

# HomeFront

a spiritual parenting resource



*Holiday*  
**EDITION**



HOMEFRONTMAG.COM

23



It is our prayer that homes and churches would create environments for children to live in so their faith will grow in a community of common language and practice. To learn more about creating environments that can ignite a transforming faith in your family, we suggest you read:



**SPIRITUAL PARENTING:**  
An Awakening for Today's Families  
BY MICHELLE ANTHONY  
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## A NOTE FROM MICHELLE

**"It's the most wonderful time of the year..."!** We sing this song every season and it rings true for each person for many different reasons. However, for those who believe in **the beautiful gift of Jesus**, given to save us from our sin, we can declare at the top of our lungs how wonderful it is indeed. Each holiday season, we usher in the advent of Christ with a season of Thanksgiving. While this can create a swirl of busyness for two months in our calendars, it can create a path of spiritual renewal in our hearts.

This **November**, take some time to bake together, share meals together, and be in God's Word together as a family. Practice intentional and **extraordinary gratitude** with your children and grandchildren. Invite others to participate in your family nights by opening your home to new friends, neighbors, and family members as a declaration of your grateful heart for all God has brought to you over the past year.

Then, as you usher in the month of **December**, create intentional times of blessing, creating, and worshipping together. **Practice traditions** that have been in your family for generations, and welcome new ones that mark this season of your family's journey.

As you look through the pages of this resource, remember that God has entrusted your children to you for this very special time and season. *Slow down enough to experience the love and wonder in their eyes as God reveals Himself afresh to each of your "gifts".*

Dr. Michelle Anthony is the Sr. Executive Pastor of Family Ministries at New Life Church in Colorado Springs, CO and Director of The Initiative for Faith and Family. Michelle has graduate degrees in Christian education, theology, and leadership and more than 30 years of church ministry experience as a children's and family pastor. She is also the author of *Spiritual Parenting*, *The Big God Story*, *Becoming a Spiritually Healthy Family*, and *7 Family Ministry Essentials*. Michelle loves a good book and a cup of coffee.

# HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE:

We believe parents and grandparents are the primary nurturers of their children's and grandchildren's faith, and we want to inspire, equip, and support you in that endeavor. Individual Family Nights or HomeGroups (which participate in Family Nights together with other families) are an opportunity for you to gather with several other families who are in similar life circumstances and grow together. Your HomeGroup will gather for eight weeks each semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer). This is a time for you to share a meal, learn more about God, engage with each other, and bless your children. HomeFront is the curriculum for our HomeGroups, and each volume contains a full semester's worth of gatherings.

You can still access previous editions of HomeFront magazine at [homefrontmag.com](http://homefrontmag.com). For the holiday season, a special 8 week edition of HomeFront will be available for your family to use in your home. If you would like more information about HomeGroups, or would like to sign up for a group near you, email [parents@newlifechurch.org](mailto:parents@newlifechurch.org). Thank you for investing in the spiritual health of your family. We hope this magazine will serve as a practical guide for you as you seek to establish a spiritually-rich environment in your home.

## DISCIPLESHIP STEPS AT NEW LIFE CHURCH

**Parents are the spiritual nurturers of their children's faith and are the main disciples in their lives.** We are committed to engaging, empowering, and resourcing our parents and families to succeed in their God-given role. Time and resources make this role challenging in our busy world. At New Life Church, we have created a clear path of discipleship for our parents with convenient times and locations. We hope to see you there!

**PARENT ORIENTATION** A first step toward engaging in our ministry. Hear philosophy, meet staff, and learn how to get involved.

**SPIRITUAL PARENTING** A six-week class that dives deep into what God's Word says about parenting.

**HOMEFRONT MAGAZINE** A quarterly magazine designed to aid in successful homegroups or family nights for your own family.

### FAMILY NIGHTS/HOMEGROUPS

Families meeting in homes to do life together (as individual families or combined with other families) and grow in their relationships with God and each other.

### PARENT DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES/EVENTS

Throughout the year, we offer special courses and events tailored toward inspiring, equipping, and supporting you as you nurture your children's faith.





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### INSPIRE

parents with ideas to create fun, spiritually forming times in the normal rhythm of everyday life.

### EQUIP

parents to become the spiritual leaders of God's truth in their own households.

### SUPPORT

families to engage their communities and change the culture around them.

## DID YOU KNOW?

*Each lesson helps you lead your family through four sections.*

### 1 GODS WORD:

Spending time together in God's Word is a powerful way for your kids to learn who God is while instilling a love for the Bible from an early age. Take some time to read the passage above together and then read and answer the questions in the following devotional.

### 2 CREATE or GAME TIME:

Sometimes the best conversations happen around creating or playing together. Don't forget to make this time engaging and purposeful.

### 3 WORSHIP RESPONSE:

Worship Response is a time to respond in a posture and attitude of worship toward God. There are many ways we can actively give our worship to God.

### 4 BLESS:

A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a Bible passage, or words of encouragement. Blessings can be spoken over a child for the purpose of declaring God's protection, joy, and wisdom over him.



# 10

## ENVIRONMENTS

The order of the 10 Environments listed coincides with the monthly distribution of this resource.

1

### STORYTELLING

*"God has a big story, and I can be a part of it!"*

The power of The Big God Story impacts our lives by giving us an accurate and awe-inspiring perspective into how God has been moving throughout history. It is the story of redemption, salvation and hope, and tells how I have been grafted into it by grace. It further compels us to see how God is using every person's life and is creating a unique story that deserves to be told for God's glory.

2

### IDENTITY

*"I belong to God, and He loves me!"*

This environment highlights who we are in Christ. According to Ephesians 1, we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, sealed, and given an inheritance in Christ all of which we did nothing to earn. This conviction allows children to stand firm against the destructive counter-identities the world will offer.

5

### OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

*"God transforms me when I step out in faith."*

As children and students are challenged to step out of their comfort zone from an early age, they learn to experience a dependence on the Holy Spirit to equip and strengthen them beyond their natural abilities and desires. We believe this environment will cultivate a generation that, instead of seeking comfort, seeks a radical life of faith in Christ.

