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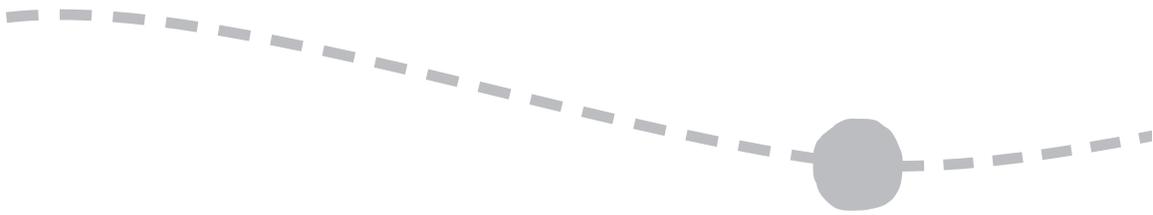
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# Foreword

Let's be honest. It requires a lot of effort, and a lot of patience, and a lot of creativity, and a lot of determination to nurture a Christ-focused atmosphere and conversation in our homes. So much is working against us. There's the television and the internet, sports and social media, homework and school projects. Then there's grocery shopping and laundry and ... well lots of things working to hinder us from purposefully spending time together as a family talking about the most important truths in the universe. But there is also something working for us: the goodness of the story the Bible tells and our desire for our children (and ourselves) to be captivated and shaped by that goodness.

That's why I love what Sarah Rice has put together in this Advent Devotional. During the season when parties and presents and programs can easily dominate our families' lives, this book provides a daily oasis of rich truths to talk about, a daily corrective to being pulled into a merely cultural Christmas. It sets before us and our children the only thing in the world worthy of lifelong pursuit: the glory of God.



When I was in college, the first assignment in my Bible Doctrines class was to write a paper on one word: glory. We weren't supposed to use any books or helps, just a concordance and the Scriptures themselves. I remember it being really hard. And I'm not sure I got close enough to the essence of glory to get a good grade. But it set me on a lifetime trajectory of seeking to not only understand but also to enjoy, pursue, be transformed by, and one day see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Glory is at the heart of the creation of the world, the Creator of the world, the problem with the world, and the future of the world. I pray that tracing God's glory through the pages of this book this Advent season will draw you and your family into the wonder of, and give you a greater longing for, the glory of God.

*Nancy Guthrie*



# About This Advent Devotional

My absolute love for the Christmas season began when I was a little girl and continues still. The music, lights, decorations, family traditions, gifts, and (most of all) the mystery of God made flesh make this one of the most wonderful times of my year. As a child, the Christmas season felt just about perfect in every way, but as I've gotten older, I've realized that my view of the season was somewhat idealized in the naivety of childhood.

As wonderful as December is, the realities of living in a fallen world don't just go away during this special month. On the contrary, they're often highlighted. Busyness and stress creep in. The longer to-do lists are exhausting. Relationships are challenging. Grief is more raw than usual. Children still have meltdowns, and there is still ... laundry! I've come to realize that my hope and joy must run deeper than the season itself, or I'll be let down every year.

The cliché "Jesus is the reason for the season" is almost as overused as it is true. I know that Jesus is the reason for the season—he is our hope in

December and every month of the year! But just because I *know* it's true doesn't mean I *live* as if it's true. In the hustle and bustle of the holidays, it's all too easy to make little room for Christ. If Jesus truly is the reason and hope for the season, then he must be central in my heart and home the whole month through. How do I make this my reality in the busiest month of the year when so many other things vie for my time and affections?

I have found that if Christ is not central in my life during the first eleven months of the year, he won't be central in the last month either. If I am not rooted in the Bible's big story from January to November, I will miss the sheer magnitude of what I read in Luke chapter two during December. The centrality of Christ in my own heart and in our family rhythms at Christmas is tied to my love for him and commitment to his Word every day of the year. It is also tied to my intentionality as I think and plan ahead for a Christ-focused Christmas season.

*Tracing Glory: The Christmas Story Through the Bible* is a twenty-five-day Advent Devotional I wrote for our family to use each December. It begins by looking back at the creation of the world in the book of Genesis and ends looking forward to the new creation in the book of Revelation, tracing the glory of Jesus Christ from start to finish. I wrote this devotional primarily for my boys because I want them to understand that the birth of Christ is the climax of a much larger story—a story about God's mission to redeem sinful people for his glory.

This Advent Devotional was written with children, teens, and adults in mind. My goal was to communicate big truths in ways a child could grasp. I want to help readers see how every individual story in the Bible points either forward or backward to the hero of the big, overarching story.

