



25 DAYS OF *Christmas*

with Arlene Pellicane, Happy Home



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Welcome!

The time for saying “Happy Birthday Jesus” is fast approaching. I’m so glad you’re here to celebrate the season with simplicity and substance together.

I’ll be doing the 25 Days of Christmas right alongside you with my own family. My hubby James, Ethan, Noelle, Lucy and maybe even Winston the goldendoodle will get involved.

Every week on the Happy Home, we can connect again and again. You’re not alone in parenthood. If you’ve never heard the podcast, I invite you to listen as we journey through the 25 Days of Christmas and beyond together.

With joy from my home to yours,

Arlene



DECEMBER 1



MOM DEVO:

Remember the Wonder

"Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced..."

1 Chronicles 16:11-12 (NIV)

As I walked through the airport, I was surprised to see my gate decorated with several flags. There were glass cases along the walls filled with all sorts of medals and pins. A wall lined with photographs of World War II heroes honored the family members of the airline's employees. My eyes watered as I stood before these images from the 1940s of young men who had given their lives for the cause of freedom.

Standing in wonder, I glanced around at a few employees. I got the feeling they were very accustomed to their surroundings. I doubt they got choked up with emotion when they walked past the black and white photographs on the wall. They didn't even seem to notice the flags and medals around them.

I really can't blame them. I was seeing everything for the first time with eyes of appreciation and wonder. If I had seen that gate hundreds of times, I probably would pass by without a second thought.

It reminded me of Christmas. We have heard the story of the baby born in a manger, and the angels singing to shepherds. We have seen Christmas plays and heard Christmas songs. It's very easy to let these familiar things pass by. Yet how much we can miss if we don't stop to wonder.

The Bible tells us to "Remember the wonders he has done..." This cycle of remembering gives us hope

and perspective. You might imagine you are hearing the Christmas story for the first time as you listen to a sermon from Luke's gospel. You may picture what it was like the day Jesus was born or what it would be like to have an angel appear to you with a heavenly announcement.

Don't lose your sense of wonder just because the Christmas story is familiar.

When my daughter Lucy was two, she had a favorite purple stuffed animal dog named Violet. She was crazy about Violet! I thought it would be funny to rewrap Violet as a Christmas present. After Lucy went to bed, I took Violet and dressed her in one of Lucy's sweatshirts and her bike helmet. I placed "Biker Violet" in a box and wrapped it in paper.

On Christmas morning, Lucy tore open the box to reveal her beloved Violet in a new outfit. She squealed "Violet!" in delight, hugging her stuffed dog tightly as if she had never seen anything so wonderful.

Violet was an old friend presented in a new way, and it evoked wonder in little Lucy. In the same way, we can take the story of Christmas and rewrap it to see this marvelous gift of God's love with new eyes.

As we remember God's wonders this season, may it stop us in our tracks. Let us salute the God who loved us so well that He sent His Son down to earth to save us.

Let's Pray

Dear Lord, thank you for coming as a baby to save my life. I am in awe of Your love for me. Today I remember the many wonders you have already performed in my life. You are worthy of praise. May I see You with new eyes of wonder and appreciation this Christmas season. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DECEMBER 2

KID DEVO

The Tastiest Cookie

You can read this aloud to your kids, or your older kids could read it out loud to the family.

"Taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the person who goes to him for safety." Psalm 34:8 (NIRV)

What is your favorite kind of cookie? I love all kinds of cookies, from peanut butter to snickerdoodle, slightly crispy on the outside and chewy on the inside. Yum! And of course there is the king of the cookie kingdom, the classic chocolate chip cookie.

How do you make a perfectly delicious chocolate chip cookie? There are a few key ingredients that every recipe must include: flour, butter, sugar, eggs, vanilla, and you can't ever forget the chocolate chips!

If you skip any of these key ingredients, your cookie isn't going to taste as good as it could. But if you put in the right ingredients, you just might bake the tastiest cookie you've ever had.

Just like in baking, there are certain ingredients that make a merry Christmas. Gratitude, love for Jesus, and an eagerness to help others are good ingredients. Also being flexible - which means not freaking out when you don't get your way.

The Bible says that you can "taste and see that the Lord is good." When you taste something delicious this holiday season, why not remember, "God is good"?

