as a gift to the world. So, lean in close and let's discover this amazing story as we travel the road to Bethlehem together!

I'm so excited, Jesus! You came to save us. That's the best gift of all! Amen.





DAY TWO

The Promise of a Savior

DAY TWO

The Promise of a Savior


The Lord himself will give you a sign. The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And He will be called Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14 NIRV

What if you knew that something was going to happen even before it happened?

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, God promised His people that He would send them a Savior. A Savior is someone who rescues people—like a fire-fighter or a police officer.

God's people were so excited! They wanted the Savior to come right away, but the Lord told them to wait patiently for just the right time.



So, they waited. And waited. And waited! It took a *l-o-n-g* time for God's promise to come true, but when God makes a promise, He always keeps it. You can trust Him.

Maybe you don't like to wait. It's hard to be patient when something good is coming! Maybe you're excited about Christmas and all of the presents under the tree but you want to start unwrapping those gifts today!

God's people were waiting for the most amazing gift of all—a Savior. And boy, were they ever surprised when He came as a baby in a manger! Jesus was a very special baby, the child of promise who came to save the world. He was definitely worth the wait.

***Thank You for coming to save us, Jesus!
Amen.***



DAY THREE

Mary Gets Exciting News!



DAY THREE

Mary Gets Exciting News!

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call Him Jesus."

Luke 1:30 NIV

Many years ago, a young woman named Mary lived in a town called Nazareth. She was just a teenager, but she was engaged to get married to a man named Joseph.

One day an angel suddenly appeared in front of her. (Wow! Can you even imagine what that would be like?) Mary was scared! She had never seen an angel before, after all!

Instead of just saying, "Hello, Mary!" the angel said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you!" To be favored means that God has something extra-special planned for you.

The angel told Mary that God was going to give her a big surprise, a baby! Mary was so confused. After all, she wasn't even married yet! Why would God give her a baby?

The angel explained that this special baby, Jesus, would be the child of promise, the Savior they had been waiting for all of these years. How exciting!

Mary decided right away that she would do whatever the Lord asked of her. And, when your heart is right with God, He will use you to do amazing things!

Wow, Lord! Thank You for this special girl who wasn't afraid to say yes to your plan! Give me a heart like Mary's. Amen.

DAY FOUR

Joseph Hears from an Angel





DAY FOUR: Joseph Hears from an Angel

But after [Joseph] had considered [divorcing Mary quietly], an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

Matthew 1:20 TLB

Joseph was engaged to a girl named Mary. But before they got married, he learned that she was already expecting a baby!

Joseph was shocked. Mary said the baby was from the Holy Spirit, but could this be true?



Joseph wasn't sure if he should still marry Mary, but he didn't want to embarrass her. He planned to divorce her quietly.

But then the incredible happened! An angel appeared to Joseph in his sleep and told him that the baby was from the Holy Spirit and that God wanted Joseph to be his dad.

Joseph knew this was no ordinary dream, but a message from the Lord. He must have been scared to raise the Son of God, but, trusting God, he overcame his doubts and fears and said yes!

God, You do the incredible! When we place our trust in Your promises and Your perfect plan, we can find peace and comfort even in the face of our fiercest fears! Amen.

DAY FIVE

Mary and Joseph Do Things God's Way



DAY FIVE

Mary and Joseph Do Things God's Way

Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant, and I am willing to do whatever He wants."

Luke 1:38 TLB

After Joseph woke up, he and Mary were soon married, just as the Lord's angel had told him to do.

Matthew 1:24 CEV

What would you do if an angel appeared to you with instructions from God? Would you tremble and freeze or run and hide? Pass out or ask loads of questions? Fall on your face or try to take a selfie to show all your friends?

Would you obey?

Mary and Joseph did.

Mary said she would do whatever the Lord wanted of her, even if it meant a really awkward conversation with her fiancé and the threat of being shunned in disgrace.

Joseph stayed with Mary and became her husband, even though at first he was scared and had doubts about what to do.

It's hard to imagine saying no to God, but we do it every time we don't obey what the Bible tells us to do—like when we say mean words to our brothers or sisters or when we disrespect our mom or dad. It's always best to say “Yes!” to God!

God, we're listening! However You choose to speak to us, help us to say yes to You like Mary and Joseph did, so we can take part in Your incredible story of redemption and love.

Amen.



DAY SIX

The Road
to
Bethlehem



DAY SIX

The Road to Bethlehem

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.


Luke 2:4 NIV

Where do you come from? Do you have a neighborhood, town, state, or country that you call home?

Some of us move around a lot and feel like we come from a lot of places, and people in the Bible could be a little like that, too.

Joseph was living in a town called Nazareth in an area called Galilee. But when the emperor wanted to know how many people were in the whole entire empire, he commanded that everyone return to their own town to be counted.





Joseph's hometown was Bethlehem because that's where his family came from. It was in a whole different area called Judea, at least a four-day walk away!

So, to Bethlehem Joseph went with his very pregnant wife, Mary. About seventy miles they trekked, probably in homemade sandals!

We don't know exactly how long it took, how many stops they made, or how many dangers they dodged along the way; we just know they made it there safely. And yet, in many ways, their journey was just beginning!

God, sometimes home feels a long way away—even when we're at our own address! When our feet get tired from all the travel, remind us that You are our true home, wherever we are! Amen.



DAY SEVEN

Mary and Joseph Trust in God's Plan



DAY SEVEN

Mary and Joseph Trust in God's Plan

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."

Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

Have you ever been on a long trip and asked, "Are we there yet?" Imagine you have no car, no comfortable shoes, and no convenience stores. The trip would take days. Now imagine you are young, frightened, and about to have a baby!

As they traveled the long, dusty road to Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph were probably thinking, "Why now, Lord? Can't we just stay home? Don't you see how hard this is?"

Mary and Joseph both received incredible promises for this miracle baby. Making this journey showed that they believed the Lord would take care of them and fulfill those promises.

In other words, they trusted His plan, even when it made no sense. And God took care of them all the way.

Trusting God's plan isn't always easy, but it's always the best choice! The promises of God are not guaranteed to keep us from difficult times... but you can be absolutely sure that God's plans for your life are the best!

I trust Your plan, Lord, even when things don't make sense. I know You will keep me safe and carry me through. Amen.

DAY EIGHT

WHAT'S SO
SPECIAL
ABOUT
BETHLEHEM?



DAY EIGHT

What's So Special about Bethlehem?

"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah, Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf."

Micah 5:2 NLT

"Big things come in small packages."

On Christmas morning when everyone is gathering around the tree, nothing gets more attention than the giant box with red shiny wrapping paper. Imagine a box so big that it doesn't fit underneath the tree. Everyone wants to touch it, rock it back and forth, or knock on it to see what sound it makes in hopes of getting a hint of what is inside.



The parents finally settle down on the couch and give permission to open presents. The wrapping paper starts flying, the giant box is opened, and inside...to your surprise...is a vacuum cleaner. It's not what you expected.

But sitting under the tree is a tiny box that nobody notices at first. When all the other presents have been opened, dad walks over and hands it to mom. Inside the box is a diamond ring that is worth more than all the other gifts combined.

Jesus was the gift that nobody expected, in a small town, in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes. But the gift of Jesus was greater than anyone could have imagined.

What a surprise, God! Jesus, the greatest gift ever, wrapped up and delivered in the tiny town of Bethlehem. Amen.



DAY NINE

No Room in the Inn



DAY NINE

No Room in the Inn

And she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in strips of cloth, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke 2:6-7 MEV

Have you ever been on a family vacation? Staying in a nice hotel is one of the things you love most, right? When you're really tired after a long day of traveling, it's nice just to crash in a warm bed, to snuggle under the covers and get a good night's sleep.

Mary and Joseph had traveled a long, long way from Nazareth to Bethlehem and they were so tired. But when they arrived they got some shocking news: The innkeeper at the local hotel said, "Sorry! We're all full! No vacancy!"

When the innkeeper realized Mary was about to have a baby, he took pity on them and offered them his stable, a place where donkeys and sheep usually slept. So, Mary and Joseph rested on the hay in that dirty stable, grateful to be safe. And there, in that strange and unfamiliar place, Mary gave birth to the Savior of the world. She wrapped him in strips of cloth because there were no diapers, no onesies, no cute pajamas.

Just like Mary and Joseph knocked on the door of that inn, Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart today. Will you say, “Come on in, Jesus!” or will you say, “No room in the inn!” The answer is up to you!

*There's plenty of room in my heart
for You, Jesus! Come on in! Amen.*



DAY TEN

An Animal Lullaby





DAY TEN

An Animal Lullaby

The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its manger, but Israel does not know, My people do not understand.

Isaiah 1:3 TLV

Before you were born your mom and dad probably fixed up a special room just for you. Maybe they bought a crib and a rocking chair. No doubt that room had cute decorations on the walls. (Nothing but the best for an adorable baby like you!)

Now think about baby Jesus, the Savior of the world. He was born in a stable, a place where animals were kept. It definitely wasn't cute!



Mary must have been nervous as she looked around that space. There was no cradle. No pack-and-play. No baby bed. But she noticed a little wooden feeding trough, filled with grain for the animals. And there, in that tiny manger, she laid the King of the world.

There's no way to know the kinds of animals that slept near the manger. Maybe there was a donkey. Or a couple of sheep. Maybe even a cow. They must have been very, very confused to see a baby in their feeding trough! But as that tiny little boy dozed off, the animals kept watch—cows mooing, donkeys braying, and sheep baaing. In their own special way, these animals were welcoming the Savior of the world with a lullaby of worship.

*I will welcome You with song, too,
Jesus! Amen.*



DAY ELEVEN
A Special Baby is Born



DAY ELEVEN


A Special Baby is Born

"Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

Matthew 1:23 NLT

Imagine putting together a Christmas list, or sending a letter to Santa to ask for your favorite toy or game. Finally the day comes and you can't wait to open your toy on Christmas morning! You are so eager that you tear off the wrapping paper and...woo-eee! There it is, as seen on TV, the very game or toy you had asked Santa for, right in your hands! That gift gives you such joy!





The baby Jesus was a priceless gift. Hundreds of years before He was born, God told His people to be on the lookout for the Messiah, the one who would bring joy, love, and salvation. And now, He was finally here, just as God had promised! He didn't come as a king wearing a robe; He came as a baby in a manger. Wow! Not at all what the people were expecting!

Mary and Joseph were amazed that God chose them to be the parents of this remarkable child! Even before he let out his very first cry, they knew their tiny baby was extra-special. He was God's own Son. They called Him Jesus, which means "God Saves" because that's what the angel told them to do. What an amazing gift of love, straight from heaven to earth!

Father God, we thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus, the Savior of the world! Amen.



DAY TWELVE

Shepherds Keeping Watch in the fields



DAY TWELVE

Shepherds Keeping Watch in the Fields

And in the same area there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And then an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were very afraid.

