

Complete Christmas Devotional

Devotion #1



Ask:

- What sort of plans do you and your family make at Christmas time? *Christmas party, decorations, gifts, church event, family gathering, etc.*
- Has there ever been a time when things didn't go according to your plan? What happened? *Let one or two kids share about the experience. Ask them if anything good happened from this unexpected thing.*



Dialogue: Things happen all the time that are not part of our plans. When this happens, God wants us to have the right response to these situations. At the very first Christmas, many things happened that were not part of the plan, from man's perspective. Let's see how these people responded to God's plan.



Look Up: Matthew 1:18-25



Ask:

- What event were Mary and Joseph planning? *Their wedding.*
- What unexpected thing happened in their life? *Mary was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.*
- Before Joseph knew that the child was from the Holy Spirit, what did Joseph plan to do? *Divorce Mary quietly.*
- Why? *Because he thought that she had sinned and had been with another man.*
- What changed his plans yet again? *An angel appeared to him and told him that the child that had been conceived in Mary was from the Holy Spirit.*
- What plan did God have for Joseph that he wasn't planning on? *To be the earthly father of the Savior.*
- What did Joseph do after the angel spoke to him? *He obeyed God and took Mary to be his wife.*
- What plan did God have all along for the birth of Immanuel? *That he was to be born of a virgin. (Explain the word "virgin" if needed to the kids.)*



Dialogue: Even though this announcement to Mary and Joseph was not part of their plan to begin with, it was part of God's plan all along. In Matthew 1:23, the angel quotes something from the Old Testament. (*Reread Matthew 1:23 if necessary and then read Isaiah 7:14.*) Isaiah 7:14 is called PROPHECY. The word "prophecy" refers to a promise that God makes about the future. This prophecy was given 735 years BEFORE Jesus came to earth. The fact that Jesus was going to be born of a virgin had been part of God's plan for 735 years before it happened. Before the angel came to Mary, she had no idea that SHE was the virgin that was going to fulfill this prophecy but God knew. God planned it that way all along. And actually God's plan in sending Jesus to be the Savior didn't just begin when God told Isaiah what to write in that prophecy; God had it all planned out before the creation of the world.



Look Up: Luke 1:38



Ask:

- What was Mary’s answer when the angel told her that she was going to be the mother of the Savior? *“I am the Lord’s servant.”*
- How could this unexpected announcement bring joy? *Joy that the Savior had finally come. Joy that she was going to be the earthy mother of that Savior. Joy that the Lord saw her as one highly favored and faithful, or joy at being one of the few people to see an angel.*
- How could this unexpected announcement bring difficulties? *Dealing with the gossip of those around her because she was pregnant without being married, fear of being rejected by Joseph or being punished by law if people thought that she had been with a man outside of marriage, wondering if her parents would believe her or understand, or losing her friends because they didn’t understand.*



Dialogue: Mary answered in humility. She didn’t doubt or get angry. She trusted God. When things happen that we don’t plan on, we should have the same response as Mary.



Ask:

- What is something that has happened in your life that was not part of your plan?
- How did this event bring joy?
- How did this event bring difficulties?
- What was your response? How could you respond differently next time?
- What did God teach you about his plan in what happened?

(Answers will vary for these questions. You may want to share an example from your own life to help your kids/teens understand this concept. Or give an example to them that they just went through in order to talk about these questions/principles.)



Activity:

1. Give a child a paper towel tube or toilet paper tube.
2. Tell the child to close his eyes.
3. Place a piece of candy somewhere in the room outside of the direct vision range of tube that the child will be looking through in the next step.
4. Tell the child to put the tube up to his eye. He can open that eye, but he must keep his other eye closed. (He could cover his closed eye with his hand if that helps.)
5. Ask him what he sees through the tube. Now let him search for the candy until he finds it.

