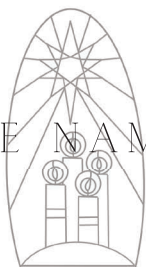


ADVENT 2021

ADVENT: THE NAMES OF JESUS



How to use this guide

For centuries, light has shone through beautiful stained glass windows of church sanctuaries illuminating the story of God and humanity. In a similar way, deep and wonderful truths about Jesus are revealed to us through the names given him in scripture.

This Advent, spend a few minutes with us each day reflecting on some of these names and the beautiful truth they illuminate. The following guide contains 25 short daily reflections that can be used alongside our 2021 Advent Calendar or as a stand alone devotional. It has been written for the entire church family - designed to be used by people of all ages.

Start with the **REFLECT** section. Read the key verse and the first question. Progress through the other questions as understanding allows.

Read the **THINK** section aloud, or use it to inform your own understanding and reflection so you can teach others at an age appropriate level..

Let the **PRAY** section shape your prayer time and, if you like, spend a bit more time in the **CONNECT** section meditating on this truth from scripture.

While driving, sharing meals and going about your daily routine, the **RESPOND** section suggests short and simple activities, challenges and conversation starters designed to keep the conversation and reflection flowing throughout the day. You might even want to spend this Advent season searching out some stained glass churches in your area or online, and let appreciation for this artistic means of storytelling spark imagination and wonder this season.

We pray that as you and your family soak in the truth of Jesus' name this Advent, your heart will grow in love for and knowledge of His worth and work. And that in doing so, our celebration of Christmas together will be filled all the more with awe and wonder at the baby born in a stable.

DECEMBER 16 CREATOR



For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created through him and for him.
Colossians 1:16

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

As one with the eternal God, Jesus did not begin to exist at the stable in Bethlehem. The baby in the manger actually had existed from before time, and was present and involved in the Creation of the world. Jesus continues to be involved in the act of creation as he works to make all things new: new birth through salvation, new hearts through His Spirit at work, and one day a new heaven, and new earth.

Pray

Thank Jesus for his wonderful work of Creation: the world around you made by his voice, the work of salvation he began before time and the work of faith he continues to form in you by his own Spirit!

Connect

Psalms 104:24-25

Respond

Spend some time in awe of Creation today. As you walk or drive, make a point of calling out the beauty of the world around you...then let that beauty and wonder lead your thoughts and feelings toward praise and thanksgiving of Jesus the Creator!

DECEMBER 2: ALPHA & OMEGA



*I am the Alpha and the Omega,
the first and the last,
the beginning and the end.
Revelation 22:13*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In Jesus' day, teachers would use this term to mean "the whole thing" or all of something from beginning to end. All things began with Jesus, and one day he will bring all things to their fulfillment - to the glory of God!

Pray

Thank Jesus for his eternal character and the abundance and satisfaction that can be found in him as Alpha and Omega. Thank him for the work of faith he has begun in your life and praise him with the assurance that he will continue and complete it.

Connect

Isaiah 48:12-13

Respond

Do something different today and pray at the beginning *and at the end* of one of your meals. As you do this, remind yourself that all things begin and end with Jesus...He is Alpha and Omega.

DECEMBER 3 : I AM



*Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you,
before Abraham was,
I AM.'
John 8:58*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

I AM was the name by which God revealed himself to Moses in the book of Exodus in the Old Testament. It means "the self-existent One." God's existence does not depend on anyone or anything and everything needed for life and flourishing exists in him. By calling himself "I AM," Jesus was declaring that He was the eternal God come in human flesh..

Pray

Take time to confess the ways you live as though you are the self-existent one; not needing to depend on anyone or anything. Talk to God about the areas of your life where you need to depend on him rather than yourself and praise him that everything you need for life and flourishing can be found in Jesus the I AM.

Connect

Exodus 3:1-15

Respond

Make a list of all the things you are currently depending on God to provide. Add to it the things you've been doing on your own as a way of declaring your dependence on him. Hang up the list in a visible area of your home this week, and when you see it remind yourself that Jesus is the I AM.



DECEMBER 4 : LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the Light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life."

John 8:12

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

As God began his work of Creation, he said, "Let there be light!" And there was light. Before any secondary source of light existed, all creation navigated, grew and was warmed by the sun, moon and stars. Light chases away darkness, and shows us the truth by exposing things for what they really are. By Jesus, as "The Light," our sin is exposed, the beautiful truth of God is made visible to us, and we are led into a life of growth and flourishing.