8

### LOVE AND RESPECT

*"God fills me with His love so I can give it away."*

Without love, our faith becomes futile. This environment recognizes that children need an environment of love and respect in order to be free to both receive and give God's grace. Innate to this environment is the value that children are respected because they embody the image of God. We must speak to them, not at them, and we must commit to an environment where love and acceptance are never withheld due to one's behavior.

3

### FAITH COMMUNITY

*"God's family cares for each other and worships God together."*

God designed us to live in community and to experience Him in ways that can only happen in proximity to one another. The faith community serves to create an environment to equip and disciple parents, to celebrate God's faithfulness, and to bring a richness of worship through tradition and rituals, which offer children an identity. Our love for each other reflects the love we have received from God.

6

### RESPONSIBILITY

*"God has entrusted me with the things and people He created around me."*

This environment captures the ability to take ownership for one's life, gifts, and resources before God. A child must be challenged to take responsibility for his or her brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as for those who are spiritually lost. Our hope is that the Holy Spirit will use this environment to allow each child to understand that God has entrusted His world to us.

9

### KNOWING

*"God knows me, and I can know Him."*

Nothing could be more important than knowing and being known by God. We live in a world that denies absolute truth, and yet God's Word offers just that. As we create an environment that upholds and displays God's truth, we give children a foundation based on knowing God, knowing His Word, and a relationship with Him through Christ. God is holy, mighty, and awesome, and yet He has chosen to make Himself known to us!

4

### SERVING

*"Asks the question, 'What needs to be done?'"*

This posture of the heart asks the question, "What needs to be done?" It allows the Holy Spirit to cultivate a sensitivity to others and focuses on a cause bigger than one individual life. It helps fulfill the mandate that as Christ-followers we are to view our lives as living sacrifices that we generously give away!

7

### COURSE CORRECTION

*"When I get off track, God offers me a path of healing."*

This environment flows out of Hebrews 12:11-13 and is the direct opposite of punishment. Instead, biblical discipline for a child encompasses a season of pain, the building up in love, and a vision of a corrected path for the individual with the purpose of healing at its core.

10

### MODELING

*"I see Christ in others, and they can see Him in me."*

Biblical content needs a practical living expression in order for it to be spiritually impacting. This environment serves as a hands-on example of what it means for children to put their faith into action. Modeling puts flesh on faith and reminds us that others are watching to see if we live what we believe.

# LESSON ONE

## SERVE

## 1 GOD'S WORD

### Jesus Serves

**GOD STATEMENT:** Jesus is the Suffering Servant  
**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 8:34, 9:35 and 10:42-45

**November has arrived and Thanksgiving is approaching quickly!** Are you thinking of warm gatherings full of delicious family recipes and traditions with friends? Often these times include remembering what we are grateful for and celebrating growth in Christ. It's true that as believers in Jesus, we really do desire to be more like Him.

For this lesson, let's shine a light on the book of Mark. **Mark highlighted Christ as the Suffering Servant three specific times.** He wrote that Jesus told the disciples He must suffer, die and rise three days later. After each announcement, a challenge is given to followers to also serve others. **Wow! Take a moment to thank Jesus for being our Suffering Servant and ask for the Holy Spirit to teach you as we look at the serving challenges.**

Let's spend time reading these verses and talking through the discussion questions.

#### READ:

- Mark 8:34
- Mark 9:35
- Mark 10:42-45

#### DISCUSSION:

1. What are the three serving challenges?
2. Are there ways your family is serving others? Praise the Lord for these!
3. Is there an opportunity this holiday season to be a servant? Pray and ask the Spirit "what needs to be done?" You'll have more time to reflect in the worship response.

## 2 CREATE

### Tabletop Firepit



- item the shape of desired well, like a block of wood or cup.
- duct tape
- 1 bowl to mix concrete

#### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Wrap the wood block or item of choice with duct tape and spray with cooking spray.
2. Mix enough concrete to fill your planter almost full.
3. Spray your planter with cooking spray for easy release once concrete is dry.
4. Pour concrete into planter.
5. Place the wooden block in the center of the planter and press down two inches to create the fire fluid well.
6. Let dry for three days.
7. After the concrete is fully dry, remove wooden block and turn planter over to release the metal form.

**Jesus knew what needed to be done while He was on earth because he spent time with God.** In Mark 1:35 we read:

<sup>35</sup> Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Each time your family uses this CREATE project, remember Jesus praying in the dark seeking His Father's will.

#### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 bag of concrete mix (not fast drying)
- 1 galvanized planter from the dollar tree



# 3 The Jesus Way

## WORSHIP RESPONSE

**As believers of Jesus, we like to follow in his footsteps.** After sunset, grab a blanket for each family member and re-read Mark 1:35. Spend a few minutes quietly listening and allowing the Holy Spirit to speak. Then leave the house together by walking outside to a private place. One parent can then play *The Jesus Way* by Phil Wickham.

After your quiet time, encourage each other to write down anything the Lord shared. If they did not hear anything, that's okay! **Sometimes we hear a word and sometimes we're simply still before God as an act of worship.**

Gather around the newly hardned tabletop firepit.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

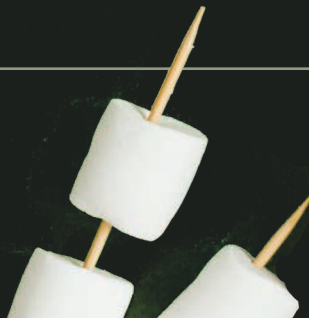
- graham cracker squares, chocolate bar of choice and marshmallows
- scewers
- lighter
- isopropyl alcohol for fire fluid

### WHAT YOU'LL DO:

1. Place all the supplies on the table for smores
2. Pour isopropyl alcohol in the fire well and light with lighter.
3. Share what any family member has heard from the Lord while making smores together. Thank Jesus again for coming into the world to serve and give His life for many. This means we can now have eternal life!