Supplies:

- Paper towel tube or toilet paper tube
- Candy



Ask:

- Why couldn’t you see the piece of candy at first? *Because you could only see a little bit of the room since you were looking through the tube.*
- Who saw the big picture and knew where the candy was? *Teacher, parent, other kids, etc.*

- Just because you couldn't see the candy, does that mean that it wasn't there? *No, it was there even though you could not see it.*



Dialogue: Life is full of times when we can't see the big picture. Maybe your best friend moves away, your parents get divorced or remarried, or you start a new grade at school. We do not know what the future holds or if these situations will bring happy times, sad times, or a mix of both. But even though we don't know the future, who does? (*God*)



Look Up: Psalm 139:16



Ask:

- What is something in your past that has happened that God knew was going to happen? *Who your parents would be, moving to a new house, someone you love passing away, etc.*
- What is something in your future that you don't know about but God does? *Who your teacher will be next year, if and who you will marry, when you will die, etc.*



Dialogue: God knew everything that is going to happen to you, even before you were born. Anything that does or does not happen, God already knows about. Nothing takes God by surprise and things don't happen by mistake. This was true in Mary and Joseph's life and this is true in your life. God wants you to be like Mary and Joseph and trust him. He sees the big picture and you can trust him that whatever he allows into your life is ultimately for your good and his glory because God is good and loving.

Ponder and Pray:



- When the angel told Mary that she was going to have a baby do you remember what her response was? *"I am the Lord's servant."*
- Is there something going on in your life where you need to tell the Lord that you are accepting his will in your life? *If so, you can tell God that right now as we end our devotion time.*



Further Study:

Additional Attributes of God - Recommended resource – The Attributes of God for Kids by Lydia White – www.attributesofgodforkids.com

- God is Sovereign
- God is Love
- God is All-Knowing (Omniscient)
- God is All-Powerful (Omnipotent)
- God is Holy

Character Quality - Recommended resource - <https://www.networkerstec.com/character.html>

- Humility
- Patience - <https://iblp.org/discipleship-tools/biblical-character/patience>

Life Purpose - <https://www.networkerstec.com/life-purpose.html>



Thoughts for Parents: Mary and Joseph's betrothal and engagement started out like any other...one filled with much joy from the couple, their family, and friends. But it quickly got complicated. While Scripture does not say how Mary and Joseph's parents accepted the news, take a moment to meditate on your response if your son or daughter was in this situation. Would you believe your daughter was pregnant through the Holy Spirit and would bear the Messiah? Would you support your son that said that he saw an angel that told him that he would be the earthly father of the Messiah? Sometimes God calls our children into things that are not part of our plan for them or what we thought would happen – even very good things. For example, maybe you wanted your child to go to a good college and get a degree to have a well-paying job but the Lord seems to be calling them into ministry, the pastorate, or the mission field. Are you going to trust God's plan for your child? Maybe God is calling your son or daughter into homeschooling, but no one else in your family has ever done that. Maybe God is opening a door of opportunity in another state for your grown son or daughter which will require them to move far away from you. Will you trust God with his plan for your children and grandchildren? God has a plan for you and your children; sometimes it is easier to trust God for yourself, but he wants you to trust him with your family too!

Devotion #2



Ask:

- Do you like surprises? What is a surprise that you have received?
- Surprises can be good or challenging, or a mix of both. What kind of surprises can be good?
- What kind of surprises can be challenging?



Look Up: Luke 2:1-7



Ask:

- What did Caesar Augustus decree? *He decreed that people had to return to their family's home town to be counted in a census.*
- What unexpected action did Joseph and Mary have to do because of this decree? *They had to leave their home town of Galilee to go to the city of Bethlehem since Joseph was from the family line of King David.*
- How might Mary have felt about this? *Mad, frustrated, sad, inconvenienced, worried, or scared.*
- Has anyone in your family had a baby? Who was there to support that person giving birth? *Mom, grandma, husband, sister, aunt, doctor, etc.*



Look Up: Micah 5:2



Dialogue: God was promising, about 700 years before Jesus was born, that the Savior was going to be born in Bethlehem. But wait! When the angel appeared to Mary and Joseph to tell them that they were going to be the earthly parents of the Savior, they didn't live in Bethlehem. They lived 90 miles away!

Did God choose the wrong people? Did Mary and Joseph live in the wrong place? Not at all—God had a special plan! He put in the ruler's heart to declare a census that would cause Mary and Joseph to pack up and go to Bethlehem at the specific time that the Savior was going to be born.