Pray

As you pray today, consider what darkness in your life or the world around you really needs the light of Jesus. Ask him to expose truth and lies and to bring his warmth, guidance and life to this area of darkness.

Connect

2 Corinthians 4:6

Respond

If you are out driving this evening, take time to enjoy the way certain streets are lit up for Christmas. Maybe put up your own lights, play with flashlights or simply light a candle at dinner tonight and think about Jesus as light in darkness.

DECEMBER 5 : SON OF GOD



*And a voice from heaven said: "This is my beloved Son,
with who I am well-pleased."
Matthew 3:17*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

To be the unique "Son of God" is to be miraculously conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and to be God Himself in human form. To be God's only Son does not mean that Jesus is lesser than God the Father, but equal with Him. In the ancient world, to be the "son of" something or someone, meant to have the same nature as that thing or person. Jesus is the only Son of God in that He shares the nature of God- He is equal with God in glory and majesty, and eternally is God- He always has been, and always will be one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus as the Son, is God who took on human form to display the radiance of His glory and the exact imprint of His nature, full of grace and truth (Hebrews 1:3; John 1:14). The picture of the Son and Father presses on our hearts the reality of just how much it cost God- just how much He truly sacrificed in sending His own Son to die in our place and bring us back to Him.

Pray

What does this sacrificial love of God stir up in you as you pray? What about God's nature shown in His Son Jesus are you most stricken by and thankful for today? How does it inspire praise in you to know that Jesus laid aside the privileges of being God and came to us as a man in humility to pour out His life in service and undeserved death? What traits of the Son can you ask the Holy Spirit to grow in you?

Connect

John 5:17-23

Respond

Look at a few family photos today, or draw out your family tree. Talk about family resemblance and relationships and keep talking about what it means for Jesus to be called the Son of God.

DECEMBER 6 : WONDERFUL COUNSELOR



*For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us,
and the government will be on his shoulders.*

*He will be named Wonderful, Counselor;
Mighty God, Eternal Father; Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

If you look closely, this is actually two names! The child to be born will be named both Wonderful and Counselor. The name Wonderful in the original language means extraordinary, or something hard to describe because it is so different and special. The name Counselor points to the way Jesus would give guidance and wisdom to the people. Before he ascended to heaven, Jesus told his disciples he would send The Counselor - His Holy Spirit! - to guide them and remind them of truth.

Pray

Praise Jesus that he is Wonderful - he is entirely different and other. As you pray, simply declare some of his unique and special attributes that you have seen and heard of in Creation and through the scriptures and ask to be filled and guided by His Spirit today.

Connect

John 14:18-26

Respond

Look for or think of something you find extraordinary today and do your best to describe it. What words might you use to show how special and different it is? If you can, put your item out on the table today as a centerpiece to remind you of Jesus who is extraordinary and Wonderful. Think about how much more extraordinary Jesus is, and that this Wonderful God wants to fill you with his wisdom and guidance! Let the wonder of this fill you with joy and hope today.

DECEMBER 7: THE WORD



*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.*

John 1:1

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

As the Word, Jesus shows us the creative power of God. He brings all reality into existence. His healing, power over nature and miracles of creating "something from nothing" reveal the same power present at Creation. Jesus as the Word also teaches that he is the *image of the invisible God* which means God in human form. In the same way our words are the physical manifestation of our inner thoughts. Jesus is the physical manifestation of God the Father. He represents the Father's invisible nature and makes God known to us!

Pray

Pray scripture! Use the words of Psalm 19 today.

Connect

Hebrews 1:1-4

Respond

Play twenty questions and see if you can guess the words each other are thinking! As you speak today, think about how your words display your inner thoughts and consider what Jesus teaches you about God the Father. OR spend a few minutes in the practice of silence and solitude today...setting aside your own words as a way of submitting yourself to Jesus as The Word.

DECEMBER 8 : THE GOOD SHEPHERD



*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd
lays down his life for the sheep.
John 10:11*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

The Jewish people who heard Jesus call himself by this name would've immediately been reminded of the ancient prophecy in Jeremiah 23 that called Israel's leaders bad shepherds for neglecting God's people. In that passage, God promised to send a good King who would reign wisely and with care. Jesus is the shepherd who protects, guides, provides and will give up himself for the sake of his sheep.