# 4 Believe

## BLESSING



**A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a Bible passage, or words of encouragement.** Blessings can be spoken over a child for the purpose of declaring God's protection, joy, and wisdom over her.

**SCRIPTURE:** Mark 12:29-31

**BLESSING:**(Child's name), may you choose to believe Jesus is the Messiah and follow Him by serving others. May you remember His goodness to you as you grow in Love for the Lord your God and others.



# LESSON TWO

## SERVE

### 1 GOD'S WORD

## There Is Much to Do!

**GOD STATEMENT:** Jesus Is Worthy

**SCRIPTURE:** Scripture: Luke 10:38-42, Psalm 46:10

**One day Jesus came to Bethany and visited Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. Martha, the oldest, was busy with cooking, cleaning, and preparing food, for the thirteen unexpected guests that had just shown up at her door.** At the thought of Jesus and his disciples coming for dinner I'm positive the first question Martha asked herself was "What needs to be done?" I mean, if Jesus wanted to spend time at your house, wouldn't you want your home to be perfect?

**During the holidays it is easy to be busy.** Cooking and serving meals, decorating, buying presents, preparing for guests, it's all a part of the excitement. However, we mustn't be so busy that we forget the true reason for the season. Remember Mary, Martha's sister? Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to what He had to say. She took a moment to be still. In Psalm 46:10 the Bible says, "Be still, and know that I am God!" When Martha asked

Jesus to tell Mary to help her, Jesus responded with "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed-or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Jesus doesn't reprimand Martha or tell her that she chose the wrong thing. Serving others is not wrong, however Jesus says that Mary chose the better thing in that moment. Mary took time out to be still and know. There must be a balance, it is good to serve and remember why we serve. **This holiday season remember to take time to be still, give thanks, and enjoy the blessings right in front of you.**

### DISCUSSION:

1. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her?"
2. What does the Bible mean in Psalm 46:10 to "Be still and know that I am God!"?
3. What can you do this holiday season to "Be still"?

### 2 GAME TIME

## Big Things First

**This activity is a fun experiment and an important lesson that teaches us about priorities.** Practice ahead of time by yourself, so you have the correct quantities when doing the activity with your child.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- big rocks
- pebbles
- sand
- water
- a jar or large cup

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33

**Pray:** Lord, we know we get busy at times but please help us to keep our eyes set on You. Help us first seek Your will before our own.



### WHAT YOU'LL DO:

1. First ask your child to fit the items into the jar or cup, from the smallest to largest.
2. The jar should be too full to fill in all the rocks.
3. Next repeat the activity with the largest items first until everything fits.
4. Talk to your child about how we must put God first in our lives.

# 3 Thankful Wall

## WORSHIP RESPONSE

### READ:

Philippians 4:8

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- string hung on your wall or bulletin board
- thumbtacks
- clothespins
- scrap paper
- pictures of family and friends
- pen or pencil

### PRAY:

Lord thank you for the blessings You've given to us. We come to You in prayer Lord, that we focus on the good things and not the stress or worries of the season.

### WHAT YOU'LL DO:

1. Read Philippians 4:8 and discuss with your family
2. Write down the blessings in your life and things you are thankful for on the pieces of scrap paper
3. Hang the string on your wall or bulletin board using thumbtacks
4. Hang your blessings, thanksgivings, and photos on the string using the clothespins



# 4 Trust

## BLESSING

**A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a Bible passage, or words of encouragement.** Blessings can be spoken over a child for the purpose of declaring God's protection, joy, and wisdom over him.

**SCRIPTURE:** 2 Corinthians 9:8

**BLESSING:** (Child's name), may God bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. You can trust in God to support you in all things and to lean on Him to sustain you when you are tired and weary.



# LESSON THREE

## IDENTITY

### 1 GOD'S WORD

## King Jesus

**GOD STATEMENT:** God Adopts  
**SCRIPTURE:** Ephesians 1:5-8

**Identity. Knowing who we are and where we come from is foundational.** It allows us to stand firm and not swayed by the everchanging world around us. The disciple Matthew understood this. His gospel, establishes the lineage of Jesus from the royal line of King David and reminds us of Isaiah 9:6-7. God had a plan from the beginning of time to make Jesus King of the Jews, but He didn't stop there, **He made a way for us to be adopted into this royal family!** Read Ephesians 1:5-8 as a family and discuss the following questions.

<sup>5</sup> God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. <sup>6</sup> So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. <sup>7</sup> He

is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. <sup>8</sup> He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. (New Living Translation)

#### DISCUSSION:

1. What does it mean to be King?
2. Remember, as a believer in Jesus Christ you have a new identity. In the above passage, what does it say we receive as adopted children of God?
3. How does this truth help you to stand strong in this world?

### 2 GAME TIME

## Who Am I?

#### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Gift bag

#### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Give the youngest player the empty gift bag.
2. The player now finds an item in the house (preferably another room) and places it in the gift bag. They can not show the item to anyone.
3. Have the member return with the hidden item and accept six yes or no questions. If the item is guessed, give the guesser the bag.
4. Continue playing until everyone has had a turn.





# 3 A Work of Art

## WORSHIP RESPONSE

Isn't it fantastic to be adopted into the royal family of God? For this all play Worship Response enjoy using art as a way to respond in an attitude of worship toward God.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- blank paper
- markers or crayons
- paper strips
- jar
- timer

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Write the royal words below on the paper strips.
2. Fold the strips and place in the jar.
3. Choose one family member to be the artist.
4. The artist picks a royal word strip out of the jar. Don't show the other players.
5. Now the artist will draw a picture of the royal word using only thier elbows.
6. Remaining players try to guess in one minute.
7. Hang your silly pictures in a high traffic area, like the mud room or bathroom, for a few days.
8. Each time you see them, smile and remember "you belong to God!"

*Royalty Words*

**THESE WORDS COME FROM REVELATION CHAPTER ONE THROUGH THREE.**

- Tree of Life
- White Stone
- Star
- White Robe
- Throne



# 4 A Special Part

## BLESSING

**A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a Bible passage, or words of encouragement.** Blessings can be spoken over a child for the purpose of declaring God's protection, joy, and wisdom over her.