A few years ago, we had a super sweet neighbor

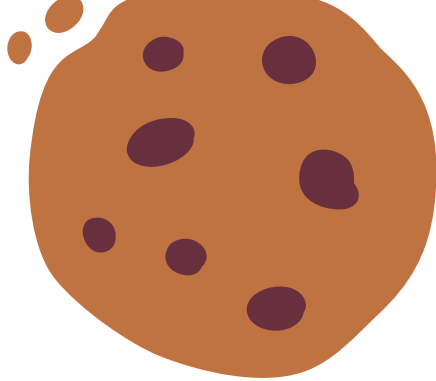
who would bake us the tastiest Christmas cookies. Unfortunately, she moved away (sad face) but I still have her recipes. In tomorrow's family activity, I'm going to share a few of those recipes. You might try to bake her peanut butter chocolate balls (or maybe another favorite family recipe). As you taste your favorite Christmas treats this holiday, think or even say out loud - "taste and see that the Lord is good!"

Let's Pray

Dear God, thank You that every good and perfect gift comes from You. Help me to honor You this Christmas, and to be loving to my family and friends. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DECEMBER 3



ACTIVITY: Cookie Time

In yesterday's activity, we talked about the Bible verse "taste and see that the Lord is good." Today it's time for the lab - cookie baking time with the kids!

Here are two delicious recipes from my neighbor to try (or you can pull out your own recipe). You might want to double the recipe - one batch to enjoy and one batch to give away. As you work together in the kitchen, ask your family about the ingredients necessary for a Christ-centered Christmas season this year.

Peanut Butter Balls

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 4-5 DOZEN)

1/4 lb Butter or Margarine 1 lb Powdered Sugar
18 oz Creamy Peanut Butter 2 Cups Rice Krispies
12 oz Bag of Chocolate Chips*
4 Tbsp Vegetable Shortening

Mix butter, sugar, peanut butter and Rice Krispies together thoroughly. Roll into small balls and dip in chocolate topping (below). Refrigerate for several hours.

TOPPING

Melt chocolate chips and shortening in a double boiler. Coat the small balls in the chocolate mixture.

*You can also use chocolate melting wafers (like the Ghirardelli dark ones).

Orange White Chocolate Chip Cookies

INGREDIENTS

1 Cup Butter (softened) 1 Large Orange, Zested
1/2 Cup Granulated Sugar 1 Large Orange, Juiced
1/2 Cup Brown Sugar 3/4 Tsp Baking Soda
2 1/4 Cups All-Purpose Flour 1/2 Tsp Salt
2 Cups White Chocolate Chips 1 Egg

DIRECTIONS

- » Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- » Cream butter and sugars until light and fluffy.
- » Beat in egg and orange zest.
- » Stir flour, baking soda and salt together.
- » Add flour mixture a little at a time to creamed mixture.
- » Alternate with orange juice. Mix just until combined.
- » Fold in white chocolate chips.
- » Drop rounded tablespoons of dough onto ungreased cookie sheet about 1 1/2 inches apart.
- » Bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until edges are golden brown.
- » Allow to cool on cookie sheets for 2 minutes before transferring to a wire rack.



DECEMBER 4



ACTIVITY:

Decorating Deputies

You don't have to decorate the house alone this year. Oh no, it's time to deputize your children! You can take your younger child or teen (individually or all the kids together) and say, "You are in charge of this space! You've been deputized!" The space might be the manger scene, a child's bedroom, an entry way, the tree, or the office.

Give your child a space where he or she has free rein to create whatever merry scene they want.

Make your child responsible (after all, he or she is a deputy!). Tell them, "If you break anything (from negligence), it's your responsibility and you'll have to replace it using your own money. After Christmas, it will be your job to put all of your decorations away. Now go be creative and have some fun!"

Get Your Kids Involved

Don't be afraid to give them some work around the house. Giving them ownership allows them to be more connected to the holiday, and to feel the pleasure of having others enjoy their decorations.

FOR YOUR YOUNGER KIDS

You can cut out this star and pin or tape it on your child's clothes proudly and with great fanfare.

FOR YOUR TEENS

You might give them some mad money to decorate their room (something like \$10 or \$20). You can also encourage your teens to look around for Christmas work - helping someone put lights up or carrying a Christmas tree.



DECEMBER 5

ACTIVITY:

Season Sabbath

Rest is an idea that didn't originate from a self-help or health magazine. It's a gift from God. The Sabbath reminds us that God is the creator and He rested. Genesis 2:2-3 says, "On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation."

We are made in the image of God and we run best on regular rest...even during the busy holiday season!

In my book *Screen Kids* (co-authored with Dr. Gary Chapman), we included a few things people shared about creating more space (more rest) with our devices:

- » We are putting a bin at our front door with a sign that says, "Unless you are expecting a call from God, the Pope, or the President – please deposit your device here so we can make the most of our time together."
- » We unplug from the time we get home until we get up again the next morning.
- » Wireless is on a timer so it goes off at night.
- » Dinnertime is always screen-free time.