Ask: Why did God want Mary and Joseph to go to Bethlehem? *To fulfill the prophecy that the Savior was going to be born in Bethlehem.*



Dialogue: Mary might have realized that she was going to have her baby away from her family. Maybe she was sad or afraid that her mom or someone she knew wouldn't be there to help her. If Mary had chosen not to go with her husband to Bethlehem, she might have been acting outside or against the will of God. Mary probably did not understand how her journey fit so perfectly into God's plan for the Savior. But even though Mary didn't know everything, she trusted the Lord and her husband that God had given her. God wanted Mary and Joseph to go there because he had specifically promised that the Savior was going to be born in Bethlehem. Whenever God tells us to do something, we can trust that his ways are best! Repeat after me (*Pump your fist in the air as you say each attribute*) — God is amazing! God is all-powerful! God is all-knowing! God is good! This journey may not have been part of their plan, but it was part of God's plan in sending the Savior.

Because God is all-knowing he is able to tell man what is going to happen in the future. Do you remember what this is called? (*Prophecy*) There are over 1,800 prophecies in the Bible and at least one half of them have been fulfilled.¹ There are around 500 prophecies specifically about Jesus—concerning his birth, life, death, and resurrection.² There was a man named Peter Stoner who was a mathematician. He looked at eight specific prophecies about Jesus and figured out what the chances/probability would be of Jesus fulfilling just these eight prophecies by accident. The odds of this happening are 1 in 10¹⁷. That is 1 chance in 100,000,000,000,000,000 (17 zeros after 10)³. Stoner gives this example to help us understand it. Imagine 1,017 silver dollars, two feet deep, spread out over the state of Texas. One of these silver dollars has a mark on it but you don't know where it is. Now what if I blindfolded you and told you to find the marked silver dollar. What is the chance that you will find the right one on the first try? That is the same chance that these eight prophecies would come true about Jesus by accident. And remember, this is just eight prophecies, not the hundreds of prophecies that actually came true! Only an all-knowing, all-powerful God could accomplish what he did through Biblical prophecy!



Activity:

1. Take a large container and place a lot of the **same** item in that container.
2. Mark one of those items ahead of time (e.g. draw an "X" on it, paint it, color it) and place it in the container with all the other items.
3. Then blindfold a child or have him close his eyes and see if he can find the marked item in one try.
4. Allow him or another child to try again. Then remind the children of the discussion above about biblical prophecy.



Supplies:

- Large container like a shoe box, 1 gallon zip-lock bag, or mixing bowl.
- A lot of the **same** item like pennies, cheerios, or beads.
- Marker/paint
- Blindfold

Ponder and Pray: End your devotion time in prayer, praising God that he is all-knowing and all-powerful.



Further Study:

- 100 Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus – Chart - <https://www.hendricksonrose.com/100-prophecies-fulfilled-by-jesus/9781890947194/pd/947199?event=WL|1011169>
- Not Part of the Plan by Kristin Clark and Bethany Beal - <https://girldefined.com/the-books/not-part-of-the-plan>
- *A Bethlehem Christmas: Celebrating the Joyful Season* by Charles Swindoll

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-prophecy.html>

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/prophecies-of-Jesus.html>

³ <https://oneminuteapologist.com/does-prophecy-confirm-jesus-as-messiah/>

Devotion #3



Ask:

- When things happen in your life that are not part of your plan, how do you respond?
- Do you get mad and pout? Do you become sad? Do you obey right away, with a happy heart? Are you thankful?



Dialogue: Maybe your mom or dad tells you it is time to go. Maybe they pick you up early from your friend's house or a fun activity and you thought you had more time to play. Or maybe they tell you it is time to leave to go somewhere or to eat dinner and that you need to stop playing with your toys. Do you obey with a happy heart, the first time? Or do you whine, complain, pretend you don't hear them, and get mad?

In our devotion today, we will read about someone who did not have the right heart attitude when something happened that was not part of his plan.



