



THE
Wonderous
GIFT A 25-DAY ADVENT
DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

SAMPLE

LeaderTrekks
YOUTH MINISTRY



THE
Wonderous
GIFT

SAMPLE

The Wondrous Gift: A 25-Day Advent Devotional Journal
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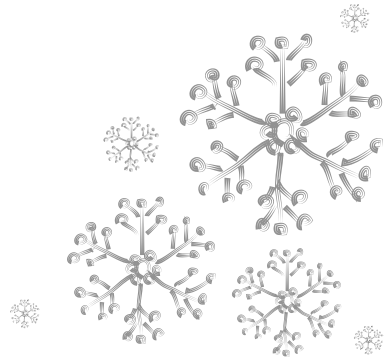
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THE *Wondrous* GIFT



Christmas is about gifts. For most of us, Christmas basically revolves around buying, wrapping, giving, and receiving all kinds of presents. Our wish lists are full of things we want: the latest technology, the hottest clothes, the newest games. We spend the weeks leading up to Christmas planning and anticipating every aspect of the gift giving and receiving experience. It's exciting and fun and Christmas wouldn't be the same without it!

Christmas presents aren't bad. In fact, the excitement we feel about Christmas gifts tells us something about what the Advent season is all about.

Advent literally means arrival. The Advent season is about remembering the day when the God of the universe came to earth. When Jesus arrived on the very first Christmas, humankind received the greatest gift ever given. The Christmas story tells of wise men who travelled far and brought gifts to honor Jesus. And 2,000 years later, we're still exchanging gifts to celebrate Christmas.

This Advent journal is designed to help you explore the greatest Christmas gift ever and to prepare your heart to receive Jesus your King, God, and Sacrifice.

So are you just waiting for a typical Christmas present? Or are you ready to receive the most Wondrous Gift?



How it Works:

This book has four weeks of journal pages to help you focus on Christ as you journey through the Advent season. The first three weeks contain seven days of devotions and activities, centered around the three gifts brought by the wise men, and what they proclaimed about Jesus. Here you'll have an opportunity to see the nativity story with new eyes, study the Bible with engaging tools, revisit the heart behind your favorite Christmas carols, or take on challenges that help you take a closer look at how Christ's Advent (his arrival) is God's ultimate gift to us. At the end of each week, you'll find a FAMILY DAY. This is an opportunity to share what you're learning with friends and family. The fourth week contains four days of devotions and activities that tie everything together as a final countdown to Christmas. We've included a special Family Devotion for you to go through together on Christmas Day.

Remember, you'll get out of this book what you put into it. The challenges you'll encounter won't always be easy—they're designed to stretch you! Take a risk and use this journal to run hard toward God. When we make ourselves available to him, he'll transform us and use us in ways that will blow our minds!

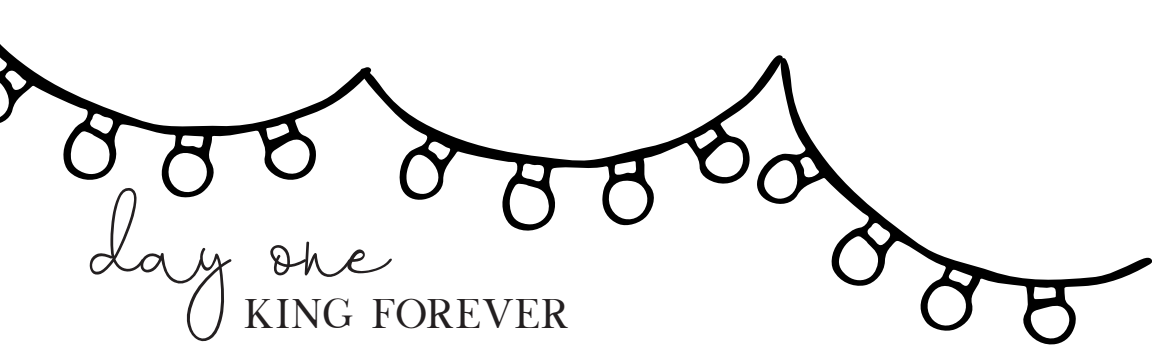


Week One

KING

THE WISE MEN'S
FIRST GIFT WAS GOLD,
SYMBOLIZING JESUS'
ROYALTY.

Christ came to be our King, and we should recognize and obey him. This week, you'll take a look at how Jesus' royalty meets us in our need, and you'll have the opportunity to honor him as King.