Pray

In what areas of your life do you need the Good Shepherd to protect, guide and provide? Talk to him about this and find rest and contentment today knowing that his care for you is characterized by goodness. You might want to pray the words of Psalm 23 today.

Connect

Psalm 23

Respond

Play a quick game of hide and seek in your house or outdoors, and talk about Jesus' parable about going after the lost sheep. Or enjoy a candy cane or candy cane flavoured treat and talk about it as a Christmas symbol; telling the story about the Good Shepherd. You can read about it in *The Legend of the Candy Cane: The Candymaker's Gift*, or watch a retelling of that story on Youtube. From now on, let this common Christmas symbol stir your heart in love for The Good Shepherd.

DECEMBER 9 THE WAY



*Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth and the life.
No man comes to the Father, except through me."
John 14:6*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

The word "way" can mean either a road or a manner by which something is accomplished. Jesus is the way into the free and abundant life found in relationship with God. He is the only way by which our heart of sin can be forgiven and made new. Jesus shows us a more fulfilling and purposeful way to live that flows out of faith, hope and love.

Pray

Confess the other "ways" you often believe will provide a fulfilling and purposeful life. Thank Jesus that he has made a way to restore relationship with him, and ask him to show you how to live out today in a way that flows from true faith, hope in him, and the love he has poured into your heart.

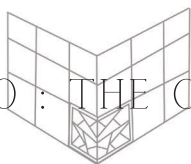
Connect

John 14:1-5

Respond

Take a new "way" to work or school today, or do something from your regular routine in a new "way" and let this simple act help you continue to think about and discuss what it means for Jesus to be The (Only) Way.

DECEMBER 10 : THE CORNERSTONE



You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

Ephesians 2:19-21

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

The cornerstone was the first stone laid at the foundation of a building. All other stones were then placed upon and in relation to the cornerstone. Jesus is the rock upon which our salvation is set, and he is the rock that holds together his people- the church. In Him, we who are his followers are joined together to become the dwelling place of the Presence of God here on earth.

Pray

Pray specifically for our church family today. Thank Jesus for "putting together" this group of people to become a new family in his name. Pray that together we would truly be built up into a dwelling place for the Spirit of the Lord; and that by his presence, his kingdom love, peace and joy would be visible in our communities.

Connect

Acts 4:8-12

Respond

Who are the people in your faith community? How are you actively living like you are "joined together" with this group of very different people made ONE in Christ? Who can you reach out to today...how can you encourage and bless someone from your church family as a way of building up those who are "fellow citizens" with you in Jesus the Cornerstone?

DECEMBER 11: LAMB OF GOD



*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said,
"Here is the Lamb of God,
who takes away the sin of the world!"
John 1:29*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

In the Old Testament, lambs were given as a sacrifice at the temple to atone or pay for the sins of God's people. We see this pattern take shape in the stories of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 and The Passover in Exodus 12. In his death, Jesus became the one time sacrifice needed to pay for and "take away" or in the precise words of John the Baptist, "carry off" our sin.

Pray

Confess the truth that you are in need of payment for your sin, that like sheep you are prone to wander. Be assured that the Lamb of God was given for you and pays that debt. Knowing this, thank him for his sacrifice and ask him to help you live in gratitude as one whose sin has been "carried off!"

Connect

Isaiah 53:7-10

Respond

Whatever dinner is tonight, do something to make it special! Practice the spiritual rhythm of Feasting with your family as a way of celebrating the good news that the Lamb of God has been given for you!

DECEMBER 12 CHRIST



Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed him. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah!" and he brought Simon to Jesus.

John 1:41

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

The Greek word for "Messiah", "Christ" means "anointed" or "chosen one" set apart for a special purpose. The "Christ" was the one prophesied about by many Old Testament prophets, who was chosen by God and would be sent by God to deliver His people from their sin. Jesus showed that He is the fulfilment of these Old Testament prophesies by preaching the gospel, healing the broken-hearted, opening the eyes of the blind, and setting the captives free in the power of God's Spirit (Luke 4:17-21). He came, not to overthrow the Roman Empire like many expected, but to free His people from a deeper and more desperate oppression- their slavery to sin- and to begin the reign of God's Kingdom on earth where we can live in right relationship with God and there is healing, wholeness, and freedom. Only the anointed Christ could accomplish this through His perfect life, sacrificial death, miraculous resurrection, the pouring out of His Spirit on all who receive Him, and His promised final return to put all things right.