Create a Digital Sabbath for Your Family Today

You might turn off Wifi for a few hours (or all day) or take a leisurely walk without your phone. As you pull away from the noise of the screen, you will be able to tune into God's heart and the hearts of your children more easily.



DECEMBER 6

ACTIVITY:

Very Silent Night

This may become your favorite activity of the 25 days (and something you want to repeat after the Christmas season). You're going to mention the famous Christmas carol "Silent Night" — you might even want to sing it together. Then you're going to tell your children:

*"We are going to have a very, very silent night.
Let's see how long we can be quiet in the house."*

You can set a timer and say, "We are going to see who can be the quietest for the longest period of time."

This includes mom and dad as well. This means there's no TV in the background, no video games, no YouTube, and minimal talking (in a library tone of voice).

This is a time to get lost in a book, draw, color, stretch, lay down...to become still. In our go-go-go loud lifestyle, this quiet will be quite a change. If you want to put some calming music on in the background, that's okay.

Maybe you have a very talkative child, this is your chance to get a break! Your child or teen might just last for a few minutes, but that's okay. Keep at it - maybe you can try this very, very silent night again in a few days. Remember to set the timer. Maybe the first time you do this, your family lasts five minutes. Next time, they might get to 10 minutes, then 20, then...



DECEMBER 7



MOM DEVO: But I'm Not Merry

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." Isaiah 9:2 (NirV)

Sixteen years ago on Christmas Day, I looked down at my pregnant belly with both sadness and relief. The doctor had told me the day before Thanksgiving my unborn baby girl would die in the womb due to severe chromosomal defects. Yet there I was, a few miraculous weeks later, still carrying that sign of hope within.

Ever since sitting in that doctor's office, God had truly been my Prince of Peace, filling my life with divine order and calmness. Yes, there were dark days filled with tears and questions and prayers. Some days I doubted; other days I was filled with faith.

My baby's heart kept beating.

But between Christmas and New Year's Eve, I lost that little 26-week-old baby. As I lay down on the hospital bed, getting ready to deliver the baby, the door opened bringing the light of God into the room. The nurse assigned to me was the exact same nurse who had helped deliver my first child. She knew my name. I couldn't believe out of all the nurses in that huge hospital, the only one who knew me was not only working that night, she was working my room.

It was divine assurance in the moment that God saw me. He was with me in my pain and sorrow. I wasn't alone, and neither are you. Today's key verse from Isaiah 9:2 says "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned."

When we live in the deep darkness of disease or death, lack or disappointment, we are not beyond hope. Light always penetrates darkness. Darkness, no matter how deep, doesn't stand a chance against a ray of light.

Isaiah 9:6 proclaims the good news that a child was born, a son was given. He is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. God stands ready to be all this to you today, whether you are walking in soft light or deep darkness.

We named that little baby girl Angel Rose because she was a messenger from God to us, and her life was both beautiful and thorny. I can honestly say my memory of her is sweet because she taught me to trust in God like I never have before. She taught me to be thankful for every breath of life God gives. I experienced God's presence in such a real way when I was pregnant with her. The worship song "Blessed Be Your Name" became my anthem:

*Blessed be Your name,
on the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering
blessed be Your name*

*You give and take away
My heart will choose to say
Lord, blessed be Your name*

The more I sang and trusted, the more God flooded into my life to give me strength. Living in peace isn't living problem free. It's living in the midst of a messy life in the presence of a living God. God can and will provide divine order in your broken world if you invite Him into your deep darkness.

Before Christ came as a baby, we were doomed to eternal darkness. But now we live in the light of salvation through the messianic King. The dark gloom of judgment is past. The bright light of salvation is ours.

His peace is for you today. He can increase your joy right now, no matter what burden you may be carrying.

Let's Pray

Lord Jesus, thank You for being my Prince of Peace and the Light of the World. I trust You with my life and lift my burdens to You. Increase my joy today. In Jesus' Name, Amen

WAY TO SERVE:

For You, Teacher

Words have power. They can encourage or they can destroy. Olympic gold figure skater Scott Hamilton said, "I had a ninth grade teacher who told me I was much smarter and much better than I was allowing myself to be."

The Christmas season is the perfect time to say thank you to a teacher.

Have your child write a thank you letter to his or her teacher and decorate it for Christmas. A few letter prompts to get your child started:

- » You're the best teacher because...
- » I know you care about me because...
- » I really like how you...
- » You help me understand ...
- » I look forward to your class because...
- » Without you, I wouldn't know how...

Parents, we can write letters to our kids' teachers too, or you might want to write to one of your former teachers. You could include:

- » I wouldn't be where I am without you...
- » I never forgot when you told me...
- » I learned ___ from you & it really helped me in life...
- » You believed in me during a critical season...
- » You gave me something to look forward to...