Luke 2: 8-9

Do you ever wish you didn't have to do something you knew you had to do? Maybe chores? Or homework? Or even hanging out with someone you weren't sure you liked?

The shepherds were working hard at night—doing what they were supposed to do, taking care of their sheep. But maybe they wanted to be with their families! And yet, they stayed there, faithfully doing their job.



But then what happened? The angel of the Lord appeared to them! And the glory of the Lord shone around them! A wonderful event was going to happen, and the Lord came to them to share this Good News.

Even though sometimes it's hard to do what we're supposed to do, God honors our faithfulness. He rewards us with His blessings! If the shepherds had not been out at night keeping watch over their flock, they would have missed what God had for them. In their obedience, they experienced a wonderful gift from God—His presence in their lives and a special announcement.

Just like the shepherds, God rewards our faithfulness in obedience to Him and to our responsibilities.

Jesus, help me obey You and be faithful—at home, at work, and at play! Amen.



DAY THIRTEEN



Angels Share the Good News

DAY THIRTEEN

Angels Share the Good News

But the angel said to them, "Listen! Do not fear. For I bring you good news of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

LUKE 2:10-11 MEV

Imagine someone handed you an envelope with a thousand dollars inside and said, "Here's a gift just for you!" Who would you tell first? Your mom? Your best friend? Your kid brother? When you have good news, you always want to tell someone you care about. Sharing exciting news is fun.

God likes to share Good News, too! When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, God sent some of His angels to share the Good News.



Who do you suppose they told first? Did they go to the mayor of the town? Did they tell a famous movie star or the richest business owner in town? Nope! The angels told a bunch of shepherds who were watching their sheep in the field. (Weird, right?)

Why do you suppose that the angels were so excited to share the Good News with poor shepherds? Maybe God wanted us to know that this very special Savior came to save everyone, even the most ordinary person of all!

Now that's Good News! He came to save everyone. Who are you going to tell first?

I'm so excited about this Good News that You came to save us all, Jesus! The first person I'm going to tell is _____. (Fill in the blank.) Amen.



DAY FOURTEEN

Shepherds on the Road to Bethlehem



DAY FOURTEEN

Shepherds on the Road to Bethlehem

“When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they came hurrying and found Mary and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a manger.

LUKE 2: 15-16 MEV

I’ll believe it when I see it.” Maybe that’s the kind of person you are. Maybe your friend says, “Wow, that new superhero movie is the best so far!” Instead of taking your friend’s word for it, you go to the theater to see the movie so that you can decide for yourself.

The shepherds were like that. They were pretty shocked that a bunch of angels showed up in their field, telling such an amazing story about the Savior’s birth in nearby Bethlehem.



These guys were super curious about the angels' story! They had to see it for themselves. So, they left their sheep and traveled together to Bethlehem in a hurry. They couldn't wait to get there! (Maybe you feel like that on Christmas morning as you rush to the tree to open your gifts!)

Sure enough, the shepherds found the baby and his parents in a stable in Bethlehem, just like the angels said. With their very own eyes they saw the Savior of the world!

***I'm curious, just like those shepherds, Lord!
I would travel across many miles just to be
with You. Amen.***

DAY FIFTEEN

Who is This Christ Child?





DAY FIFTEEN

Who is This Christ Child?

When the shepherds saw Jesus, they told His parents what the angel had said about Him. Everyone listened and was surprised. But Mary kept thinking about all this and wondering what it meant.

Luke 2: 17-19 CEV

After finding Jesus, the shepherds told Mary and Joseph what the angel had said—that the baby in the manger was Christ the Lord, the Savior.

This surprised them and everyone else who heard it. They believed the angel, but they didn't really understand. What did it mean that He was the Savior? Who would He save? How would He save them? Jesus was only a baby, after all.

Many people in Israel were expecting a Savior, but they couldn't agree on what that Savior would look like. Some thought He would be a strong warrior to fight the Romans. Some thought He would be a wise king to take over the government. But nobody expected Him to be a helpless little baby.

Mary especially wondered about these things. But God often works in surprising ways that we don't expect. He doesn't tell us everything all at once. He gives us hints a little at a time of the wonderful things that He has planned. And so it would be with this special baby who was the Savior of the world.

God, help me to believe You and obey when You tell me things that I don't completely understand. Amen.

DAY SIXTEEN

*Glorifying and
Praising God*



DAY SIXTEEN

Glorifying and Praising God

As the shepherds returned to their sheep, they were praising God and saying wonderful things about Him. Everything they had seen and heard was just as the angel had said.

Luke 2: 20 CEV

Have you ever seen something exciting and wonderful that you remembered for a long time and wanted to tell everybody about?

The shepherds saw wonderful things that night which they would never forget. An angel from God appeared to them announcing the Christ Child, and then they saw the baby Jesus with their own eyes.

After these marvelous experiences, the shepherds had to go back to the fields to take care of their sheep. But as they returned to their everyday lives, they couldn't forget what they had seen. As they worked and ate and rested, they continued to praise God and talk about Jesus with each other. And when they saw other people, they told them all about the little baby that would change the world forever.

In this way, the shepherds became the first witnesses of the Savior. Because they were faithful to share what they knew about Jesus, the Good News began to spread.

God, help me to praise You for the wonderful things You show me. Help me to bless other people by telling them about Your goodness. Amen.

DAY SEVENTEEN



Jesus is Dedicated in the Temple

DAY SEVENTEEN

Jesus is Dedicated in the Temple

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to do what the Law of Moses says should be done for a new baby, the Spirit told Simeon to go into the temple. Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and praised God.