Pray

Thank Jesus the Christ for the way He saved you, for opening your eyes to the truth of God and setting you free from the captivity of your sin, of the world's and the enemy's lies. Ask Jesus to reveal things in your heart and mind that are out of step with His Kingdom. Confess this sin and commit to receiving and living out the freedom the Messiah has provided.

Connect

Luke 23:32-39

Respond

Some people think "Christ" was Jesus' last name! But did you know the titles Messiah and Christ were the same word - simply in the languages of Hebrew and Greek? Acts 11:26 tells us that the people of Antioch gave the disciples the name "Christian" or "Little Christ." Why might that title be a good name for the disciples? What do people think it means today?

DECEMBER 13 : MIGHTY GOD



*For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government
will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor;
Mighty God, Eternal Father; Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

In the prophecy of Isaiah, God's people were told that the child to be born would be strong and powerful...more so than any of the supposed gods of other nations. All these years before his birth, Jesus was described as mighty, strong, and powerful! The baby, born in a barn, helpless and small - was the Mighty God! As Jesus walked on earth, the miracles he performed demonstrated his power over all things - nature, disease, demons, sin and even death!

Pray

Knowing Jesus has power over nature, disease, demons, sin and death, pray for the situations and people you know of that are in need of the help of the Mighty God.

Connect

Psalms 95:1-5

Respond

Play a quick "Who would win?" game today. Take turns suggesting two different animals, superheroes or even family members and let the others make an argument for who is the "mightiest." Laughs aside, let this game reveal that no matter what image of strength and power we have in our mind, Jesus is ultimately the MIGHTY GOD.

DECEMBER 14 : THE TRUE VINE



*I am the true vine
and my Father
is the gardener.
John 15:1*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

The image of a vine was a common picture in the Hebrew Bible of life, flourishing and abundance. Jesus, by his divine nature, is the new Tree of Life; the source of human flourishing. "Abiding" or staying close and connected to the True Vine will produce true life; one of purposeful growth and flourishing. Bearing fruit is impossible for branches that are cut from the vine. In the same way, we are powerless to produce a life of "fruitfulness" unless we remain connected to Jesus as the source of life and goodness. SO what does it look like for you to "remain" or "abide" in the True Vine?

Pray

Confess other false vines that you are tempted to believe will offer you the good life. Ask Jesus to reveal to you what remaining or abiding in him looks like today. Praise him as the source of true and abundant life.

Connect

John 15:1-8

Respond

On your way today, see if you can name the 9 "fruit" or ways the Holy Spirit is fruitful in followers of Jesus. Do you know where to find that passage in the bible? If those characteristics are *the fruit of the vine*, talk about what that teaches you about Jesus as the True Vine?

DECEMBER 15 : SAVIOUR



*Today in the city of David a Saviour was born for you,
who is the Messiah, the Lord.
Luke 2:11*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

The people of Israel had always been keenly aware of their need to be saved. From slavery, national enemies, famine, disease and trouble...they were often in need of rescue. What they didn't realize however, was that their greatest need was to be saved from themselves. Saved from hard hearts that by nature chased after idols and contributed to the brokenness of creation: hearts destined for the penalty of death and forever cut-off from the Creator who loved them and in whom they would find their identity and purpose. Our need for rescue is the same as Israel's and the good news is that a Saviour has been born for you and me!

Pray

Confess your sins and admit your own need for a Saviour today. Thank Jesus that he does not leave you to yourself, but has come as the rescuer for all people.

Connect

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Respond

As you go about your day, watch for images and pictures of the nativity, if you have young children, take time to play with or set up a Nativity scene. Think about or discuss how our world usually portrays Heroes or Rescuers. Which ones are your favourite and why? Talk about why a baby is not usually what our world pictures when they think of a saviour, and take time to wonder aloud why Jesus the Saviour would come in this way.

DECEMBER 16 : FAITHFUL AND TRUE



*Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse.
Its rider is called Faithful and True,
and he judges and makes war with justice.
Revelation 19:11*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

Throughout the Old Testament, God's people testified to his faithfulness. He proved trustworthy, steadfast and just, and remained true to his people even when his people were UNfaithful and UNtrue to him! In the same way, Jesus as Faithful and True reminds us that he will ultimately do what he has said. He will remain steadfast in his work of restoring all creation, he will make his home with his people, and he will judge the earth in righteousness and reign with justice as the truly good king.