**SCRIPTURE:** Ephesians 1:8

**BLESSING:**(Child's name), may you grasp the kindness of God toward you. You are His special family member and He showers wisdom and understanding on you. So stand strong and firm, because you are a child of the King.



# LESSON FOUR

## IDENTITY

### GOD'S WORD

# 1 Gifts for a King

**GOD STATEMENT:** God Gives Good Gifts

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 2:10-11 and Ephesians 1:12-14

The account of the Maji visiting young Jesus and presenting Him with wonderful gifts is glorious and it follows with the Maji worshipping Him. Last week, we spent time thinking of our identity in Christ. We are adopted into His forever family and God pours out grace and showers us with kindness. Do you see a characteristic of God here? He loves to give good gifts to remind us who we are, which results in praise to the King!

**Read Ephesians 1:12-14 below to discover another gift God gives us:**

<sup>12</sup> God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. <sup>13</sup> And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. **And when you believed in Christ,**

**He identified you as His own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom He promised long ago.** <sup>14</sup> The Spirit is God's guarantee that He will give us the inheritance He promised and that He has purchased us to be His own people. **He did this so we would praise and glorify him.**

### DISCUSSION:

1. Verse 14 above tells us God will give us the inheritance He promised. What does inheritance mean?
2. Who can receive an inheritance?
3. How can you stand firm in an everchanging world knowing you are a child of the King and He will give you an inheritance?

# 2

## CREATE

# Wrapping Party

As we approach December, let's enter with thankful hearts for the good gifts God gives. This simple create helps us remember his kindness and think on the specific gifts the Holy Spirit has given each believer.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- small boxes and or bags (Amazon boxes are great!)
- holiday wrapping paper or fabric
- scissors, tape, writing pen
- ribbon
- a copy of the spiritual gift labels found on page 27 or simply handwritten on the package.

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Divide the boxes /bags and gift tags between family members.
2. Let each person wrap their boxes or decorate bags as desired.
3. Divide the spiritual gifts listed on the next page among family members.

4. Handwrite the spiritual gift given on the gift tags and attach to your box or bag.
5. Set all the gifts on display to use during Worship Response time.







## 3 On Display

### WORSHIP RESPONSE

#### what you'll need

- spiritual gift boxes

#### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Have the spiritual gift descriptions available to read. Take turns allowing each family member to choose a box and give it to another member they think displays the gift!
2. If you have a non reader, simply allow them to give a surprise gift to another family member. Read that gift aloud as a family.
3. Remember, only the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts. This is simply a way to think of how God gives His children good gifts.
4. Isn't it fun to encourage and build one another up?

## 4 Glorious

### BLESSING

**A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a Bible passage, or words of encouragement.**

Blessings can be spoken over a child for the purpose of declaring God's protection, joy, and wisdom over him.

**SCRIPTURE:** Ephesians 1:18

**BLESSING:** (Child's name), I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope He has given to you—His holy child who is His rich and glorious inheritance. This is your identity in Christ, firm and everlasting.

#### SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

**LEADERSHIP:** encouraging and helping others to build the kingdom of God (Romans 12:8 NIV)

**ADMINISTRATION:** helping with long term goals and remaining on task (1 Cor. 12:28 NIV)

**TEACHING:** instructing in truths and doctrines of God's Word

**KNOWLEDGE:** teaching and discipleship. The ability to learn, know and explain God's Word

**WISDOM:** the ability to discern works of the Holy Spirit and apply teaching and actions

**PROPHECY:** proclaiming the Word of God with boldness (Romans 12:6 NIV)

**DISCERNMENT:** being able to recognize the truth about a situation

**EXHORTATION:** people with this gift are enthusiastic about the Lord and they can motivate others

**SHEPHERDING:** looking out for the spiritual welfare of others

**FAITH:** trusting God to fulfill His plan. People with this gift are encouragers

**EVANGELISM:** the building up of the church so others will be led to Christ

**APOSTLESHIP:** motivators, church planters, missionaries: people who look beyond the walls

**SERVICE/HELPS:** helping those in need of practical assistance (Romans 12:7 NIV)

**MERCY:** The person with this gift shows acts of compassion

**GIVING:** People with this gift will give freely and with joy to further His kingdom

**HOSPITALITY:** Making people feel welcome, appreciated, and wanted (1 Peter 4:9 NIV)

*Taken from biblestudytools.com*



### — Interactive Advent Calendar —

**December 1st was a much-anticipated date in our house. It was the day Christmas began!** My parents would unveil the annual advent calendar they had created on a poster board with a small envelope for each day. Rather than being filled with candy, our advent calendar was full of family activities that gradually became annual traditions – things like making Christmas cookies, going for a drive to look at Christmas lights, roasting hot dogs in the fireplace, or having a wrestling match with Dad that became “Wassail and Wrestle!” These activities rarely cost much money, but they were always a memory-maker. So much so that I kept the tradition going for our kids (even through college), and now our kids are continuing for our grandkids!

You can also fill the pockets with miniature, meaningful holiday items (i.e. a tiny fabric Christmas tree, gold/tiny wise man character, a manger). These pockets can be adorned with festive designs, numbers, and colors, creating a charming visual display. Each day, you can make the countdown interactive and personal by having different people in your household take turns pulling the item from the pocket and discussing what that item means to them.

**Whether hung on a wall, displayed on a mantel, or set on a table, this advent calendar creates a shared experience for your family, centered on intentional conversations about the meaning of Christmas.** You can make your own or purchase one online, like this one <https://a.co/d/hdfdmx6>.