Luke 2: 27-28 CEV

In the days when Jesus was born, every new baby was brought to the temple to be dedicated to God by the priests in a special ceremony started by Moses. But the priests had stopped listening to God in their hearts, and they couldn't see how special Jesus was—His family was poor, and He looked like every other baby.



Mary and Joseph did the right thing by bringing Jesus to the temple, but God had plans to dedicate his Son in a special way.

Simeon was an old man who loved God and always listened to Him in his heart. God told him to go into the temple that very same day. When He obeyed, he saw Jesus and knew in his heart that he was looking at the Son of God.

Simeon held this special baby in his arms and dedicated Him by praising God for sending the Savior.

God, make my heart soft to You. Help me be like Simeon who was listening in his heart when You showed him Jesus.

Amen.





DAY EIGHTEEN: The Wise Men See a Star



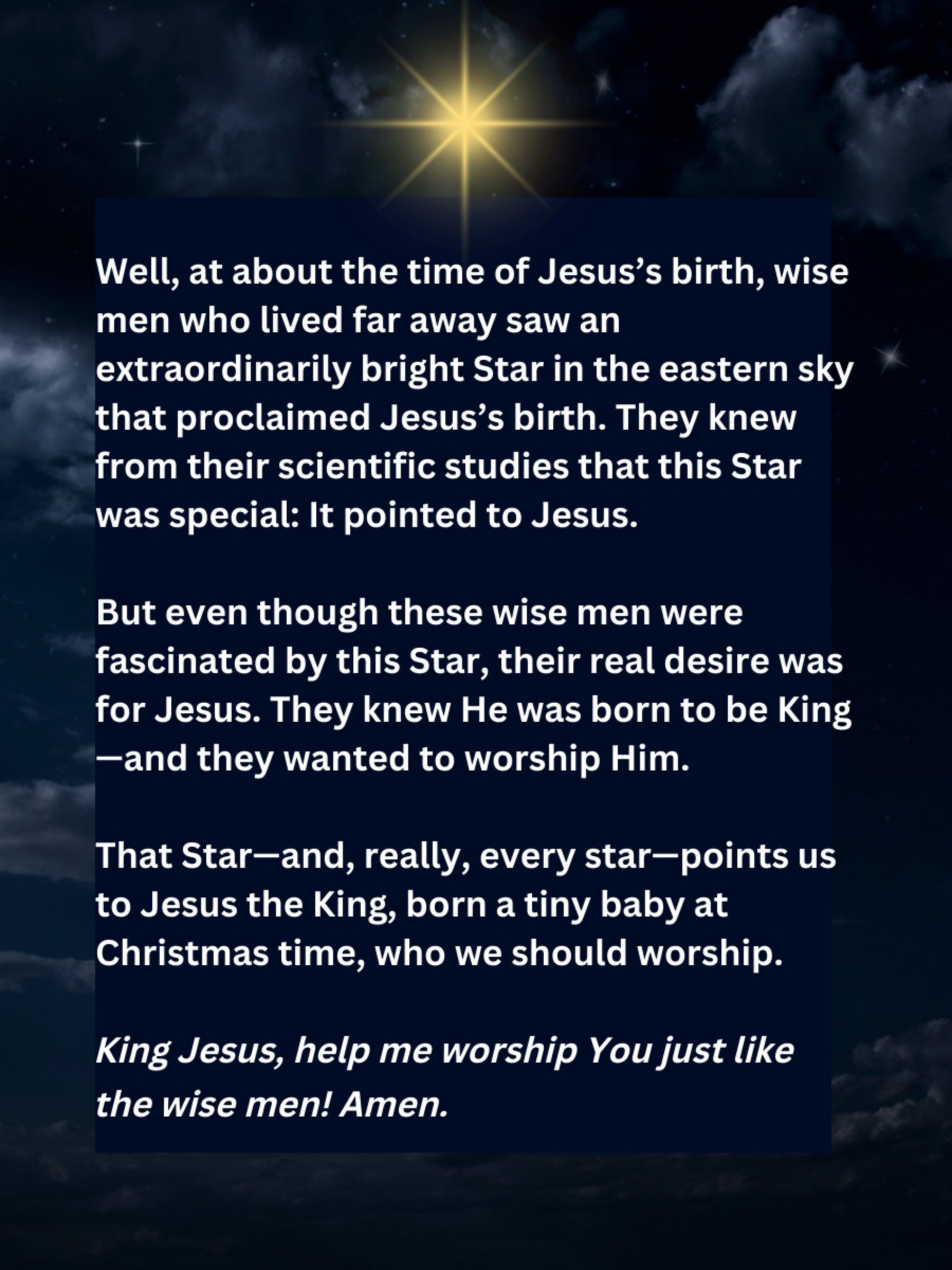
DAY EIGHTEEN

The Wise Men See a Star

Now after Jesus was born in Judea in the days of Herod the king, wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who was born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

Matthew 2:1-2 MEV

Have you ever gazed into the night sky and seen the blackest of nights with the brightest of stars? These great balls of fire look like twinkling gems because they are on fire—like sparkling clusters in the heavens.



Well, at about the time of Jesus's birth, wise men who lived far away saw an extraordinarily bright Star in the eastern sky that proclaimed Jesus's birth. They knew from their scientific studies that this Star was special: It pointed to Jesus.

But even though these wise men were fascinated by this Star, their real desire was for Jesus. They knew He was born to be King—and they wanted to worship Him.

That Star—and, really, every star—points us to Jesus the King, born a tiny baby at Christmas time, who we should worship.