Pray

Confess the ways that you tend to put your trust and hope in things that are UNfaithful and UNtrue. Ask God to grow faith in you to truly believe that Jesus IS Faithful in all his ways and True in all he says. And invite the Spirit to reveal the ways you might be doubting God as Faithful and not trusting him as True.

Connect

Numbers 23:19

Respond

Talk to young children about the rainbow as a reminder of this name of Jesus. Or challenge your family to think of some of the promises God has made to his people in scripture: Can you think of some promises God made to his people Israel? Can you think of any promises Jesus made to his followers? Which of these promises is meaningful for you? Which are sometimes hard to believe? Share why.

DECEMBER 17 : EVERLASTING FATHER



*For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government
will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor;
Mighty God, Everlasting Father; Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

Isn't it interesting that in this one verse, Jesus is called BOTH a child, a son AND a father? Jesus, as God, is entirely different than and separate from all creation. While we are made in his image, he is not like us! So whatever we think of when we think of a father, we can be assured that Jesus far exceeds our expectation and fulfills this role perfectly as intended. Jesus is the never ending giver of life. He is the head of his family; the Church, and he will never give up his role of loving, guiding and providing for his children.

Pray

Take time to thank God for all the ways he is a Father to you; loving, guiding, protecting and providing. Praise him for the incredible way he can be both everlasting; so far above and different from humanity, and yet incredibly near to you in relationship. You might want to pray the "Our Father" or "Lord's Prayer" today. You can find it in Matthew 6:9-13.

Connect

Psalms 103:11-18

Respond

Make a list of some of the ways Jesus has guided, protected or provided for your family over the past year. What have you been praying for? How has God answered your prayers? What prayers has he yet to answer?

DECEMBER 18 : LION OF JUDAH



*Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep.
Look, the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David,
has conquered so that he is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.
Revelation 5:5*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

The picture of Jesus as the Lion of Judah provides beautiful 'bookends' to the Biblical story, originating in Genesis and ending in Revelation. In Jacob's parting words to his son, Judah, he compares him to a lion and predicts that his line will be one of royalty, ruling with power and majesty through his family line ending with one ultimate King to whom all people will serve for all eternity. Out of Judah's line, King David ruled. Generations later, through David's family line came Jesus- "The Lion of the tribe of Judah", "the Root of David", the only one who is worthy to open the scroll (revealing the cosmic plan of God), because he overcame sin, evil, and death itself through the cross and resurrection. Jesus holds all authority over every ruler on earth and the heavenly places and has power over life, death and eternity. He came to conquer the enemy once and for all and to establish His forever Kingdom. Like the lion, there is none above him. He is undefeatable, clothed in kingly majesty, fierce in His love, and worthy of all praise.

Pray

Pray with growing assurance as you picture Jesus as the fierce and powerful Lion of Judah. Are there areas of your life you are refusing to submit or need to rededicate to His lordship? Are you feeling under fire from the enemy? Overwhelmed or overcome with doubt, fear, temptation? Come to the Lion of Judah with both humility and confidence.

Connect

Genesis 49:8-10

Respond

Somehow the Lion rarely makes it onto the list of most common Christmas symbols. And yet the fact that Jesus was the King promised to come from the tribe of Judah is why we celebrate his birth! Think of some common Christmas symbols - maybe ones you see around your house. Which symbols point to the true story of Christmas? Which symbols don't seem to fit? What might it look like to make the symbol of the lion part of your Christmas decor this year...as a way to point to and celebrate Jesus as the Lion of Judah?

DECEMBER 19th MESSIAH



*The woman said,
"I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming.
When he comes, he will explain everything to us."
John 4:25*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve fell to the temptation of the snake. As a result of their sin, evil and death entered God's good creation, all of humanity is now born into a sinful nature and we live enslaved to the power of sin and death. We need someone to reverse the devastating effects of humanity's fall and sin's grip on our hearts. As soon as sin enters the world, we see that God has always had a plan for redemption- that the Messiah, a "chosen" offspring of the woman, would come through Abraham and bring peace and restoration to the world. He would be bruised by the serpent but would ultimately crush it's head (Genesis 3:15). This promised Messiah, the chosen deliverer sent from God, the fulfillment of thousands of years of hope and expectation, is Jesus. Jesus Messiah was fatally bruised and pierced for our sin, but in His resurrection, crushed the serpent's head, disarming the power of sin forever. And He will return again to bring a final end to all evil and restore His good creation to absolute perfection.