*-Jonathan Bryan and Ellen Moore*

### — Gifts from God —

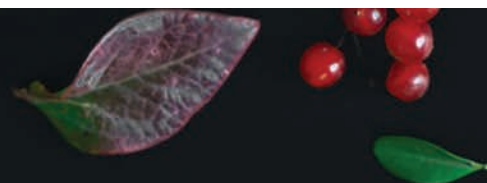
**At Christmas, we celebrate the gift that God gave us in His Son, Jesus.** This is a fun family tradition that is a meaningful way to highlight how your guests are “gifts” to your family. It can be done after you have finished your Christmas meal but while everyone is still sitting around the table or after opening gifts together.

Write words on slips of paper (see below) and put into a mason jar. Next, have each person choose one from the jar. Then give everyone a moment to think about the person to their right and how that word relates to him/her. When ready have the oldest person start first. That person will turn to the person on their right and say, “You are a gift from God because you are \_\_\_\_\_” (filling in the blank with the word they chose from the jar). Then this person will think of a time or an instance that person reflected the word they just read. After that person is finished, the person who was just affirmed will do the same to the person on his/her right until everyone has had a chance to be affirmed.

For example, if someone chooses the word “patient” then they could say, “Grandma, you are a gift from God because you are patient. I can remember when I was baking with you one time, and I spilled flour everywhere. You were patient and helped me clean it up.” Or if someone chooses the word “helpful” then they could say, “Carter, you are a gift from God because you are helpful. When you see that I am working hard around the house, you quickly respond by helping me get those things done, even when I don’t ask you to.” When everyone has been affirmed, ask someone in the room to thank God for the gift of each person in the room, and close in prayer.

**Words:** Helpful, Loving, Patient, Kind, Fun, A Good Listener, Faithful, Courageous, Joyful, Thoughtful, Hard-Working, Tender-Hearted, Wise, Generous, Sacrificial, Forgiving, Encouraging, Peaceful, Encouraging, Gracious, Servant-Hearted.

*-Michelle Anthony*



## Grateful Hearts

**Thanksgiving is a time to pause and spend extended time reflecting on gratitude.** Each November, my family takes out a small tree with bendable branches (which can be found at a craft store or online by searching for “small birch tree”). Next, we cut out heart-shaped pieces of paper in fall colors such as red, yellow, and orange. We place the heart “leaves” and a pen in a basket next to the tree along with some tiny clothespins.

Throughout the month, our family members can write on these “leaves” something that they are grateful for, remembering to thank God while writing it down. Then they put the heart on the tree. Over time, our tree was full of fall leaves and grateful hearts. On Thanksgiving, we take time to read each one and pray together as family and friends, for the many blessings we have been given in our lives.

-Traci Landon

## — Gingerbread House Competition —

**With the cozy holiday season comes much family time, laughter, and lovely traditions.** One family tradition that never fails to make me smile is that of my family’s gingerbread house competition. In short, we make homemade gingerbread houses, purchase all sorts of delicious candies, and use icing to decorate our homes. Then mom and dad are the final judges, saying who won first, second, and third place! What is special about this tradition is that **it’s inclusive:** both young (siblings/nieces/nephews) and old (grandparents, uncles/aunts, etc.) can pair up to decorate; **it’s unifying:** everyone is gathered around the table laughing, competing, (and munching) as they decorate; and **it’s creative:** each family member gets to share their voice, ideas, and creativity in a cohesive, family-oriented, and loving holiday environment in the home. Looking to connect your family and strengthen your home? Try a good ole fashion gingerbread house competition.

-Tim and Mariah Shepard

## Preparing Our Hearts with Food and Family

**One Christmas tradition for me start in 1976, when I married into the Trevino family, of which my husband Jaime is one of 11 siblings.** On Christmas Eve, known as Noche Buena, was a night for family and remembering the birth of Jesus. My precious in-laws, Tomas and Julia Trevino, instilled in each of their children the importance of family and the love of Jesus by anticipating the celebration of his birth.

December 24th, started with the preparation of lots of delicious food and getting the house set-up, making the nativity the central focus. Everything took place at Mom and Dad’s house, as family started arriving what seemed like a big house somehow seemed very crowded. But the noise and crying of many babies, would not spoil the excitement.

Today the Trevino family has grown to over 100, and we are still growing. Our parents are no longer with us, but the tradition continues. We share a strong bond of family and Christ Jesus and honor Him in a culture that seems to have forgotten the reason for the season.

-MaryAlice Trevino

PERFECT FOR

*Christmas  
morning*

# PRALINE-PECAN FRENCH TOAST

MAKES 8 TO 10 SERVINGS

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 (16-oz.) French bread loaf
- 1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1/3 cup butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 3/4 cup chopped pecans
- 4 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup 2% reduced-fat milk
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

## PREPARATION

1. Cut 10 (1-inch-thick) slices of bread. Reserve remaining bread for another use.
2. Stir together brown sugar and next 2 ingredients; pour into a lightly greased 13- x 9-inch baking dish. Sprinkle with chopped pecans.
3. Whisk together eggs and next 4 ingredients. Arrange bread slices over pecans; pour egg mixture over bread. Cover and chill 8 hours.
4. Preheat oven to 350°. Bake bread 35 to 37 minutes or until golden brown. Serve immediately

*-Ryan and Emily Jackson*



# PUMPKIN BARS WITH CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

Makes 12-14 servings

## INGREDIENTS

- 16 oz Pumpkin Puree (canned pumpkin)
- 1 and 2/3 cup granulated sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp salt

## FROSTING

- 6 oz cream cheese, softened brick, not tub style cream cheese
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 4 cups powdered sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla extract

## WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. In a large bowl, combine pumpkin, sugar, eggs and oil with an electric mixer until well combined.
3. Add flour, baking soda, baking powder, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon and salt to the wet ingredients and mix by hand until just combined.
4. Pour batter into a 9x13" baking pan that has been sprayed with non-stick cooking spray.
5. Bake for approximately 30-40 minutes. Bars should be starting to set up but remember this is more like a brownie than a cake, it should seem a bit undercooked in the center, but not still be wet.
6. Remove from oven and allow to cool completely on a wire cooling rack.