DECEMBER 9

KID DEVO: Milk, Please!

"Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Welcome others into your homes." Romans 12:13 (NirV)

When my daughter Noelle was two, she would sit in her high chair and roar her command, "MILK!" She wanted me to drop everything and bring her some milk. She screamed and let me know she wanted it right away!

I realized I had to teach her how to say the magic word please. At first, she yelled, "MILK PLEASE!" After a few days, her tone got better. She eventually sweetly asked, "Milk, please?" Her milk was served much faster when she asked nicely.

At Christmas, we can demand what we want. "GIFTS PLEASE!" When Noelle was in elementary school, she would walk down the toy aisles in December pointing and saying, "Put that on my list." "Put that on my list." "Put that on my list."

It was quite a long list!

Yes, it's fun to receive Christmas gifts. But it's also fun to give Christmas gifts. The Bible tells us to share with other people. Maybe there's a kid at your school or even one around the world that could really use a gift this year. Maybe you will be the one to buy that gift with your own money. Look for ways to make someone else's Christmas wish come true and you will end up having the merriest Christmas yourself!

Let's Pray

Heavenly Father, I'm so thankful for Your love and how You give me everything I need. Thank You for my family and for my daily bread. Help me to be more thankful and to find ways to help other people. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



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WAY TO SERVE: Dollar Time

It doesn't take a lot of money to bless someone else. Because of stores like Dollar Tree or 99 Cents Only, you can buy some pretty cool gifts with just \$10.

Go to the dollar store with your kids and pick out ten items that you think your neighbors would like. Buy different kinds of items - some practical, some zany. Ideas include:

<i>Bag of Candy</i>	<i>Christmas Decor</i>
<i>Beauty Items</i>	<i>Kids Toys</i>
<i>Cleaning Supplies (ha!)</i>	<i>Pet Toys</i>

Wrap them individually as mystery gifts. If you can, plan to give them away to your neighbors tomorrow (if not, plan another time). When you greet them, you can tell them to pick out a mystery gift (who wouldn't like that!). You can give one gift per house, or give all your gifts away to one family - whatever you like!

You can include a card or gift tag that says:

*Although this gift is a mystery
There's one thing that I know
God loves you so much He sent His Son
The perfect Christmas gift to show!*

Merry Christmas!



WAY TO SERVE: Sing, Sing, Sing

Fa la la la...la la la!

Time to 'fess up...some of you started playing your Christmas tunes right after summer. You LOVE your Christmas music!

Whether you are a mega fan of Christmas caroling or just a casual observer, singing is actually a wonderful way to maintain mental and emotional health - both for kids and adults.

So sing! Go to your neighbors and carol!

For many years when my kids were in elementary school, we would have a class Christmas party and go around the neighborhood singing Christmas carols (see photo of my Lucy as Mrs. Claus). It was such a warm feeling to see our neighbors, leaning on their front door frames, smiling as they listened to the kids singing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" or "Joy to the World."

By the way, did you make dollar mystery gifts for your neighbors on December 10? If so, you can deliver those on your Christmas caroling neighborhood tour.

JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing

Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders, of His love

WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

We wish you a merry Christmas
We wish you a merry Christmas
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a Happy New Year

Good tidings we bring
To you and your kin
Good tidings of Christmas
And a Happy New Year



ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH

Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing over the plains
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains
Gloria, in excelsis Deo (repeat)

Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo (repeat)

O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

O come, all ye faithful
Joyful and triumphant
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem
Come and behold Him
Born the King of Angels!
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
Christ the Lord

Sing choirs of angels
Sing in exultation
Sing all ye citizens of heaven above
Glory to God
Glory in the highest
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
Christ the Lord

Yes Lord we greet Thee
Born this happy morning
Jesus to Thee be the glory given
Word of the Father
Now in flesh appearing
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him
Christ the Lord

SILENT NIGHT

Silent night, holy night
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin Mother and Child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth

JINGLE BELLS

Dashing through the snow
In a one-horse open sleigh
Over the fields we go
Laughing all the way
Bells on bob-tail ring
Making spirits bright
What fun it is to ride and sing
A sleighing song tonight – oh

Jingle bells, jingle bells
Jingle all the way!
Oh what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh (Repeat)

WAY TO SERVE: Delivery Dash

From Uber Eats to DoorDash, more people are growing accustomed to having food delivered to the front door. But what if you receive something good that you didn't order?

That would be a welcome surprise!