In each day's reading, there is a key Scripture given to look up as the basis for that day's devotional. Next is my written commentary on the key

Scripture. At the end of each day's reading, I have summarized the key Scripture and commentary with one main point and a Christ connection, showing how that particular Bible passage points to Jesus Christ. I have also provided three questions that will help you and your children process what you have read and then engage in discussion about it. Finally, at the end of this resource, I have provided a "Dictionary of Big Bible Words," where I've included a definition for some of the more difficult words and complex concepts throughout. You will notice that in each day's reading, some words are in bold type. When you come to a bold word as you read, you can flip to the back and refer to the dictionary to help you better understand or explain it to your child.

While preschoolers may not yet be able to grasp all the content given in the key Scripture and commentary, they will benefit from hearing the main point. I would suggest that parents of very young children read the first two sections on their own first and then communicate those truths to children at their particular level of understanding. I think most school-aged children and teens will benefit from listening to or reading the commentary, but families can decide what works best for their particular situation. This is a resource that very young children can grow into through the years.

In this resource, each day comes with a visual of an individual ornament from an entire ornament set that can be purchased with the devotional. If you have the ornament set, you can use the images to show you which ornament to pull out for the day. If not, these ornaments can be easily replicated using basic craft materials. Each day of the Advent season, have your children pull the ornament out of the bag that corresponds to the key Scripture and hang it up. Having a visual helps children grasp the meaning of the text and makes Advent exciting as they anticipate what ornament they will open each day.

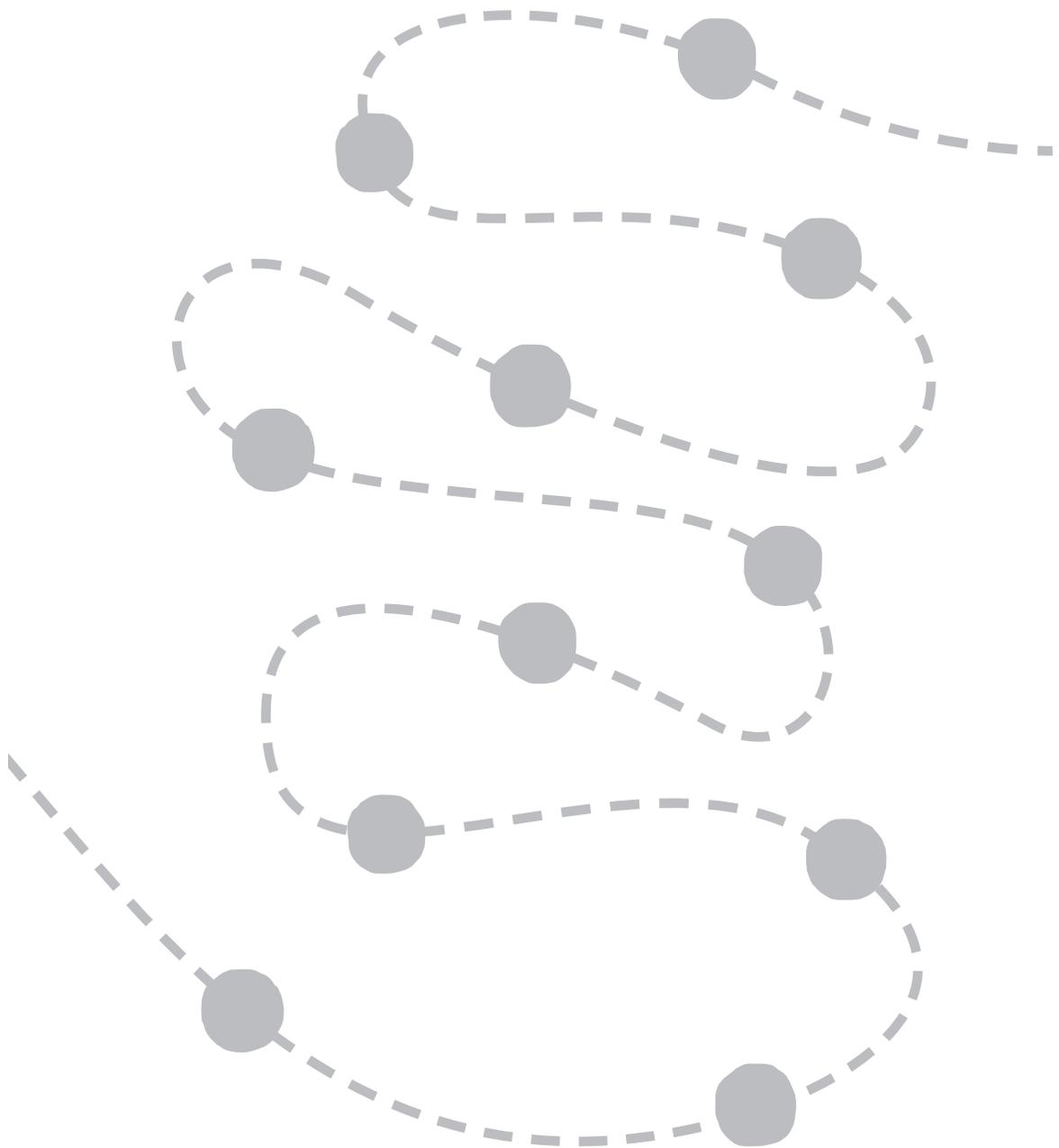
The story you will encounter in this Advent Devotional is both epic and true and it isn't finished yet. We are living within this grand story now,