King Jesus, help me worship You just like the wise men! Amen.

DAY NINETEEN



Herod, a Not-So-Nice King

DAY NINETEEN

Herod, a Not-So-Nice King

When Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Matthew 2:3 MEV

Did you ever see a bully? Someone who made someone do something for him—even though it was bad? Did you ever see someone lie to get what he wanted?

Usually that person who lies or uses other people is afraid—afraid of someone being greater than himself. And that is what Herod was like: fearful, jealous, and dishonest. He told the wise men that he wanted to worship Jesus, but he really wanted to kill Jesus.



You see, Herod knew Jesus was the real King. And he was afraid Jesus would take all his power away. Herod was a bad king.

But the Good News is that Jesus is the King! And He is a good King! He loves. He gives. He takes away fear. He sacrificed Himself. Even as a baby, Jesus was perfect and blameless.

Herod got it wrong because he was afraid of Jesus.

But we can get it right by trusting Jesus to love us, care for us, delight in us, and protect us.

Lord Jesus, help me to love You the way You love me. Amen.



DAY TWENTY

**Wise Men on the
Road to Bethlehem**



A decorative graphic at the top of the page features a central sun with rays, a dotted line path, and several stars of varying sizes. The text is centered over this graphic.

DAY TWENTY


Wise Men on the Road to Bethlehem


And there it was—the star they had seen in the east! It led them until it came and stopped above the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed beyond measure.

Matthew 2:9-10 HCSB

Sometimes it's really hard to know the right thing to do. We want to choose good, but our fears can get in the way.

Often, we don't know which path to take—or whose advice to follow! If we don't follow the right path, we can get lost on our way.

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page features a dotted line path leading through several stars of varying sizes, similar to the graphic at the top.



The wise men also wanted to take the right path. They wanted to find Jesus so they could worship Him. But they needed to know how to get there so they would not get lost.

And then they saw the Star! It made them indescribably happy. That Star—that bright ball of fire that had pointed them to Jesus—also took them right to the place where Jesus lived! The Star led the wise men on the right path so they would find Jesus.

Just like the wise men, we should follow the right path that always leads to Jesus and the good He wants in our lives. This will bring us joy!

Jesus; help me to choose goodness and truth to follow on the path of life. Amen.



DAY TWENTY-ONE

Three Special Gifts



DAY TWENTY-ONE

Three Special Gifts

And when they came 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 gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 1:11 MEV

Shiny, green packages wrapped in shimmering red ribbon under a tinsel-covered tree with gold and silver ornaments: a glittering display of cherished gifts awaiting the treasured morning of Christmas day.

Nothing compares to the feeling of receiving a present chosen just for you, expressing who you are.

The wise men chose carefully when they brought gifts to Jesus. They brought gold, which represented Jesus being God in the flesh. They brought frankincense, which stood for Christ's holiness. And, they brought myrrh, which symbolized His suffering—the pain He would endure on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins.

When we receive gifts at Christmas, God wants us to enjoy them. But He also wants us to recognize, like the wise men, that God sending His Son as a baby boy is the perfect gift to us because He is our royal King, He is holy, and He is our Savior.

Let's enjoy Christmas presents—but also remember that Jesus is God's ultimate gift to us.

Jesus, help me to remember You are God's wonderful gift from Heaven. Amen.

DAY TWENTY-TWO

The Wise Men Take a Different Road



DAY TWENTY-TWO

The Wise Men Take a Different Road

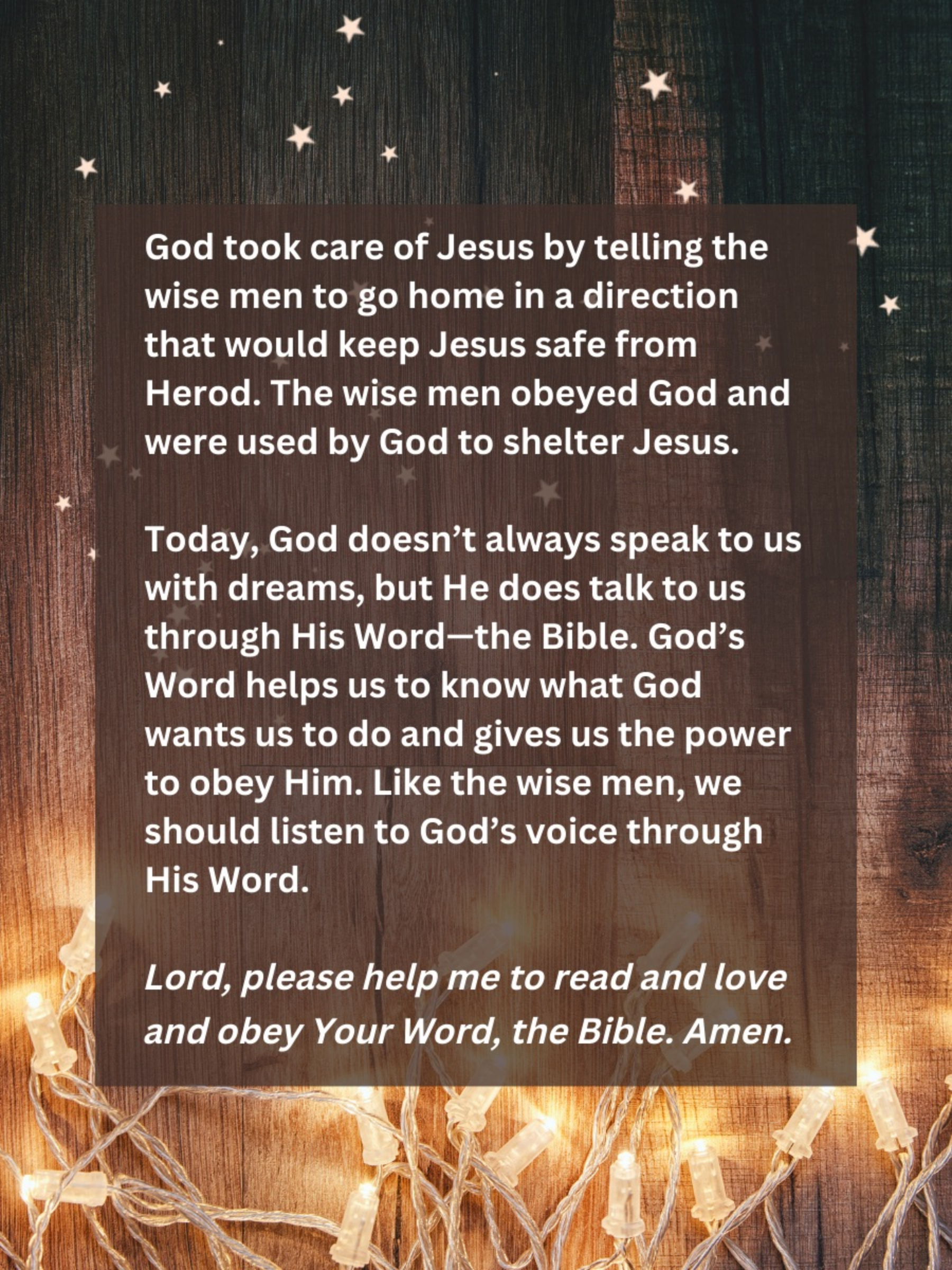
But being warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they returned to their own country by another route.