Round up the kids and become your own Delivery Dash Christmas car! You can either bake cookies or other treats, or you can buy something delicious at the store. Attach a note saying, "We appreciate what you do to serve our community! God bless you and Merry Christmas!"

Drop off treats at places like your local:

<i>School / District Office</i>	<i>Fire Station</i>
<i>Police Station</i>	<i>Urgent Care Clinic</i>
<i>Doctor's Office</i>	<i>Dentist's Office</i>
<i>Church</i>	

Have your kids hand out the treats. This is a perfect way to teach common courtesies such as eye contact, greeting adults, giving and accepting gratitude and compliments. On top of all that, your child is practicing generosity and seeing firsthand the impact a gift can have on someone's day.



DECEMBER 13

WAY TO SERVE: Gift of Prayer

When was the last time someone prayed for you out loud in your presence? Maybe it was recently, or maybe you can't really remember.

The Bible tells us in James 5:16 that the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. You don't have to be a pastor or a veteran Christian to pray for someone else. So here is today's way to serve, both for you and your kids (everyone can do this):

Find Someone to Pray For in Person, and Pray for Them Out Loud

Your child might pray for a friend or teacher. You might pray for a stranger (maybe God will prompt you to pray for the barista at the coffee shop) or for a loved one. If you can't pray in person, then pray over the phone (calls please, not texts). It doesn't have to be long.

IT CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS:

May the Lord bless you and keep you, and make His face shine on you and give you peace.

Dear Lord, give my friend a sign of Your goodness. Thank You for helping us and comforting us.

Jesus, You are our light and salvation. Who shall we fear? Fill my friend with strength and courage.

If your child doesn't know what to say or feels intimidated about praying out loud, you can practice at home. Your child can pray for you. Encourage your child by saying that God loves to hear his or her voice. Your child might start with, "God bless my mom today" and that's great. The prayer muscle has been put to use!



DECEMBER 14



MOM DEVO:

Notice Others in a Selfie World

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others. Philippians 2:3-4 (NIRV)

A few years ago, my daughter Noelle and I were sightseeing in New York City. One highlight was rocketing up 102 stories in a mere 47 seconds inside the elevator of the Freedom Tower. Once at the top, we looked for a good spot to take in the glorious view. I couldn't help but notice two teenage girls taking up a large space in the very front.

The problem was they were not even looking at the city below. They were posing for selfies – lots of them! They laid on the floor and posed. They struck different standing poses and snapped. I walked around and returned to that same spot about ten minutes later. They were still there! Posing in pursuit of the perfect selfie with New York City in the background.

I doubt they noticed the other people who would have liked to snap a picture where they had set up camp. I wondered why they didn't turn around and enjoy the panoramic view with their God given eyes instead of the phone screen. With screens taking center stage, women can be obsessed with capturing the perfect photo to show the world.

Yet Philippians 2:3-4 tells us to “do nothing out of

selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.” Selfish ambition is a work of the flesh, not of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:26 (NIRV) instructs, “Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each another.”

This Christmas season, instead of trying to take a great selfie, turn your lens outward. Humility is what that baby in a manger teaches us loud and clear. It can be hard to be humble when you're trying to get more likes and garner more followers.

When you walk into a room, do you take the attitude of “Here I am!” or do you step in the doorway and think, “Ah, there you are!” Turning our “selfie” focus into an “others” focus takes practice and intention. God calls us to be “There you are!” people, women who are genuinely interested in others, especially during the Christmas season.

Remember the teenage girls from the Freedom Tower? They walked out with some great selfies, but they never really took the time to take in the view. They missed out. Don't miss the amazing people and things happening around you because you're focused on your phone. Make it your daily practice to notice others in a selfie world.

Let's Pray

Dear Jesus, I am weary of keeping up with my phone and trying to portray myself in a positive light. Please help me to put my phone in the proper place. I want to notice others more readily and most importantly; I want to notice You. Show me Your hand in my life at work today. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DECEMBER 15

KID DEVO: Tell Me a Joke

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me. Don't keep them away. The kingdom of heaven belongs to people like them." Matthew 19:14 (NIRV)

What Would It Be Like to Meet Jesus?

Meeting baby Jesus would be pretty cute. It's amazing to think that God came down to earth as a helpless, little baby with ten little fingers and ten little toes, rosy cheeks and a tiny nose.

But what about Jesus as a man? What do you think He would have been like?

The Bible says in Matthew 19:13 that people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples told them not to. Maybe they thought Jesus was too busy or important to talk with children.

But Jesus said, "Let them come!" Maybe the kids were running towards Jesus. Maybe a little boy wanted to sit on his lap. Maybe Jesus had a raisin cake in his pocket and pulled it out to share. I imagine Jesus was very welcoming and friendly. He loved children. Who knows? Maybe He would have liked jokes from the Old Testament like these:

Where is the first tennis match mentioned in the Bible? When Joseph served in Pharaoh's court!