awaiting the final chapter when we will see Christ face-to-face and dwell with him forever. My prayer is that, as we wait, God would use this resource to help us stand in awe of his matchless glory. As we encounter the breadth and length and height and depth of God's love for us in Christ, may we move to worship him every day in December and the whole year through.

For his glory alone,

*Sarah Rice*





DECEMBER 1

# Christmas in Creation



## KEY SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:1-3

Did you know that the Christmas story begins on the very first page of the Bible? It begins with the words “In the beginning God...” You see, the Christmas story is one long, beautiful story about God.

Before anything else existed, God was here. No one created God. He has always been and doesn’t need anything outside himself because he is enough. God doesn’t need food or clothes. He doesn’t get hungry like us. God doesn’t get tired and need to sleep. He doesn’t need love from anyone else because God himself *is* love. There are three persons in our one God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the **Holy Spirit**—and there has always been perfect love between them. In fact, there is perfect *everything* in our three-in-one God. He is **holy**—totally beautiful and good.

The first thing that the Bible tells us is that God created the heavens and the earth. God made everything. He made things we can see, like trees and animals, and he made things we can’t see, like angels and faraway planets. If God doesn’t need *anything*, why do you think he created *everything*?

The Bible says God created the whole world for his **glory**. This means God created everything so his perfect goodness and beauty could be enjoyed and celebrated and praised!

When God first created the earth, it was a dark blob of matter. Do you know what God made next? He made light! God made light to shine on the dark earth, so his glory could be seen by and through everything else he would create.



Later on in this story, we'll see a different kind of darkness covering the earth and keeping God's glory from being seen and enjoyed as it should be. We'll also see the true Light coming to earth to defeat that darkness and show the glory of God as it had never been seen before. The Christmas story is all about light chasing away darkness!

## MAIN POINT

God has always existed. He doesn't need *anything*, but he created *everything* to bring him glory. The Christmas story begins with the creation of the world and God's light shining on it.

## CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus Christ is the true Light of the world. He brings life to **sinners** living in spiritual darkness and perfectly reveals God's glory (Jn. 1:1–5, 9; Is. 43:5–7).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did God create?
2. Why did God create everything?
3. Praise God for something he has made (e.g. tall mountains, a beautiful sunset, a new baby, etc.).

DECEMBER 2

# Glory Reflectors

KEY SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 1:27–28

When you look in a mirror, what do you see? You see a picture of yourself! God created everything—the sun, moon, stars, mountains, oceans, trees, and animals—to be like a mirror reflecting a picture of him. We can't see God the Father with our eyes because he doesn't have a body like us. God is spirit. But when we look at God's creation, we can learn some things about him. We can see how huge and powerful and beautiful God is through what he has made. Do you know what God created to reflect the best picture of him? You and me! We are his **glory** reflectors.

God saved his very best creation for last. After making everything else, God made two human beings. He made a man named Adam and a woman named Eve. God made Adam and Eve both alike and different. They were alike because they were the only creatures on earth made in God's image. These humans were made to reflect God more clearly than anything else in all of creation and to show a true picture of him. But Adam and Eve were also made different from each other. They were made male and female. God gave them different bodies and different jobs so that, together, they could do the most important job he would give them on earth—to reflect his glory.

God put Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden in a place called Eden. He commanded them to look after the garden and care for the animals just as he would. God told Adam and Eve to have lots of children. They were to fill the earth with many more humans who would show God's glory by telling a true story about him with their lives. You are one of those children! Like Adam and Eve, you were made either a boy or girl in God's image. You were



made to reflect a picture of God so that everyone who sees you will say, “Wow! God is great!” He is the one who deserves all the praise and hoorays, because he is the one who made *you!*

All humans are created to show what God is like, but only one human born on earth has shown who God is perfectly. The Bible says when we look at this human, we see an exact picture of the invisible God! This human is the Hero of the Christmas story—the ultimate glory reflector.

### MAIN POINT

God made human beings male and female in his image to show what he is like and bring him praise and glory.

### CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus Christ is a perfect picture of the God we cannot see. When he came to earth, he showed us God’s glory (Col. 1:15–20).

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who are God’s “glory reflectors”?
2. Why do you think God made boys and girls different?
3. What is your favorite thing to do (e.g. play a sport or instrument, build with bricks, draw pictures, dance)? How can you show others what God is like when you do this?