Matthew 2:12 MEV

Do you own something precious that you love? Maybe a toy, or a doll, or something someone gave you that reminds you of them? What if someone came along who did not care how special that gift was—and tried to harm it, or break it, or steal it?

Do you remember that Herod wanted to kill Jesus? Well, Herod told the wise men to come back to him so that he could find out exactly where Jesus lived.

But—we also know that God gave us Jesus as a special and wonderful gift. And God wanted to protect Jesus when He was a young child.



God took care of Jesus by telling the wise men to go home in a direction that would keep Jesus safe from Herod. The wise men obeyed God and were used by God to shelter Jesus.

Today, God doesn't always speak to us with dreams, but He does talk to us through His Word—the Bible. God's Word helps us to know what God wants us to do and gives us the power to obey Him. Like the wise men, we should listen to God's voice through His Word.

Lord, please help me to read and love and obey Your Word, the Bible. Amen.

DAY TWENTY-THREE

Joseph Has
Another Dream



DAY TWENTY-THREE

Joseph Has Another Dream

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill Him."

Matthew 2:13 NIV

One night, when Joseph was sleeping, he had a special dream. In the dream, an angel came to Joseph and said "Take Mary and Jesus and leave town quick! King Herod wants to hurt the baby!"

Joseph woke up and told Mary about the dream right away. They quickly packed up and left that very night to keep baby Jesus safe. Joseph and Mary traveled far away to another country called Egypt, so that Herod wouldn't find them and hurt the baby. They didn't get to be home in Nazareth with their families that year, but they were so happy that baby Jesus was safe from harm.

God gave Joseph the dream to warn him so he could protect Jesus from the mean King Herod. Dreams from God are special! And He is still speaking to our hearts today. Are you listening?

Father God, may we always be good listeners and pay attention to Your words as You direct our steps in Jesus's name! Amen.

DAY TWENTY-FOUR

JESUS, A SPECIAL LITTLE BOY





DAY TWENTY-FOUR

Jesus, a Special Little Boy

Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When He was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. After the festival was over, while His parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it.

Luke 2:41 NIV

Jesus was a very special little boy who loved God very much. Most people just thought He was an ordinary boy, the son of a carpenter, but He was extra-special!

When Jesus was twelve years old, He went with His mom and dad to Jerusalem for Passover. After the festival, Mary and Joseph packed their bags and headed home, but Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents were so distracted that they didn't realize Jesus had been left behind! They probably just figured He was with the other kids.





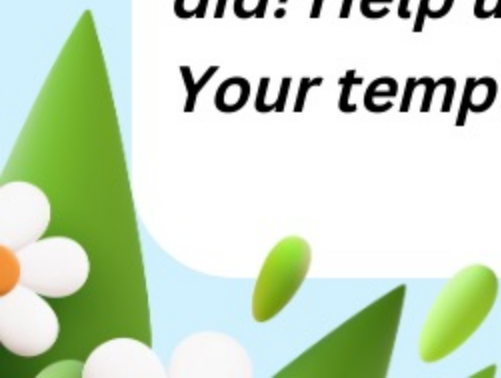
When they couldn't find Jesus after a day of traveling, they went *a-l-l* the way back to Jerusalem to look for Him. They found Jesus in the temple talking with the religious teachers. Their precious little boy was listening to them and asking them questions.

“Why did you stay behind, Son?” Mary asked. “Because, Mama. . .” He responded. “I had to be about my Father’s business.”

The most important thing to Jesus was being close to God in the temple. He was a special boy, indeed, far more than a simple carpenter. He was the Savior of the world!

What a precious Savior, who loved His heavenly Father above all!

Father God, we want to love You the way Jesus did! Help us to love Your Word, the Bible, and Your temple, the church. Amen.