The wise men's first gift was gold, symbolizing Jesus' royalty:

***Born a King on Bethlehem plain,
Gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, Ceasing never
Over us all to reign.'***

Many Americans pride themselves on not giving allegiance to any king or queen. The idea of submitting to someone who did not earn their status but simply inherited it does not suit the American work ethic. The good news is that Jesus is the kind of king who bucks all stereotypes—he was born in poverty, essentially homeless during his final years of ministry, and his lineage is decidedly not of the usual earthly variety. Yet he is King of the universe and the ultimate ruler over all humans! Amazingly, we have a choice as to whether or not we acknowledge his kingship. Every person in history has been given that decision, and it has eternal repercussions. Once you affirm that Jesus is indeed your King, this means your life as his child should be lived by his rules.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

*Are you interested in the royal families of other countries?
Why or why not?*

How would your life look different if you were part of a royal family?

Why do you think this hymn calls us to “crown [Jesus] again”?

What are some stories about Jesus that remind you of his royalty?



day two

A RIGHTEOUS KING

The American Revolution took place for a very good reason. King George III, who was then king over America, did not have the interests of his subjects at heart, and he made decisions as a leader that harmed his people instead of protecting them. In this passage in Jeremiah, the prophet wrote to a people being oppressed by the kings who had conquered them. The prospect of safety and a righteous king would have been a welcome message. The good news for us is that this message promising peace and a wise and just ruler is true for us as well, under the ultimate Righteous King that Jeremiah was prophesying about: Jesus. No earthly kings, in all of their sinful frailty, can ultimately take that promise of peace and safety in Jesus away from us.

Read JEREMIAH 23:3-6 and ponder it using the 5P METHOD of Bible study. *This title, 5P Method, is simply a way to help you remember this Bible study technique so you can use it to learn from other passages later.*

PURPOSE

Why do you think the author wrote this? Why is it important enough to be in the Bible?

PRIMARY VERSE

Which verse seems to contain the most important thought in the passage? Which one stands out most to you? Write it out.

PROMISES

Make a list of any promises you find in this passage.

PROBLEMS

If you find anything you don't understand—even if it's just a word—write it down as a question. Then ask someone for the answer or look it up yourself.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

What do you need to change or work on so that what you have read is real in your life? Be specific—your application should tell who, what, and when.

day three

YOUR FIRST CHRISTMAS

You have probably heard the carol “The First Noel” many, many times, perhaps so many that you no longer actually hear the words anymore. In today’s activity, you are going to listen to it one more time, but with an ear to hearing it as if you are the storyteller.

Find a version you like online and just listen to it verse by verse. Then, go back over each verse and the chorus and rewrite it in modern language, as if the story was happening to you. (We’ve rewritten verse one as an example.)

A few nights ago, I was in a field watching the sheep with a bunch of other shepherds when an angel appeared and started talking to us!

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

What was it like to try to place yourself into the story?

What portion of the story struck you the most as you rewrote it?

How did imagining yourself there change the way you felt about the statement made in the chorus (“born is the King of Israel”)?

As you retold the story of the first Christmas, did it shift how you perceive Jesus and his kingship? How so?

day four

OVERJOYED



In this passage in Matthew 2, we learn about a group of scholars who, through a mixture of scientific and religious studies, developed the astonishing theory that a new king was going to be born in Israel. They were so convinced that they traveled an incredible distance to find him and were surprised when the locals knew nothing of this coming king.

Imagine their delight when they found their theory to not only be true, but of a far greater magnitude than they had expected. The king that their studies predicted was in fact the King of Kings! God cared so much about getting the word out about Jesus that he led these scholars on a journey to discover the King of the universe.

“...THE GOSPEL IS NOT ABOUT CHOOSING TO FOLLOW
ADVICE, IT’S ABOUT BEING CALLED TO FOLLOW
A KING. NOT JUST SOMEONE WITH THE POWER
AND AUTHORITY TO TELL YOU WHAT NEEDS TO
BE DONE—BUT SOMEONE WITH THE POWER AND
AUTHORITY TO DO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, AND
THEN TO OFFER IT TO YOU AS GOOD NEWS.”

— Timothy Keller²

READ MATTHEW 2:1-12, THEN ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

Have you ever made an important discovery, either about yourself or the world around you? What did that feel like?

Why do you think Matthew included this story in his gospel?

The Christmas story includes a lot of different people: shepherds, angels, wise men, etc. Who do you identify with the most? Why?