Pray

Thank God for having a plan to redeem the world so lost and broken by sin. Thank Him that He chose and anointed His own Son and His plan was to enter into the world He loves in such brokenness and take the consequences of our sin upon Himself. In what areas are you waiting for the Messiah to come and act? Ask for the strength you need to wait on the Lord, knowing that His plan and timing of deliverance is perfect.

Connect

Isaiah 53:1-12

Respond

Advent is about waiting. In this season we remember how God's people waited for many years for the Messiah to come. We are also reminded that we are now waiting for the day Jesus will come back to earth to make everything new! Share something you are waiting for and looking forward to this Christmas season. What kinds of things help you wait well? How can you "wait well" for the day Jesus returns?

DECEMBER 20 : KING OF KINGS



*These will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them
because he is Lord of lords and King of Kings.
Those with him are called, chosen, and faithful.
Revelation 17:14*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

King of kings is a title of ultimate victory. It describes a king that has a higher position than any other king or ruler. Nebuchadnezzar was once called king of kings by Daniel (Daniel 2:37) because he was the current "ruler of all." However, Nebuchadnezzar was about to find out that there is a King that is higher and more powerful than himself...a King to whom even HE must submit. The scriptures tell us that Jesus has ALL authority and ALL power over any other ruler from the past, present or future. Ultimate victory and authority belongs to him alone.

Pray

Consider kneeling as you pray today - as a way to show your submission to Jesus as the King of Kings. Talk to him about his greatness, and how you need him to rule and reign in your heart and circumstances today. Ask the Lord to reveal areas where you haven't been submitting to Jesus as King, and show you what you must do to turn from that unbelief.

Connect

Philippians 2:9-11

Respond

If you have young children, play a game of Simon Says or "King Says." Or take turns sharing what law you would make if you could be King for a day. Use this as a way to continue talking about Jesus as the highest King and authority. Reflect on what it means to you for Jesus to be your King. This might be foreign in our democratic and individualistic world. So take time today to consider and pray about what parts of your life you need to surrender to Jesus knowing that he is the King of Kings.

DECEMBER 21: BREAD OF LIFE



*"I am the bread of life," Jesus told them.
"No one who comes to me will ever be hungry,
and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again."
John 6:35*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

The imagery of bread was important to God's people, it was a symbol to them of God's faithful provision as he led them through the wilderness. The true story of their ancestors being fed by manna would have been on their minds as they heard Jesus call himself by this name. But Jesus is the true and better manna! He has come down from heaven as the faithful provision of God. Yet he is not just the bread, he is the *bread of life*. He is abundant and enough. No one who comes to him will ever be hungry again.

Pray

Confess other appetites you are trying to fill, and the things you look to for satisfaction outside of Jesus. Praise Jesus today that he is enough...that the love, peace and satisfaction found in him are abundant and life-giving.

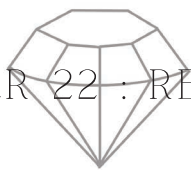
Connect

John 6:47-51

Respond

Think about how you might meditate on Jesus as the Bread of Life. You might choose to feast as a family and consider what Jesus meant when he said coming to him would mean never hungering again. OR you might choose to fast at some point today...setting aside earthly food for a time of prayer with God; and by doing so, remember and submit to your source of TRUE sustenance.

DECEMBER 22 : REDEEMER



*But I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at the end
he will stand on the dust.
Job 19: 25*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

Calling Jesus by the name Redeemer first admits that we are slaves! Slaves to sin and death. We don't have the ability or the will on our own to free ourselves from this bondage and we are helpless without a redeemer. We need someone to buy us back out of slavery. As the Redeemer, Jesus paid the price or ransom for our freedom - the cost to him was death. Not only that, Jesus' death redeems ALL creation. He is redeeming it all from sin and death and will one day makes all things new!

Pray

Spend time today thanking God for paying the ultimate price to free you from the power of sin and death. Pray expectantly and in hope as you look forward to Jesus' return. Celebrate and take joy in the fact that one day ALL of creation will be redeemed from its bondage to sin and brokenness.

Connect

Romans 8:1-2

Respond

Consider how you might partner with us this Christmas as we support *Ally Global* in their ministry to rescue women and children from human trafficking. Visit crossridge.church/ally for more information about how you can get involved in this practical work that reminds us of the truth that we ourselves have been rescued by Jesus the Redeemer.