DAY TWENTY-FIVE



Jesus, the Savior of the World

DAY TWENTY-FIVE

Jesus, the Savior of the World

They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

John 4:42 NIV

Years went by and Jesus grew up. Before long, it was time for Him to start telling everyone who He was—the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

To prove that His words were true, Jesus did remarkable things, including lots of miracles. In fact, the Bible says there aren't enough books in the world to record the number of miracles He performed. (Wow!) Before long, lots of people believed in this remarkable Savior and followed after Him.

People still believe in Him today! There has never been anyone like Jesus. Who else could take one look at you and tell you your life's story? He can touch you and take away all of your pain. He always says the right thing, always fights for justice, and still brings healing.

But, not everyone sees Him for who He is. The shepherds in the field rejoiced, but King Herod wanted to kill him. That hasn't changed. The people with much to lose are sometimes the ones who have the hardest time receiving Him.

No other name brings more freedom. . .and controversy. . .than the name of Jesus. But, He truly is the Savior of the world, and you can trust Him with your heart today.

Jesus, I want to trust that You love me just as much as You loved those in the Bible. Amen.

DAY TWENTY-SIX

Jesus Tells the World about His Father



The page features a vibrant, abstract background with large, overlapping shapes in shades of orange, blue, green, and red. These shapes are decorated with small, scattered patterns of dots and lines in contrasting colors, creating a playful and artistic atmosphere.

DAY TWENTY-SIX


Jesus Tells the World about His Father

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who remains in me, and I in him, bears much fruit. For without Me you can do nothing.

John 15:5 MEV

Sharing a delicious lunch with someone.
Listening carefully to teachers. Being fair on the playground. Not telling tales! Goodness, mercy, kindness, truth—all these things Jesus taught as He lived on earth. Jesus told story after story about how to live in the kingdom of God.

Jesus also fed the 5000. He healed the blind. He walked on water! And He raised the dead. Jesus was the great miracle-worker!




Jesus said that if we abide in Him—think about Him, love Him, let our mind remain on Him—He will abide in us and give us power to do good.

He tells us in His Word that nothing—not one single thing—can take away His love for us. And this great love is too important to keep to ourselves!

Jesus wants us to go and tell others about this special love, because He came to seek and save the lost who do not know this love.

With Christ’s power, we can love others the way Jesus did and share with them His love, reflecting the heart of God the Father.

Lord, help me have grace and mercy toward others—and tell them about Your love! Amen.





DAY TWENTY-SEVEN

Jesus Gives the Ultimate Gift

DAY TWENTY-SEVEN

Jesus Gives the Ultimate Gift

Greater love has no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13 MEV

Birthdays are one of the happiest events! When you go to a birthday party and bring a present, do you expect the birthday girl (or boy) to give you a present back? What if you receive a birthday gift—do you give one back to your gift-giver? Of course not!

The way we celebrate with birthday gifts is just the way Jesus has celebrated His love for us by giving Himself as the ultimate gift.

Jesus told His disciples that the greatest love someone could ever have for another person is to give his life. And that is just what Jesus did on the cross: He gave His life to make the only way possible to have forgiveness for our sins. It takes a perfect Person to cleanse us from our sin. There is only One who could! Jesus is that perfect Person.

But—Jesus’s death was not the end of the story. Jesus not only died, but He came back to life! And His resurrection gives us new life.

Rejoice—because Jesus’s death on the cross saves us from our sin, and His resurrection gives us eternal life.

Lord Jesus, help me to fully understand that Your sacrifice on the cross cleanses me from all sin and your resurrection brings me new life. Amen.

DAY TWENTY-EIGHT

We Accept This Gift in Our Hearts



DAY TWENTY-EIGHT

We Accept This Gift in Our Hearts

If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:9 WEB

Imagine you've been invited to the best party in town at a beautiful mansion. When you arrive, the host offers you a beautifully wrapped gift. You open it and discover a million-dollar piece of jewelry inside. Wow!

Now imagine that you carelessly leave the package behind when the party is over. You toss it aside like it's worthless. How sad would that be?

Jesus gave the gift of His life, the most precious gift of all. He offered salvation to anyone who would choose to accept Him. But this is one gift you have to accept. You can't treat it carelessly.

Today, if you want to accept this gift into your heart and become a Christian, all you have to do is pray this simple prayer: *"Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross for me. Thank You for giving me the very best gift of all. I accept You as my Lord and Savior. Come and live in my heart and be my King forever! Amen."*

Once you say that little prayer, the angels in heaven throw a party! You are a child of God. Welcome to the family!

Thank You for this amazing gift, Jesus! Amen.



DAY TWENTY-NINE
We Share the
Story of His Love

Jesus
loves you!

“For God
so loved
the world....”