## FROSTING

7. Cream together cream cheese and butter until light and fluffy. Add in vanilla and mix until combined.
8. Add one cup of powdered sugar, and salt, and mix until well combined. Then add remaining powdered sugar and mix until well combined.
9. Spread frosting over bars. Slice and serve.

-Sheryl Salanda

# LESSON FIVE

## FAITH COMMUNITY

### GOD'S WORD

## Jesus is Born

**GOD STATEMENT:** Jesus is Near  
**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 1:26-31 & 39-45

The bells are ringing, twinkle lights shine, and friends gather to celebrate the most wonderful time of year, Christmas! Being with your FAITH COMMUNITY is a just a natural part of this joyous season when Christ was born. Humans are truly designed to be together.

Luke records many accounts of Jesus as a man who loves his FAITH COMMUNITY. He begins the book with the story of Mary hurrying to Elizabeth's house. She had just learned she would be the mother of the Messiah and needed her relative for support. Being close was important. In addition, as she greeted Elizabeth, John the Baptizer leapt for joy in his mothers womb. **The nearness of Jesus excited his cousin even as an unborn baby.**

Read Luke 1:26-31 and 39-45 and discuss the following questions.

### DISCUSSION:

1. Who in your FAITH COMMUNITY encourages you in joyous occasions and supports you in difficult times?
2. Who do you encourage and support?

Remember, "Our love for each other reflects the love we have received from God."



## 2 CREATE Together is Better

Have fun playing these two mini games as a family.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Ball of string

### WHAT YOU'LL DO (MINI GAME # 1)

1. Have all the players sit around the kitchen table with thier heads down.
2. On the count of three everyone raises thier head and looks at one person.
3. If that person is looking back at them, they are both safe.
4. If that person is looking at someone else, you are out.
5. Continue until everyone is out.

### WHAT YOU'LL DO (MINI GAME # 2)

1. Invite all players to stand in a circle.
2. Have the youngest player hold a ball of string and tell thier life story starting with thier birthday.
3. If the player says something that someone else in the circle has in common, the second player will shout, "Connection!".
4. The first player tosses the ball of string to the second player.
5. The second player now begins to tell thier life story.
6. Repeate until everyone has gone and a web is created.

Now we can see, we're all connected!

# 3 Thank You!

## WORSHIP RESPONSE

**How often to do tell our FAITH COMMUNITY thank you?** These beautiful home made thank you cards will be a wonderful gift for anyone who receives it.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Watercolors
- Paint brushes
- Water cup
- White Crayon
- Cardstock or Watercolor paper

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Think of someone who is an important part of your FAITH COMMUNITY.
2. Cut the 8.5" x 11" paper in two.
3. Fold each piece in half to create a card.
4. Use the white crayon to write Thank You on the front.
5. Include Christmas shapes like stars or trees to make it festive.
6. Watercolor over the white crayon to reveal the happy message.
7. Write a note to thank them for being part of your FAITH COMMUNITY. You may include a favorite memory of being together.
8. Mail your card or hand deliver the next time you are near the recipient.



# 4 Growing Close

## BLESSING

**A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a Bible passage, or words of encouragement.** Blessings can be spoken over a child for the purpose of declaring God's protection, joy, and wisdom over her.

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 1:45

**BLESSING:**(Child's name), **blessed are you when you believe the Lord will fulfill what He has spoken...** may you hear his voice as he guides you to your own FAITH COMMUNITY and may he develop strong relationships that will help you grow closer to Him.



# LESSON SIX

## FAITH COMMUNITY

### GOD'S WORD

# 1 An Invitation

**GOD STATEMENT:** Jesus Welcomes All

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 6:12-19

There once were twelve men with different backgrounds, different strengths and weaknesses. Jesus called these men to be His apostles and this tightly knit group learned together what it really meant to follow Him. There were times they had to work together to row a boat or feed the five thousand. Jesus would send them out in pairs (often opposite personalities) to work as a team. For three years, they learned from the only perfect man how to live in brotherly community.

Jesus knows we need community and often he will bring someone different from ourselves into the group. **This holiday season, look around and ask the Lord if there is someone He'd like you to invite to experience a taste of FAITH COMMUNITY.** Maybe there is a family who recently moved to town and would enjoy an invitation to a Christmas card making party or caroling. Take time to ask them questions and find out how they are different from you! What a gift to learn from others and celebrate the different strengths God has given.

### DISCUSSION:

1. Read the Scripture and discuss what you know about each disciple Jesus called.
2. Were they all the same?
3. Why do you think Jesus chose disciples with different strengths and weaknesses?



## 2 GAME TIME

# *Follow the Leader Pictionary*

**Following Jesus by welcoming new friends into our life can be hard.** This silly game is a little difficult, but super funny. When Jesus asks us to do hard things, remember He is still our joy. We can delight in His ways.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Blank paper for each player
- A pencil or marker that won't bleed through the paper

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Have all the players form a line with one person next to a wall.

2. Each player will place their piece of paper on the back of the person in front of them. The first person will place their paper on the wall. If you have big height differences, have taller participants play on their knees.
3. The player at the back of the line will draw a simple shape on the paper.
4. The player in front feels the shape drawn on the paper on their back and tries to draw the same on their own paper.
5. This is repeated until all players have drawn that shape.
6. Repeat until the entire picture is complete. For example if the picture is a smiling face, the eyes are drawn first, then the smile, then the circle face.
7. When the picture is finished, everyone looks at their drawing and laughs!

# 3 Global Community

## WORSHIP RESPONSE

Jesus's disciples spent a lot of time together, growing and learning in close proximity. It is comforting to be with other believers. We can share stories of hardship and victory or hug one another and pray for specific requests.

This week, we're asking a big question, "are there others Jesus wants us to include?" **What if this holiday season, your local FAITH COMMUNITY adopted a global community?**

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Internet access

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Ask the Lord to direct you to a specific people group to pray for on an ongoing basis.
2. Visit [joshuaproject.net](http://joshuaproject.net) to see unreached places (this means that these people have not heard about Jesus).
3. Select the Get Involved tab and then the adopt a people group. Once you have decided on a nation or group, commit to praying for them. Maybe your community can pray together for them each time you meet..