DECEMBER 23: PRINCE OF PEACE



*For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us,
and the government will be on His shoulders.
He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

When we think of peace nowadays we often think of the absence of conflict, but the bible's word for peace is Shalom. Shalom means wholeness or completeness; total satisfaction or harmony. Isaiah the prophet pointed to the Messiah as one who would bring Shalom to Israel, but also to all nations of the earth. As Prince of Peace, Jesus first provides needed *reconciliation*; restoring humanity's peace with God rather than enmity(Romans 5:1) Jesus also provides us inner peace in our feelings and thinking as his Spirit bears his fruit in us(Gal. 5:22.) Finally, Jesus' peace offers us peace with others as we are joined together into his family. As Christians, we are called to join Jesus in this ministry of reconciliation and work with him to bring his peace to all people(1 Cor. 5:18.)

Pray

Let the peace of Jesus wash over your heart and mind as you thank him for restoring peace to your relationship with God and others. Confess the areas of your life that are lacking wholeness and harmony today, and ask him to bring his peace to your thoughts, feelings and actions around these circumstances.

Connect

Philippians 4:4-7

Respond

What does a "peaceful environment" look like in your home? Does it involve music playing? Hot drinks and reading by the fire? Doing a puzzle or eating by candlelight? Share your ideas and then do your best to create that environment today and spend some time in it. Let it be a reminder to you that Jesus brings a deeper, fuller, longer lasting peace than what we can ever manufacture.

DECEMBER 24 : GOD WITH US



*The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel -
which means God with us.
Matthew 1:23*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

From the time God's people were formed into the nation of Israel, what set them apart was that the One True God lived among them. His glorious and saving presence dwelt in the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle and then the temple. Sadly, because of Israel's idolatry, the Presence of God eventually left the temple (Ezekiel 10-11) with no biblical evidence that it ever returned. John begins his gospel with the incredible news that, "The Word(Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us." In Jesus, the presence of God had returned to his people! Through his death and resurrection, humanity was restored into relationship WITH God and after he ascended to the Father, he sent his Spirit to be poured out into his followers..making his home in his children in the same way he dwelt in the Most Holy Place. One day Jesus will return to rule and reign visibly on earth, and a loud voice from the throne will cry, "Look! God's dwelling place is with humanity and he will live with them!"(Revelation 21:3)

Pray

As you pray today, take time to remember that God Himself makes his home in you through his own Holy Spirit. Let the awareness of his closeness bring you comfort and joy and let those feelings overflow into praise. Lift high the name of Jesus and pray with anticipation for the day when Jesus will once again walk this earth and we will know tangibly God WITH US!

Connect

John 1:10-14

Respond

As you have opportunity, join the Church today in the gathering of God's people to celebrate Christmas Eve. Look around at your fellow believers and celebrate that God has come to be WITH us. Rejoice as part of the body or temple where God's Presence is living and active here on earth and sing with JOY that one day you will see him face to face!

DECEMBER 25 : INDESCRIBABLE GIFT



*Thanks be to God
for his indescribable gift!
2 Corinthians 9:15*

Reflect

- ◆◆◆ What name for Jesus does this scripture reveal?
- ◆◆◆ What does this name teach about who Jesus is and what he does?
- ◆◆◆ How will knowing and loving Jesus by this name change how you think, speak and act today?

Think

God is the first giver. Aside from every other good gift that comes down from the Father (James 1:17) he first gives us his only Son (John 3:16) - the extravagant and Indescribable Gift of grace! As his children, recipients of this gift, we receive it and respond gratefully by living a life of gracious generosity ourselves. As we have freely received, so we also ought to freely give!

Pray

Pause for a moment on this busy day to be truly thankful before God for the gift of Jesus. Praise him for his grace that is good news of great joy for all people. Ask him to fill you with his generous heart, that you might live a life characterized by gracious giving for his glory. Ask him to reveal Jesus as the Indescribable Gift to people in your life who have not yet put their faith and hope in him.

Connect

John 3:16-17

Respond

As you take part in the Christmas tradition of gift giving today...remember that in doing so we reflect the generous nature of God. Take a moment in the midst of it all to somehow treasure and express your gratitude for the greatest gift of all...the only Son of the Father, the Christ Child, given for you.

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