Look Up: Matthew 2:1-16



Ask:

- What happened that upset Herod in vs 2? *The wise men came and asked, "Where is he who has been born King of the Jews?" Herod thought that a new king had been born that threatened his kingship.*
- What did the chief priests and scribes tell Herod? *That the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem.*
- What was Herod's heart attitude when something happened that was not part of his plan? *Jealousy, anger, hardness of heart, etc.*



Dialogue: Instead of rejoicing that the Christ had come in his lifetime, and in his kingdom, he hardened his heart to the God's plan and committed a great sin – murdering all the male children in Bethlehem and the surrounding region that were two years old and under.



Ask:

- What unexpected message did Joseph receive? *That he needed to flee with his family to Egypt.*
- When did he receive this message? *In the middle of the night.*
- When did he obey God? *Immediately.*
- What would have happened if he would not have obeyed God? *From man's perspective, Jesus would have probably have been killed.*
- Even though this sudden move was not part of Joseph's and Mary's plan, how do you know that this was part of God's plan? *Because it fulfilled the prophecy "Out of Egypt I called my son" in Hosea 11:1 (read this verse to the kids).*



Dialogue: Joseph is a really good example of someone that trusted and obeyed God, especially when things were not part of his plan. Every time Joseph received new information that helped him to see more of the truth, he trusted God and adjusted accordingly. For example, when Joseph received the

news about needing to flee to Egypt, he could have done nothing and justified himself by saying, “But God just led me here to Bethlehem. And after all, the prophet Micah said that the Savior was going to be born here.” If he would have hardened his heart, like King Herod did, things could have been disastrous for him, Mary, and Jesus! The choice that he made to go to Bethlehem was what God wanted him to do before, but now God was showing more information that required a different action and was a different part of God’s plan. So instead of stubbornly holding on to the decision that he had made in the past, he was willing to act accordingly with the new information he had received.

Sometimes when unexpected things happen in our life, we see them as a detour. The Christmas story seems full of detours and changed plans. Perhaps Joseph and Mary felt like all the traveling they were doing were detours, yet that was the map God had already drawn for them as parents of the Savior. When we reflect on Bible prophecy, we see how much of what happened during the Christmas account was just what God had planned along. The same is true in our life; God has a plan for our lives and we can trust him with all our heart because his plans are ultimately good because God is good. You can trust God with the twists and turns of your story!



Look Up: Proverbs 3:5-6



Ponder and Pray:

- When someone shows you new information are you willing to change your mind about something? It is good to make decisions, but our decisions need to be based on truth. Often times we will receive new information and we must adjust, make new decision, or be flexible based on the new information received. In every step of our journey though, we can trust God like Joseph did. Ask the kids to think about a time when they received new information and had to make a different decision based on the new information they received. Was this an easy or hard choice? What was their attitude? How could they do differently in the future or what kind of circumstances might happen like this in the future that they could prepare for?
- Ask the kids if they can think of a time that they need to have a happy heart when things don’t go as expected. It might be as simple as when you tell them it is time to clean up or when they go to their friend’s house and you tell them it is time to leave. Encourage them to ask God for help to respond correctly to change, ask forgiveness (from God or others) when they have the wrong attitude, and then praise them when you see them making steps to have the right attitude and do the right thing.
- Ask the kids if there is something in their life that was not part of their plan—something that felt like a detour. Talk with the kids and help them to process and pray about this situation. Maybe share a testimony from your own life. Encourage them to memorize certain Scripture to help them.

Further Study - Character Qualities:

- Obedience - <https://iblp.org/discipleship-tools/biblical-character/obedience>
- Flexibility - <https://iblp.org/discipleship-tools/biblical-character/flexibility>
- Wisdom - <https://iblp.org/discipleship-tools/biblical-character/wisdom>

Devotion #4



Ask: If someone asked, ‘What is Christmas about?’ what are some answers people might say? *Presents, lights, Christmas tree, family, church, Jesus, etc.*



Dialogue: While all of those things are usually a part of Christmas, the true meaning of Christmas is about the cross.

God has always been here—He is eternal. God created everything in the solar system and on the earth—from the big blazing sun to the tiniest lady bug. What are some of your favorite things that God made? (*Let children respond*) After God created this world, he said that it was very good!