Your prayer as a FAITH COMMUNITY will impact the global community of believers in Jesus!



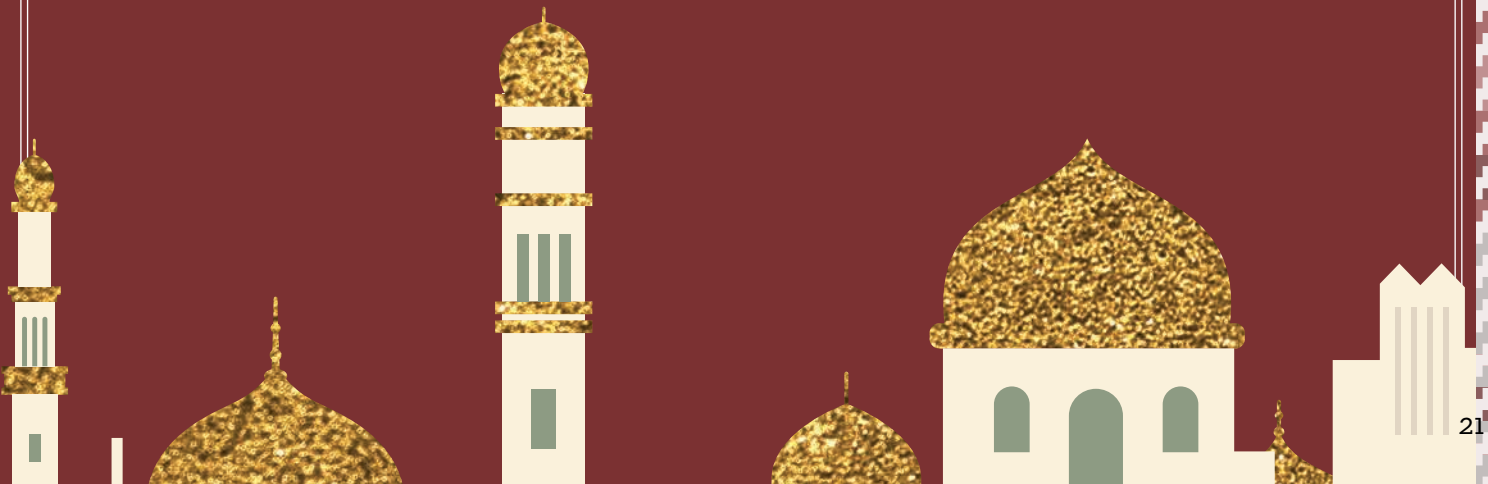
# 4 Friendship

## BLESSING

A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a Bible passage, or words of encouragement. Blessings can be spoken over a child for the purpose of declaring God's protection, joy, and wisdom over him.

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 9:2

**BLESSING:** (Child's name), may you be blessed with friendships that proclaim the kingdom of God. May you be sensitive to the Holy Spirit as he brings new friends into your special FAITH COMMUNITY.



# LESSON SEVEN

## STORYTELLING

### GOD'S WORD

# 1 The Nativity- Not Just a Story

**GOD STATEMENT:** Jesus is the Good News

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 2:1-21, John 10:10

A long time ago a young woman, Mary, and her husband, Joseph, made a journey. They had to leave their home in Nazareth and travel 90 miles on foot to Bethlehem because Ceaser was taking a census. The young woman was pregnant, about to give birth at any moment, to the baby who was the Messiah, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Almighty King of the Universe. The One who hung the stars in the sky and knows the exact number of grains of sand around the world would be coming into the world as a baby. All God, all man, all for us.

Jesus came to earth to die on the cross for our sins. He split the veil between man and the Holy of Holies so we may enter God's Presence. Jesus came for the sinners, the pagans, the proud, the alcoholics, the liars,

the prostitutes, the sick, the healthy, the know-it-alls, the bullies, the hurt, and everyone in between. He came so that we may have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). When He made His debut into the world the angels sang "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:14 KJV)" He didn't come just for the good, devout, and faithful, He came for everyone who has ever lived and will ever live in the future. And more great news...He is coming again.

### DISCUSSION:

1. What does John 10:10 mean?
2. This holiday season how can we show Christ's love to others?

### CREATE

# 2 Beaded Candy Cane Ornament

### LEGEND OF THE CANDY CANE

**Look at the candy cane, what do you see?** Stripes that are red, like the blood shed for me. White for my Savior who is sinless and pure! "J" is for Jesus, my Lord that's for sure! Turn it around and a staff you will see Jesus my shepherd was born for me!

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 chenille stick
- red and white pony beads

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Bend up the bottom of the chenille stem so the bead doesn't fall off.
2. Put 1 red pony bead on the chenille stem. Then, put 1 white bead on the chenille stem.

3. Continue alternating between the red and white beads until you reach the end of your chenille stem.
4. Bend down the top of the chenille stem so the beads don't fall off.
5. Bend the top part of the beaded chenille stem into a cane shape.
6. Hang on your tree and enjoy!





# 3 Nativity Prayer

## WORSHIP RESPONSE

L7

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- A Nativity Set (you can use a nativity set you own or print out a picture of a set you can put together.)
- Scripture: Luke 2:1-21

### WHAT YOU'LL DO:

1. Place the pieces of the Nativity one at a time and say a prayer with each piece.
2. Place the stable: "Lord, make this home a place that welcomes you and puts you first."
3. Place the animals: "Jesus, let humility—like that of your surroundings at your birth—be a characteristic of my life."
4. Add Mary and Joseph: "As Mary and Joseph prayed, let me act according to your will."
5. Place the infant Jesus figure: "Gracious Christ, as you took on human flesh, were born in a stable, and laid in a manger, please be with me through this season in a special and enduring way."
6. Place the angel or angels: "Let peace on earth and goodwill toward all multiply among me and my family this Christmas season."
7. Place the shepherds: "Lord, make me as excited as those shepherds were to welcome You and spread the news about You."
8. Place the wise men (in the scene or at some distance): "As the magi came to worship and present their gifts to you, let my life be acceptable in your sight, Lord, you are my strength and my redeemer."