What did Adam say on the day before Christmas? It's Christmas, Eve!

Why didn't they play cards on the Ark? Because Noah was standing on the deck!

Jesus wants to bless you this Christmas and every single day of the year. He wants to fill your life with joy. The Bible says in Matthew 19:15 that Jesus placed his hands on the children and blessed them. When you think of Jesus today, picture Him smiling at you.

Let's Pray

Dear Jesus, thank You for coming to earth as a baby. Thank You for caring about me. Help to learn more about You and to tell my friends about You, too. In Your Name Jesus, Amen.



MOM DEVO:

Spies in Disguise

"He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy." Job 8:20-21 (NIRV)

When James and I were engaged, we had a meeting with our wedding coordinator at the church. There just happened to be a wedding happening that day. After our meeting, we were walking through the lobby and noticed the wedding party getting ready to begin the procession. James pushed me over to a side door, pretending he was a spy, and said, "Okay, we've got visual contact with the bride. Let's get ready to roll!"

He crouched at the side door, took out his imaginary gun, and pretty much acted out a scene from Mission Impossible. I was horrified. What if someone saw us acting like super spies? I said in the most serious voice I could muster, "Sweetheart. This is not funny. This is someone's wedding. Let's leave quietly."

This of course made it funnier to James who now laid it on even thicker. "Get down, hide, they're coming!" he exclaimed, running to another side door. Now I'm more embarrassed because we're mobile. I just wanted to get in the car and drive away.

That moment didn't play out well for us. We both left the church (that we soon would be married in) upset. He was wondering, "Why is she such a killjoy?" I was thinking, "I can't believe he is so inappropriate!"

Can you relate? Maybe you're the fun one and your spouse or kids are all business. Or vice versa. Christmas is a perfect time to allow - even welcome - a

little more childlike silliness into all our lives. Today's verse from Job says that it's God who will fill our mouths with laughter and our lips with shouts of joy.

Maybe the next time you're out with your kids (or better yet, at home!), you can pretend to be spies and hide from each other. Being a fun home isn't the antithesis of being a godly home. Psalm 21:6 says, "Surely you have granted him unending blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence."

Let's Pray

Lord, You have turned my mourning into dancing. You have clothed me with joy. Help me to share Your joy and gladness with my family and friends today. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DECEMBER 17

ACTIVITY:

Pajama Movie Night



This week's Happy Home podcast guest Sandra Stanley talked about her family's pajama movie night and I thought that was a great idea! If your family wants to snuggle up and watch a Christmas movie, it's fun to enjoy old favorites like *Elf*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The Grinch*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Home Alone*. But maybe you want to try something new this year.

Here are a few movies that aren't your typical Christmas fare. Maybe you haven't thought of some of these as "Christmas" movies...but they definitely have the Christmas spirit in them.

Muppet Christmas Carol ('92) *The Star* ('17)
White Christmas ('54) *Holiday Inn* ('42)
Meet Me in St. Louis ('44) *Miracle* ('04)
Miracle on 34th Street ('94) *Little Women* ('94)
*Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch, and the
Wardrobe* ('05)

By the way, my favorite romantic comedy with Christmas in it is: *While You Were Sleeping* with Sandra Bullock. There's a Lucy in it (one of my favorite names, AKA my youngest daughter).



accessmore.

DECEMBER 18

ACTIVITY:

Light Up The Night

It's a great night to enjoy the neighborhood Christmas lights!

Whether you walk around your block in jackets or hop into your car for a drive around town, look for twinkling lights and Christmas cheer.

Your family can search for:

- » Best of show (best lights ever)
- » Most whimsical
- » Most Grinch-like
- » Most improved from last year
- » Overall favorite

Christmas is all about Jesus, the Light of the World. Talk about what Jesus said in John 8:12;

"I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."



DECEMBER 19

ACTIVITY:

Gift Wrap Race



Ready to have some fun AND get some tasks checked off your to-do list?

You probably have a few Christmas gifts that still need to get wrapped. It's time for a (controlled) gift wrapping race!

Place the gifts in front of your kids along with the supplies they will need (gift wrap, tape, and scissors). Say "on your mark, get set, go" and let them start wrapping.

- » Winner #1 - Whoever gets one gift wrapped first
- » Winner #2 - Whoever wraps the most gifts total (if you're wrapping more than one gift per child)

The big caveat is these gifts need to turn out nicely wrapped. So this isn't just a slap the paper on, throw on the tape, crazy race. Oh no...this is like a "You work in Santa's workshop and you're in the gift wrapping section" kind of race.

