



December 2019

THE

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Christmas Reminds Us to Be Prepared

POWERSOURCE

ASK JESUS:

1. To help your family members prepare their hearts for the upcoming Christmas celebration.
2. To make you alert to ways you can share your faith during the holiday season.
3. To keep you ready and watchful for Jesus' second coming.

Preparedness is a familiar and important concept for parents. Often it's associated with physical safety: child-proofing a home, keeping emergency phone numbers handy, and planning ahead in case of natural disasters.

Preparation also plays a role in joyful occasions—from faith passages to developmental milestones. Throughout the years, parents make countless decisions and plans, offering guidance and support as their kids prepare to head out on their own someday.

During the weeks leading up to Christmas, a season known as Advent, followers of Jesus have the opportunity to prepare our hearts for his birth. That can be challenging,

with all the hustle and bustle of the typical December. Advent also is a time to prepare for Jesus' *second* coming, something we may not think about very often amid packed daily schedules.

Throughout Scripture—often in stories called parables—Jesus instructs us to stay alert and watchful. The day of his return, which is unknown to all but God, will appear like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2). So, we are to remain awake, tell others about Jesus' good news of salvation, and be ready to share our beliefs.

To help your children be spiritually prepared, put Jesus and faith in him at the center of your home—and your Christmas celebrations. Read on for more seasonal ideas for getting ready to welcome our Savior and King!

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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Our Guiding Star

Hide a swaddled doll in a darkened room. Then lead family members through the room with flashlights (or phone lights) to search for the baby. Play several rounds, giving each person a turn to hide the baby and lead the search.

Read aloud Matthew 2:1-12. Say: **A bright star led some followers to find baby Jesus, who was born to be the light of the world. It must have been so exciting to follow the star to Bethlehem to find baby Jesus!**

Ask: **In our game, how did you feel when you were following the light? How would the game have been different without flashlights?**

Say: **I'm glad we were prepared with these lights so we could find the baby. Let's remember to follow the light of Jesus every day as we get ready for Christmas!** Close in prayer, thanking Jesus for always guiding us with his light.

Jesus Is Coming!

The people of Jesus' day expected him to be an earthly king who would overthrow the Romans and restore the kingdom of Israel. From our standpoint in history, we know that the baby Jesus grew up to become the Suffering Servant (see Isaiah 53), a sinless sacrifice who died in our place. One day, Jesus will return bodily to rule as King over all heaven and earth. But as Immanuel, or "God with us," Jesus also remains always present with us, no matter what we're facing. Remind children of that precious promise as Christmas approaches—and every day after!

Guest Prep Brainstorm things your family does to get ready for guests. Discuss what you'd do differently if Jesus came to stay at your house. Read aloud Mark 1:3-4. Say: "John the Baptist told many people that Jesus was coming. We, too, can let others know what Christmas is about—our Savior's birth." Pray, asking God to bless your family's plans for his Son's arrival.

Holding onto Hope At breakfast, discuss each day's Christmas-related plans. Talk about how anticipating this special time is like or unlike what Mary and Joseph hoped for as they waited for Jesus.

Preparing a Place Have children design place cards and decorate paper plates for a meal. Afterward, read Luke 14:12-24 and talk about how God loves each of us and invites us to a heavenly feast. Say: "While we're preparing our hearts for Jesus, God is preparing a place for us in heaven." Close in prayer, thanking God for each family member by name.

Waiting for the Promise Discuss why waiting is tough—and how it feels when a long wait is finally over. Read aloud Jeremiah 33:14-16. Say: "This prophet told people that the Messiah, Jesus, was coming. More than 500 years

later, God's promise was fulfilled." Brainstorm promises you could make that might be worthwhile in 500 years. Say: "Knowing that God always keeps his promises helps us trust him while we're waiting."

"Spread" the News Set out sugar cookies, frosting, blunt knives, and sprinkles. While kids decorate cookies, discuss ways we can "spread" the good news about Jesus' birth and add "sprinkles" of joy to people's lives.

Nativity Copycats Encourage kids to follow the examples of people in the Bible: loving Jesus as Mary and Joseph did, praising Jesus as the angels did, telling others about Jesus as the shepherds did, and giving Jesus gifts as the wise men did.

Christmas Concert Let younger children ring bells, play music boxes, and dance to Christmas carols. Say: "Knowing that Jesus is coming makes us happy!"

The Big Picture On a long piece of paper, outline a Christmas design. Each day in December, spend a few minutes coloring in the details together. As the mural comes into focus, discuss how to stay focused on Jesus. Display the completed mural in a window.

"I have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all people."
—Luke 2:30-31

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *Spies in Disguise*

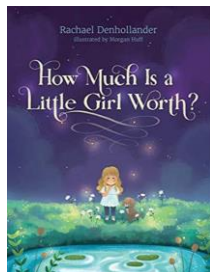
Genre: Animation, Action, Adventure

Rating: PG

Cast: Will Smith, Tom Holland, Rashida Jones, Reba McEntire

Synopsis: This spy comedy with a Christmas release date is based on the animated short *Pigeon: Impossible*. After the world's top spy accidentally swallows a young inventor's gadget, he becomes a pigeon. In that feathered state, he must try to save the world from an evil mastermind.

Our Take: Kids will enjoy the shape-shifting and ingenuity in this movie, which is rated PG for action violence and rude humor. After watching it together, talk about making the most of tough situations and working with people who seem different from us.