God gave Adam and Eve, the first two people he created, one rule and he gave them the freewill to choose to obey him or not. God did this because he loved Adam and Eve and he didn’t want to force them to obey him like robots. He wanted Adam and Eve to freely choose to love him and obey him. Did Adam and Eve choose to obey or disobey God? (*Disobey*) Disobedience is called sin in the Bible. You can also say that **sin** is “anything that we think (*point to your head*), say (*point to your mouth*), or do (*wave your hands*) that breaks God’s law”. (*Have the children repeat that definition with you with the actions*). Adam and Eve’s sin affected the entire universe. **Their** disobedience is the reason why bad things happen in the world today. Sin is **not** God’s fault. There are many consequences for sin, but the main one is death.



Activity:

1. Before class write some of the consequences of sin on some dominos: **Sin, physical death, spiritual death, eternal death**, suffering, pain, tornadoes, war, lying, stealing, etc. The key ones to write are bolded but you could also write some other consequences if you would like. You can put a mailing label on the back of the domino to write on, cut a piece of paper to fit the back of the domino and tape it to the domino, or write directly on the back of the domino.
2. Set up the dominos so they are standing an inch apart, with the key ones near the beginning.
3. Then let a child knock down the first domino and watch as the rest fall down too.

Supplies:

- At least four dominoes
- Blank mailing labels, or paper, tape, and scissors.
- Pen or permanent marker



Look Up: Romans 6:23a



Dialogue: There are three types of death as a result of sin. One is physical death—that is dying here on earth. The second is spiritual death, meaning that our friendship with God is dead. And the third is eternal death, which means being forever separated from God in a terrible place of punishment after we die. Adam and Eve deserved this punishment for their sin, and because you and I have sinned, we deserve this punishment too.

God is just—which means that he has to punish sin. He cannot let us get away with doing what is wrong. What happens to a student in your class at school or at church that does wrong? (*He/she sits in time out, leaves the classroom, loss of privileges, etc.*) Is your teacher being a good teacher or a bad teacher when your teacher punishes this student for misbehaving? (*Good teacher*) Your teacher is being just by not letting that student get away with what is wrong. And since God is just he cannot let us get away with doing what is wrong either. God's justice demands that the punishment/payment of sin must be made...but in his love and his grace, he provided a way so that you and I don't have to pay it ourselves.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God promised to send a Savior (*Read Genesis 3:15*). A Savior is someone that rescues you from a problem. For example, if you were drowning in a pool, who might come save you? (*Parents, lifeguard, friend, etc.*) If you are drowning you cannot save yourself. If your friend was drowning too, he couldn't help you either. You need someone that is NOT drowning in order to come and help you.

In the same way, you cannot save yourself from the punishment of sin; neither can your friend, Pastor, and parents because they have also sinned and are under the same punishment. Only someone perfect, who is not under the punishment of sin, could take your place and the punishment for your sin. Who do you think this person is? (*Jesus*) Jesus is God—He is the creator of time, lives outside of time, and yet stepped into time in order to be our Savior from sin. Jesus has always existed, but Christmas time is when we celebrate that the eternal, Creator of the world (*Colossian 1:16-17*) was born as a baby to be our Savior. Our Savior had to be 100% man and 100% God. Jesus had to be 100% man because it was man who sinned so only a perfect man could be our substitute, but he also had to be 100% God. Otherwise, if Jesus would have been born completely of man, he also would have inherited the sin nature from Adam and would have the same sin problem we do—he could not have been our Savior because he would need saving too. But since Jesus is 100% man and 100% God, he was able to be our Savior.

Sometimes people say that the Garden is Eden, after Adam and Eve sinned, is when and where God began his rescue plan. But even though Genesis 3:15 is when the rescue plan was set in motion, God already knew that Adam and Eve were going to sin, even before he created them, and he knew what he was going to do about sin. There has never been a time when God didn't know what he was going to do about sin. He knew before the foundation of the world when, where, and how Jesus was going to be the Savior from our sin.