There will be bragging rights for the fastest elves!

For your younger helpers, they can just wrap to the best of their ability. I'm sure the gift recipient will be touched that your little elf did the wrapping.



KID DEVO:

Let's Feast!

The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites. Tell them, 'Here are my appointed feast days. They are the appointed feast days of the Lord. Tell the people that they must come together for these sacred assemblies.'" Leviticus 23:1-2 (NirV)

Do you like going to Christmas parties? I love going to ugly Christmas sweater parties (I have a big penguin on my sweater) where we eat Christmas cookies and drink hot chocolate. I enjoy reading the Christmas story from the Bible, singing carols, and playing games.

Celebrating together with friends and family isn't just about Christmas decorations and eating until our stomach hurts. It's an idea that started in the Old Testament. Apparently, God loves celebrations!

In Leviticus 23, God tells Moses about the seven feasts of Israel. These feasts were appointed times meaning you weren't supposed to do them "whenever." There's a specific date on the calendar to observe the feast (like how we celebrate Christmas on December 25). The feasts served as a special time to rest from work, dedicate yourself to God, and eat special foods (desert desserts perhaps?). There's even a feast of trumpets which included a special service announced with trumpet blasts - TA-DA! (Leviticus 23:24).

When you go to Christmas parties or any Christmas gatherings this week, remember it's a celebration! The emotion of this season is joy. Deuteronomy 16:14 says, "Be filled with joy at your feast." So, are you ready to party? Yes please, let's feast on God's goodness, faithfulness and love!

Let's Pray

Dear God, thank you for giving me a reason to party and to be happy! Jesus, I am so excited to celebrate Christmas and Your birthday. Thank You for coming to earth to save me from my sins. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DECEMBER 21

ACTIVITY:

Christmas Mad Libs

According to Mad Libs co-creator Leonard Stern, the first sighting of Mad Libs happened in 1953 when he couldn't find the right adjective to describe the nose of Ralph Kramden's new boss (in the classic Jackie Gleason sitcom *The Honeymooners*). Asking his friend for a random adjective was how it all began.

Here are a few Christmas Mad Libs you can try sometime today or maybe at the dinner table this evening. Fill in the blanks (your kids can learn the parts of speech!), read aloud, and have a good laugh at the crazy Christmas combinations you create.





MAD LIB: Caroling

When the kids went caroling, they loved to go around the _____ neighborhood.

ADJECTIVE

One particular neighbor was a _____

ADJECTIVE

_____ and loved to _____.

NOUN

ADVERB

VERB

the kids caroled there they _____ and

VERB

_____. They sang so loud that the

VERB

PLURAL NOUN

VERB





MAD LIB:
Christmas Cooking

During Christmas we like to make _____.
PLURAL NOUN

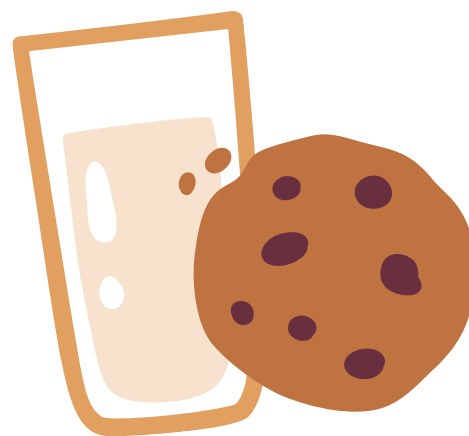
It takes a lot of _____ work. _____ are
ADJECTIVE PLURAL NOUN

perfect toppings for _____ Set the oven
CHRISTMAS FOOD.

for _____ °F. Put the _____ _____ in the oven
NUMBER ADJECTIVE NOUN

and _____ _____ the _____. When the
ADVERB VERB PLURAL NOUN

_____ is _____ then it's time to eat!
NOUN VERB



DECEMBER 22

MOM DEVO:

Mary & Joe

When we read about Jesus' earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, it's easy to elevate them to superstar status. But if we were alive during the time of Christ, maybe we would have run into Mary and Joseph around town. Maybe we would have been friends. Maybe we would have called him Joe!

Read these passages about Mary and Joseph, remembering they were ordinary people like you and me.

Read About Joseph:

MATTHEW 1:18-25

- » What do you observe about Joseph's character?
- » What would you have done if you were in his shoes?
- » What can you learn from him?

Read about Mary

LUKE 1:26-38

- » What do you observe about Mary's character?
- » What would you have done if you were in her shoes?
- » What can you learn from her?