How does thinking of Jesus as your King change the way you experience the Christmas season?

day five

KING OF ALL



Most of us have no real-world experience of living under a king. Politically speaking, those days are in the past for most of the world! It's hard to imagine submitting to one person just because they happen to be a king. Yet as Christ-followers, that is exactly what we are called to do. Unlike in Medieval times, however, we have a choice as to whether or not we will submit to King Jesus and live by his rules.

The good news is that the Bible is essentially one big guidebook for to how to live a life submitted to Jesus' reign. Today, let's start by looking at Jesus' number one rule, given to us in Matthew 22:

"JESUS SAID, 'LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR PASSION AND PRAYER AND INTELLIGENCE.' THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT, THE FIRST ON ANY LIST."

-MATTHEW 22:37-38, MSG

Take some time today to imagine what it would look like to submit your passion, prayer, and intelligence to King Jesus. Write down three tangible ways that you could live under Jesus' rule in each of these areas. For example, you could choose to set aside time to pray every day until Christmas or create new space for Jesus in your mind by fasting from social media after dinner for a week.

Now, choose one bullet point from each category to do between now and Christmas. Better yet, do all nine! Find an accountability buddy, tell them your plan, and ask them to both pray for you and check in with you weekly on how it's going.

The image shows three white, decorative tags with a scalloped top edge and a hole at the top, set against a dark, textured background. Each tag has a title and three empty checkboxes on the left side.

- PASSION**
 -
 -
 -
- PRAYER**
 -
 -
 -
- INTELLIGENCE**
 -
 -
 -

day six

OUT OF THIS WORLD

After listening to a lot of Christmas carols and being steeped in the sentiment of the season for too long, we can be tempted to think of baby Jesus as cute and sweet and manageable. This passage in John helps remind us that even though Jesus came as a vulnerable baby, he was always much greater and more powerful than we could ever imagine. While Pilate tries to put Jesus in a tidy box that he can understand (political king of the Jewish people), Jesus refutes him by saying that he reigns over something much bigger than the world Pilate inhabits. We all can be tempted to limit Jesus to the ideas we have about him, but he is so much greater than we can ever imagine this side of heaven.

Study **John 18:33–38** using the **OPA method** for Bible study.

Helpful tip: the more effort you put in to making observations, the easier it will be to see principles and applications.



OBSERVATION:

Compile all the facts found in this passage.

Try to make 10–15 observations about what you read.

PRINCIPLES:

Draw a few principles from the observations you made.

What is God trying to teach you in this passage?

APPLICATION:

How will you apply these principles to your life? Be specific—a good application will tell who, what, and when.

family day

CHOOSING THE PERFECT GIFT

The wise men presented Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The song “We Three Kings” puts those into three categories: Gold to signify Jesus’ kingship, frankincense to highlight Jesus’ deity, and myrrh to foreshadow Jesus’ role as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Their gifts were specific to who Jesus was and had great significance beyond their monetary value.

HOW TO GET YOUR FAMILY INVOLVED:

Invite your family to spend 15–20 minutes imagining what it would be like to give gifts with meaning to each other. You’ll need some paper and pens.

“THE SON OF GOD BECAME
A MAN TO ENABLE MEN TO
BECOME THE SONS OF GOD.”

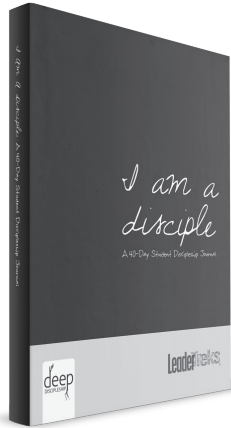
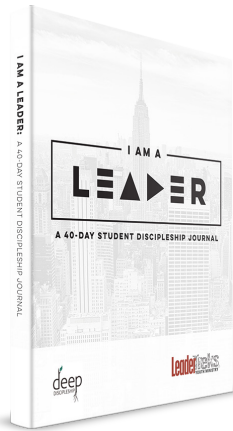
- C.S. Lewis³

instructions:

- *Play “We Three Kings” (or even better, sing it all together!) and draw attention to the significance of each of the three gifts.*
- *Have everyone list out the names of each family member on a piece of paper.*
- *Under each name, write three traits that you love about that person. Try to go beyond outward or surface-level characteristics.*
- *Now, imagine the best possible gift you could give each person based on that trait if money and logistics were no issue. For example, if you love that your Dad is a history buff, you could give him a chance to watch Abraham Lincoln give the Gettysburg Address. Let your imagination run wild!*
- *Spend a few minutes sharing the gifts you’d like to give each other.*

KEEP GOING!

Check out these other journals made just for you:
(Go to Leadertreks.org for more info.)



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