DAY TWENTY-NINE

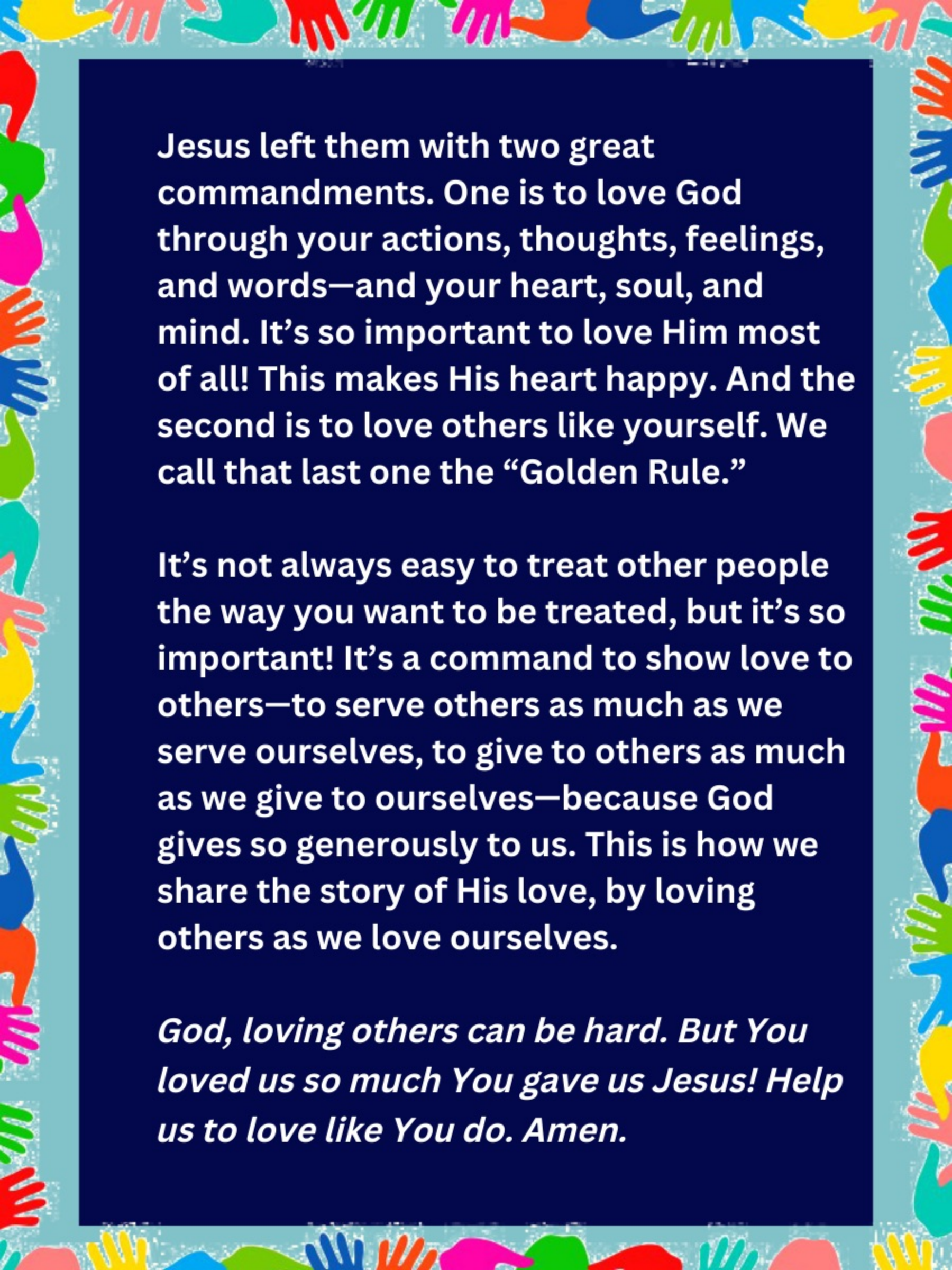
We Share the Story of His Love

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Matthew 28:19-20 NIV

After Jesus gave His life for our sins and rose from the grave, He appeared to his disciples and told them to go make more disciples all around the world, spreading the Good News about what they had seen.





Jesus left them with two great commandments. One is to love God through your actions, thoughts, feelings, and words—and your heart, soul, and mind. It's so important to love Him most of all! This makes His heart happy. And the second is to love others like yourself. We call that last one the "Golden Rule."

It's not always easy to treat other people the way you want to be treated, but it's so important! It's a command to show love to others—to serve others as much as we serve ourselves, to give to others as much as we give to ourselves—because God gives so generously to us. This is how we share the story of His love, by loving others as we love ourselves.

God, loving others can be hard. But You loved us so much You gave us Jesus! Help us to love like You do. Amen.



DAY THIRTY

Christmas,
THE VERY BEST

Gift
of all.





DAY THIRTY

Christmas, the Very Best Gift of All!

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 NIV

Christmas is the best time of the year! It's so fun to open presents under the tree and it's lots of fun to give presents, too. (Hey, let's go to the mall, y'all!)

Think about all of the gifts you've been given over the past few Christmases. Which was your favorite? A bike? A doll? A game? It's hard to choose, isn't it?

Here's the thing about presents: They're fun for a while, but they don't last forever. Toys break. You outgrow those clothes. That cool video game won't always be your favorite. Some presents end up at the bottom of your toybox or shoved to the back of your closet. Time goes by and you forget all about them.

Wouldn't it be great if there was a present that would last forever, one you would always love?

Wait! There is! Two thousand years ago God gave us His Son, Jesus, the Savior of the world. He came as a baby in a manger, lived an amazing life, performed miracles (wow!) and then gave His life for us on the cross.

When Jesus died for our sins, He gave us the gift of heaven, a chance to live forever with Him. Now, that's a gift worth celebrating, the very best gift of all!

***Thank You for giving Your life for me, Jesus!
Amen.***



Merry Christmas!

We truly hope you have enjoyed this new devotional and that you have learned more about the true Christmas story. Jesus is the reason for the season and He's the best gift you will ever receive.

If you have any questions about what it means to follow the Christ of Christmas, please don't hesitate to email us at hello@declaration.org.

**Visit declaration.org to learn more about Declaration Church in Spring, Texas!
Merry Christmas, y'all!**