DECEMBER 23

ACTIVITY:

Under the Tree

It's Christmas Eve Eve! (which means yesterday was Christmas Eve Eve Eve, but let's not carried away)

How about a slumber party underneath your Christmas tree tonight?

For those of you who don't mind sleeping on the floor, you can get out the sleeping bags (or blow up mattresses) and curl up as a family in front of your Christmas tree. You can talk into the night under the twinkling lights of your tree. It could really be a fond memory that costs nothing (except missing your soft bed).

Variation: Pull out the sleeping bags or blankets and lay in front of the Christmas tree. Talk into the night...and then get up and walk into your bedrooms and fall asleep like normal.



KID DEVO: Is Today Tomorrow?

*"I will be glad and full of joy because you love me."
Psalm 31:7a (NIV)*

When my youngest daughter Lucy was three years old, she dreamt of the day she would go to Disneyland. We had shown her pictures of Disneyland and told her we would be visiting Mickey and Minnie Mouse soon. Of course, she did not want to wait one second! "Are we going today?" she asked with great excitement. "No, we are going next week," I would say.

Every morning that week, Lucy would wake up and ask, "Is today tomorrow?" But it sounded more like "Is today tomowo?" (remember she was three!). I laughed and told her, "No, today is not tomowo."

Maybe you are also wondering today on Christmas Eve, "Is today tomowo? Is it Christmas yet????"

Maybe you're dreaming of all the things on your Christmas wish list and wondering what will be under the tree. You think, "If I could get that game, that toy, that puppy, then I will be happy!" But you know what? No matter what you get "tomowo," you can choose joy. Don't think "I will be happy tomorrow if I get _____." Instead you can say, "I will be happy tomorrow because it's Christmas, Jesus' birthday!"

Let's Pray

Dear Father in Heaven, I'm so happy it's almost Christmas. Thank You for the best gift of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Thank you for the Holy Spirit who helps me and comforts me. I love you God! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Note to parents:

Tomorrow's activity is a scavenger hunt for your child to find his or her Christmas gift. You can look at it now to prepare the clues if you'd like.



ACTIVITY: Gift Scavenger Hunt

When your child opens a gift, it's done in a flash
Why not send them on a journey to help make it last?

In today's activity you'll find rhymes to use
To send your child on a scavenger hunt, there's nothing to lose!

Here are the clues to print and hide through the house. Hand your child the first clue and then hide the rest (the answers/locations are right here).

CLUE #1

*The hunt begins, will you get something to eat?
Go in the kitchen,
where you normally get treats*

Answer: Kitchen pantry, where your child finds snacks

CLUE #4

*Wonder what you'll get? Will it be what you want?
Look for where the packages come
It's a bit of a jaunt*

Answer: Outside front door

CLUE #2

*Inside this place, it gets very hot
It's close by, you're almost in the spot*

Answer: Oven, microwave, toaster oven

CLUE #5

*Close the door, let's be nice and cozy
Find your next clue, where you could dozy (like sleep!)*

Answer: Their bed or the couch

CLUE #3

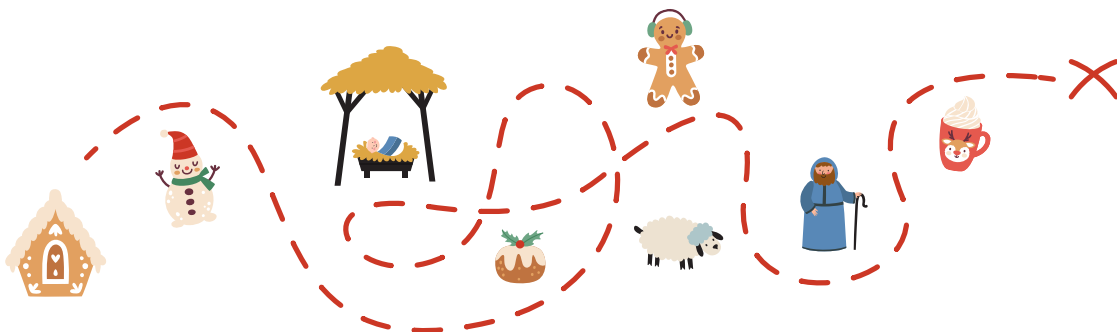
*Now you're working up a sweat
It's time to take a shower
Head towards the place
Quick, you don't have an hour*

Answer: Shower or bathtub

CLUE #6

*Now you're so close, the end is in sight
Go where the dirty clothes go
To be made right!*

Answer: Leave gift in laundry room



Merry Christmas, friend!

For more family resources,
visit ArlenePellicane.com and HappyHomeUniversity.com
for the latest masterclass and *Screen Kids* film.

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