This nativity prayer can be adapted to your circumstances. **May this prayer change an otherwise routine part of this magical season into wonderful moments of prayer and meditation.**

# 4 Shine

## BLESSING

A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a Bible passage, or words of encouragement. Blessings can be spoken over a child for the purpose of declaring God's protection, joy, and wisdom over her.

**SCRIPTURE:** Numbers 6:24-26

**BLESSING:**(Child's name), may the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.



# LESSON EIGHT

## STORYTELLING

### GOD'S WORD

# Joy To the World!

**GOD STATEMENT:** Christ is Coming Again!

**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 98, Matthew 1:18-2:23

**Pastor Issac Watts wrote Joy to the World in 1719.** Most people believe that he wrote it about the birth of Christ making it a wonderful Christmas carol, however Watts wrote the poem based on Psalm 98, Christ's second coming. "Joy to the World, the Lord is come. Let earth receive her King".

Psalm 98 says, "Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. **The Lord has made His salvation known and revealed His righteousness to the nations.** He has remembered His love and His faithfulness to Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the

sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn-shout for joy before the Lord, the King. Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the Lord, for He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity."

### DISCUSSION:

1. What similarities do you see between Psalm 98 and the lyrics to Joy to the World?
2. What does it mean when we sing "the Lord is come"?
3. What is your favorite holiday song and why?



## 2 CREATE Joyful Ornament

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- white cardstock or small paper plate
- another piece of white cardstock
- hole punch
- blue watercolor paint
- green tissue paper
- twine or string
- glue
- scissors
- pencil

### WHAT YOU'LL DO

1. Use scissors to cut the tissue paper into medium-sized squares.
2. Cut out a circle for your planet earth.
3. Paint the circle blue using the watercolor paints
4. Glue down the green tissue paper for your land masses
5. On the second piece of cardstock, write Joy to the World!
6. Punch a hole in the top of the earth and in the top and bottom of your Joy to the World sign
7. Thread the twine or string through the holes and tie a loop at the top to hang your ornament





# 3 Worship Guitar for Kids

## WORSHIP RESPONSE

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- shoebox
- scissors
- glue
- 6 rubber bands

### WHAT YOU'LL DO:

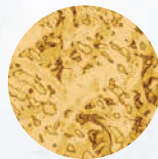
1. Cut a hole into the shoebox's lid
2. Glue the lid in place on the box
3. When the glue is dry take the first rubber band and stretch it across the box
4. For each rubber band "string" thank God for one blessing in your life
5. Use the guitar to sing "Joy to the World"!

# 4 Abounding Love BLESSING

A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a Bible passage, or words of encouragement. Blessings can be spoken over a child for the purpose of declaring God's protection, joy, and wisdom over him.

**SCRIPTURE:** Philippians 1:9-11

**BLESSING:** (Child's name), may your love abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.



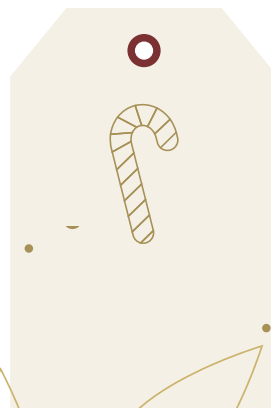
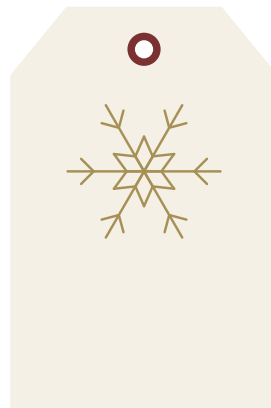
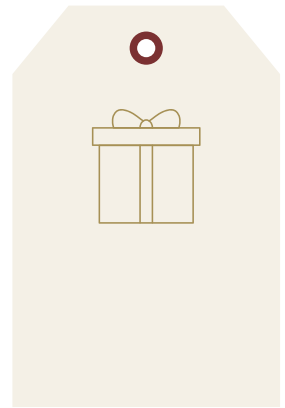
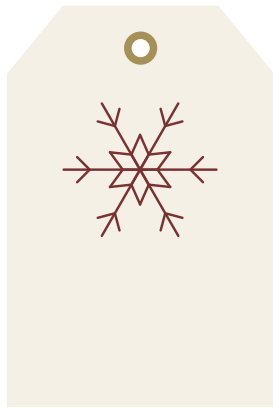
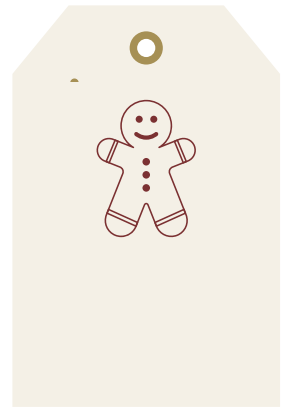
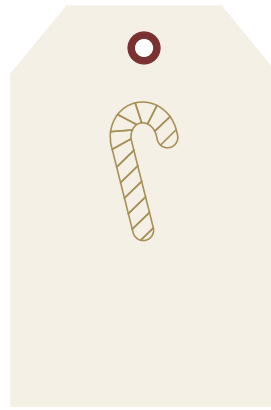
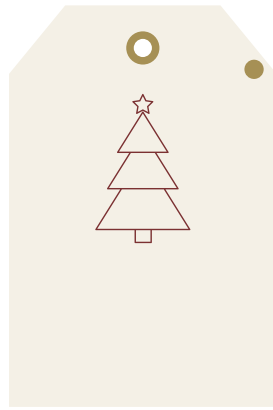




MERRY  
*Christmas*  
AND HAPPY NEW YEAR



# RESOURCE



FOR GOD SO

*Loved*

THE WORLD

that he gave  
his one and only

*son,*

that whoever  
believes in him

SHALL NOT

perish but have

*eternal  
life.*

-JOHN 3:16

*HomeFront*