



Devotion #1 HOPE



It has been said that Mary and Joseph were led into the city of Bethlehem by the light of the luminaria. Can you imagine Mary and Joseph following the soft glow of the luminaria as they made their way into the town Isaiah foretold over 700 years before Jesus' birth?

John 1:4 describes Jesus this way, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Jesus would bring hope, freedom, and light to a dark world. He would be the source of light that would push away the darkness. John also said, "The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world."

Family Discussion:

- What do you think is represented by the word "dark/darkness?"
- What are some ways you can let the light Jesus gives us shine for others?
- As a family, how can you be a light for those around you?

Family Activity:

Whether or not luminaries lit the path for Mary and Joseph back then, today many people use them at Christmas to light the path of walkways, driveways, or sidewalks. Before battery-powered tealights became available, the most common form of light used in luminaries were candles. The soft glow of the luminary candle lit walkways, driveways, or walking paths. It's amazing how the small flame of a candle can brighten even the darkest room. And it's amazing to think that a tiny baby would brighten even the darkest world.



For this activity, you'll need the following:

Candle (or simply use one light in the room) Matches/lighter
Adult supervision

Begin by finding a room in your house where your family can gather. Once there, have someone turn off the lights so that the room is dark. Sit for a moment and talk about the darkness. Discuss how it takes over the whole room. Can you see anything in the dark? After a few seconds, have an adult light the candle (or turn on a lamp). What happened to the darkness? Does the room feel different now that there is light?

John 1:1-5 tells us that Jesus came as a light to push away the darkness. He came to shine His light in the world for all people. And no matter what, the darkness of sin will never overtake the light and goodness of Jesus.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father:

Thank you for sending Jesus to the world. Thank you for giving us the gift of His light. Help us to be reminded of Him whenever we see all the beautiful lights this holiday season. But also help us to remember that He is the light of the world every day.

HOPE



Devotion #2 PEACE



There are many stories in the Bible where Jesus sat with His disciples around a fire for some of His most special conversations. It was by a warm fire, on the beach, that Jesus appeared to His disciples for the last time to give encouragement, express His love, and forgive Peter.

Most likely, as Jesus and the disciples traveled from place-to-place, they would build a fire to keep warm. Take time to imagine some of the things Jesus and the disciples might have talked about. Maybe they talked about what happened that day. Or, perhaps they shared stories. Whatever they talked about, the important thing was that they were spending time together. The fire's glow would have made them feel safe and peaceful as they spent time together.

Family Activity:

Now it's time for you gather as a family. If you have a fireplace in your home, light a fire and gather your family together. If you don't have a fireplace, simply find a space in your home where you can comfortably gather.

Begin by discussing some simple topics. For example:

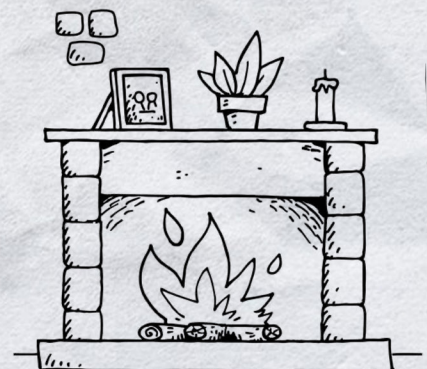
- What was the best part of your day?
- What was the worst part of your day?
- What is your favorite thing about Christmas?
- What is your favorite food to eat at Christmas?

Hopefully these questions will move you toward deeper conversations as a family. Let the fire's glow bring you a sense of peace and assurance.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father:

Thank you for our family and for this time together. Help us to remember how important it is to connect with one another. Also, help us to remember how important it is to connect with You as well. Amen.



The Christmas tree is one of the most recognized symbols of Christmas. There is sense of joy as families gather together to decorate the tree with all the trappings of Christmas. But the Christmas tree is also a symbol that represents Jesus as well. Isaiah foretold of Jesus' coming in terms of a tree and branches. In Isaiah 11:1 it says, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit."

As you sit and take in all the decorations that adorn your tree, let's think about how they can remind us of Jesus and His birth.



Devotion #3 JOY

The Star: The star on top of a Christmas tree can remind us of the star that shone over the house where Jesus was living at the time the wisemen came to find Him and honor Him.

The Angel: The angel on top of a Christmas tree can remind us of the angel that appeared to Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds to bring the news of Jesus' birth.

The Lights: The lights that adorn the tree remind us that Jesus is the light of the world.

The Colored Lights: The different colored lights, remind us that Jesus brings the light of Salvation to all people in all nations.

The Branches: The branches on the Christmas tree remind us that Jesus' love is always reaching out to the world.

The Water Pan: The water pan provides life-giving nourishment to the tree. Just as Jesus nourishes us spiritually.

The Evergreen: The fact that evergreens stay forever green, reminds us that Jesus offers us forever life or eternal life.

The Garland: The garland wrapped around the tree reminds us of Jesus' loving arms that are wrapped around us.

The Top: The very tip-top of the tree points upward—toward Heaven. Pointing us toward the place where Jesus dwells and watches over us.

Family Activity:

Spend some time around the Christmas tree. Go through the ornaments, lights, and trimmings you've placed on your tree. Do they hold special meaning? Is there a fond memory attached to them? Do you have a favorite? Choose a decoration that has meaning to you and talk about it with your family.

As you look at the ornaments and decorations, think of how they connect to Jesus and the joy His birth brought to the world.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father:

Thank you for giving us our family. Please be with each of us and bless us with Your goodness and mercy. Lord thank you for always loving us and providing all the things we need. Amen.



JOY



Devotion #4 LOVE



God's gift to the world at Christmas was the gift of love through the light of His Son, Jesus. God promised that He would send a Savior—and that's exactly what He did. The birth of His Son was the fulfillment of God's great promise to His people.

Throughout the Bible, the word light is used to describe Jesus. And Christmastime is all about light and lights. Most importantly, the light of Jesus. So many of our favorite Christmas carols proclaim this fact. The words of Silent Night describe Jesus as "love's pure light." And the lyrics in Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, say, "Hail the Son of righteousness! Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings."

Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah shared that the Savior would come and shine a light upon God's people. Many years later, Zechariah said that the coming Messiah would "give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace."

Jesus is the true source of light—all light. His light brings peace, hope, and love. And no matter how dark your world might seem or how discouraged you might feel, Jesus can change it. He can bring new life and light into the darkness. God's gift to the world at Christmas was the gift of love through the light of His Son, Jesus.

Family Activity:

Take some time as a family to sit quietly by the family Christmas tree. Do your best to get rid of all distractions. As you sit together, look at the lights. Let them remind you of Jesus—God's gift of light and love sent to the world to bring life to those who seek Him. The birth of a Savior, the fulfillment of a promise, the light that would push out the darkness. A light that will never be overcome by darkness.

Merry Christmas! Jesus is born! Let His light shine in you for all to see.

After you've had time to sit and reflect, read Luke 2:1-11 from the Bible as a family. Let the words of this beautiful passage fill your heart and help you remember that Jesus truly is the reason for the season.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father:

Thank you for the gift of Jesus. Thank you for loving us so much that You sent Your, Jesus to earth for all of us. Help us to remember that through His life we have light. May we shine His light for all to see. Amen.