Look Up: 1 Peter 1:20



Dialogue: God is all-knowing. A big fancy word to say that God is all-knowing is "omniscient". "Omni" means "all" and "scient" means "knowing." When you look at the word "scient" does that remind you of a subject at school? (*Science*) The study of science has to do with knowledge so that can help you to remember that omniscient means all-knowing. Because God is all-knowing he is able to tell us what is going to happen in the future. Do you remember the word that starts with a "P" that means that God tells man what is going to happen in the

Supplies:

- Piece of paper with the word "Omniscient" written on it.
- Marker

future? (*Prophecy*) In earlier devotions, we learned about some prophecies that God gave about the Savior. Not only is God all-knowing to tell us what is going to happen in the future, but he is also all-powerful (also called “omnipotent”) to make those prophecies come true. God is amazing!



Ask: (*Fill in key details of Jesus’ birth, life, and death as necessary*)

- What are some things that happened at Jesus’ birth?
- What are some things Jesus did as an adult?
- What are some things that happened to Jesus during the time of his death?



Dialogue: Jesus didn’t come just to heal people and tell people about God. The reason that Jesus came was to be our Savior from sin. In order to take the punishment for sin, Jesus had to die because the wages of sin is death. When Jesus died he had to give his blood because without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Heb 9:22b). So Christmas is really about the cross. (*Pause*) What holiday do we celebrate to remember when Jesus rose from the dead? (*Easter!*) Jesus didn’t stay dead; he rose again three days later because he is more powerful than sin and death and his resurrection showed that the punishment for sin had been made and accepted by God. Now because of what Jesus did you can have your sins forgiven.



Look Up: John 1:12



Dialogue: At Christmas you will probably receive Christmas presents. What sort of presents are you hoping to get? (*Let children answer*) What if someone gives you a gift, but you never open it? Would you get to benefit from that present? (*No*) In the same way, God is now offering you the gift of forgiveness. Because Jesus came and died on the cross and rose again, God can offer you the gift of forgiveness from your sin but you have to receive it. Just like you can reject a gift that someone gives you, so you can also reject God’s gift—he won’t force you to take it. But he loves you and desires for you to receive it. Let’s look at John 1:12 again.

- “Yet to all who received him” — This means to take as your very own, just like you would receive a Christmas gift as your very own.
- “to those who believed in his name” — This means to believe or trust completely that Jesus’ death and resurrection is the only way to have your sin forgiven. You are not trusting in your own good works, baptism, another religion, or anything else to save you from sin.
- “he gave the right to become children of God” — When you believe in Jesus as your Savior you become part of God’s forever family. You receive eternal life, instead of death. You become God’s friend while you are here on earth and one day you will live forever with God in Heaven.

If you have never believed in Jesus, do you believe in Jesus as your Savior from sin right now? (*Pause*) If so, you can tell God three things:

- Admit that you have sinned against God, broken his law, and are sorry.
- Believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose again to forgive you.
- Ask God to forgive you.

(Depending on your setting, if there are children that have indicated that they would like to pray to believe in Jesus allow them to pray out loud using their own words (best option), quietly by themselves, or repeating after you. You may want to separate from the group to do the salvation counseling with the children that want to believe in Jesus so that you can have focused time with them. Follow up with these children as able for assurance counseling and discipleship.)



Ponder and Pray: When you celebrate Christmas this year, take time to remember that Christmas is about the cross!

- For children that have believed in Jesus as their Savior, encourage them to THANK Jesus for being their Savior and to SHARE the good news about the Savior with others in some way during Christmas.
- For children that have not believed in Jesus as their Savior and did not want to do so during this lesson, continue to share about the Savior with them and pray that they would receive him this Christmas. Salvation is the best present to receive!

Watch this video as a review and reminder that Christmas is about the Cross-
<https://youtu.be/s1UI0yOLc-o>

Further Study:

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- Sharing the Gospel with Children/ Salvation Counseling Help – www.networkerstec.com/kids-gospel.html
 - Sharing the Gospel at Christmas - www.networkerstec.com/christmas-resources.html
 - Gospel Musical - www.networkerstec.com/good-news-musical.html
 - Sharing the Gospel at Halloween - www.networkerstec.com/halloween.html
 - **FREE PDF download** of additional Christmas devotionals in this series:
www.networkerstec.com/christmas-resources.html