BOOK

Title: *How Much Is a Little Girl Worth?*

Author: Rachael Denhollander

Synopsis: In this picture book geared toward ages 4 to 8, abuse survivor and advocate Denhollander emphasizes every child's God-given value. Lively illustrations show girls of various races, accompanied by uplifting text such as: "You bear God's image—mind, body, and soul—Lovingly made to be perfect and whole."

Our Take: This book helps build up children's esteem by pointing to God as their loving Creator: "He says you're worth everything, even his Son." Though aimed at girls, the message also is applicable to boys and even adults. With older children, you can tie in body-safety messages while reading about each person's worth.



CULTURE & TRENDS

The VSCO Takeover VSCO has become more than just a photo-editing app. Now it's also the latest label for Gen-Zers, specifically girls. Described as surfer-girl-meets-the-'90s, "VSCO girls" gravitate toward Birkenstocks sandals, little-to-no makeup, hair scrunchies, and Hydro Flask water bottles covered with hip stickers. (*various sources*)

Building Braille Skills To help blind and vision-impaired children learn Braille, LEGO created special bricks containing the raised-dot symbols. While playing, kids can boost their reading and number skills. Sighted friends also can participate, thanks to printed letters and numbers on each brick. This is the latest in a wave of inclusive toys. (*kidscreen.com*)

Games, Podcasts & Apps

Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order

With another film release this month, "Star Wars"-themed items are sure to be in demand for Christmas. In this game, Padawan fugitives train to rebuild the Jedi Order before getting wiped out by the Empire. It's rated T for Teen, so use caution.

Christmas Stories

This podcast from Focus on the Family is filled with seasonal activities, tips, and stories for all ages. Episodes encourage family members to share their favorite Christmas memories—and may even inspire you to begin some new traditions together.

Family Link

New from Google, this free app promises to help parents set "digital ground rules" for young device-users. Family Link encourages healthy decision-making, monitors usage, and suggests teacher-approved apps that parents can add directly to a child's device.

QUICK STATS

Overextended Though the federal government recommends putting no more than 7% of household income toward childcare, almost two-thirds of U.S. families (and 95% of low-income families) spend more than that. (*time.com*)

Picking Pronouns More than one-third (35%) of Gen Z-ers, born from 1995 to 2015, say they personally know someone who uses gender-neutral pronouns such as *they* and *them*. (*Pew Research*)

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This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, read, listen to, and play.



December

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6 Christmas Family Game Night 6:30	7 Men's Breakfast
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19 Angel Tree gifts returned to church office!	20	21
22 NO Children's Church/ Nursery Family Service	23	24 Candlelight Service 6:30-7:30 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26	27	28 Winter Youth
29 Winter Youth	30 Winter Youth	31 New Year's Eve				

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3 Things kids can teach us about God

#1. UNLEARN indifference and RELEARN Wonder!

October's newsletter shared how kids see wonder all around them in everyday things, the sun rising, stars shining at night or in butterflies hatching. Adults can learn to see the wonder of God's creation by slowing down and seeing things the way a child does.

#2. UNLEARN business and RELEARN Play!

Children can teach adults to stop and play from time to time. Given the choice kids would play 100% of the time. Although that is not completely practical as an adult, we can learn to stop and play from time to time.

The bible has a great example of this in the story of Martha and Mary. Upon hearing of a visit from Jesus, Martha and Mary busied them self with

household tasks to prepare for his arrival. When Jesus arrived Mary was so excited she stopped and curled up at his feet (like a child) and listened intently to every word and story he shared. Martha continued on her "to do" list and became more and more frustrated that she was working alone. She finally is so upset she asks Jesus for help to make Mary work with her (again like a child). Jesus tells Martha that Mary was actually making the better choice; she had decided all other things were not as important as spending time with him. Mary had stopped to spend time with Jesus, above all things on her list.

This Christmas season, be a Mary. Choose spending time with Jesus and your family over you to do list. UNLEARN the business of the season and RELEARN play and joy the season brings.

#3 Continued in January.....

Family Ministry Lesson of the Month:

Friends Forever! Jesus wants to be your child's friend now and forever. Helping them get to know Jesus and grow that friendship will prompt a love for him. Disciples have a loving friendship with Jesus and the love encourages obedience.

Most parents would love their kids to be obedient ALL the time. In reality this is simply not possible. Only Jesus was able to accomplish this and he did so for us. God sent him to earth, but then Jesus made the choice to obey. He obeyed out of love, not obligation. Not only love for God, but also because he loved US!

Parents need to build a foundation of love vs fear to get true obedience. Children who truly love their parents and see love from them want to obey. They also learn to love God by the model their parents set. As they grow in love and obedience towards their earthly parents, and follow their example they will grow in love and obedience to their heavenly father. Ultimately, this is the greatest form of obedience a parent could ask for!



"Jesus said, 'Love one another'" (John 15:17).

Come to me, all who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

Children's Ministry Mission

For the month of December Children's Ministry is collecting snack items for local foster care kids. Children who are in foster care often have long meetings at the DHS office in St. Helens. One way we can help the meetings go a little smoother for the kids, foster parents and DHS employees is to provide snacks for the kids.

We are trying to stuff the children's Christmas tree with gifts of snacks! Donations of Goldfish, Pretzels, wrapped crackers, granola bars or even cup of noodles (for longer visit's) can be brought to the church the month of December and placed under the Children's Ministry Christmas tree!