

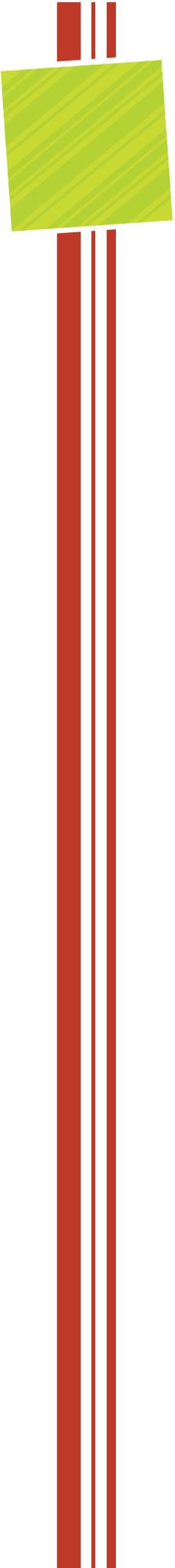
Every Good and Perfect Gift:

Crossing Kids Advent Devotional



Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

James 1:17



Crossing Kids Families,

When you think of Christmas, what images fill your mind? Dark green tress covered in lights? Freshly wrapped packages being ripped to shreds by young children? A special family dinner with Christmas music playing in the background? If so, you're not alone. You're not the only one dreaming of a "White Christmas" and the nostalgia the holiday season brings. In fact, each of these images will be explored in this Advent devotional.

I know what you are thinking. What do all of these secular things have to do with the true meaning of Christmas? Where is the manger? Where is the Gospel?

So often in life, we have the tendency to compartmentalize the things that are most important to us. We view things as "spiritual" or "secular," "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong." More often than not, it's easier to idolize or demonize what we see around us.

This Advent season, we'd love for families at The Crossing to try something different. What would happen if rather than placing all of our hope in the images listed above, we viewed them as sign posts that point to a greater spiritual reality? What would happen if instead of boycotting or undermining, we used these pictures to spark conversations about what is eternal rather than temporary?

Each week, we'd love for your family to take 15 minutes to prepare for Christmas. You'll study one of five familiar cultural icons (**Christmas trees, Christmas lights, gifts, Christmas music, and feasts**) as a springboard to see how Jesus not only fulfills Old Testament prophecy, but how these common, cultural images point to a far greater image—the Image of the invisible God (**Colossians 1:15**).

In this devotional, you'll find a weekly discussion starter and scripture reading. You will also find an empty grid and stickers of the images you'll use as a closing activity each week. If you have an elementary child, he/she will participate in a lesson on Sunday morning that coincides with the different images described in this devotional. You can complete the devotional in the order these lessons are scheduled (see next page for specific grade level information) or use the devotional as is.

Consider trying this before, during, or after a meal or perhaps right before bed on a designated night. You'll also find an optional family activity that you can try together each week as a way to reinforce each idea and spend time together during an extremely busy season.

Please know that our staff team is praying for you and your family as you prepare to celebrate our Savior's birth.

Merry Christmas!

Crossing Kids Staff

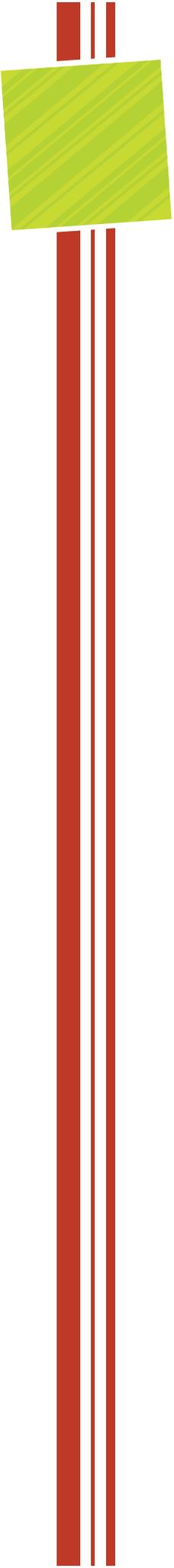
(This devotional was written by Emily Pilkington)

8:00 WORKSHOP ROTATION SCHEDULE

	K-1st	2nd-3rd	4th-5th
Nov. 22	Gift	Light	Feast
Nov. 29	Music	Gift	Light
Dec. 6	Tree	Music	Gift
Dec. 13	Feast	Tree	Music
Dec. 20	Light	Feast	Tree

9:30 & 11:00 WORKSHOP ROTATION SCHEDULE

	K	1	2	3	4
Nov. 22	Gift	Tree	Music	Feast	Light
Nov. 29	Light	Gift	Tree	Music	Feast
Dec. 6	Feast	Light	Gift	Tree	Music
Dec. 13	Music	Feast	Light	Gift	Tree
Dec. 20	Tree	Music	Feast	Light	Gift



Week #1: Introduction

Introduction:

Have you noticed how stores change right before Christmas?
What about our house?
What about T.V. and radio stations?

Do all those changes last?

(No. Each of these changes are temporary. Decorations get put away. Even the gifts that we give/receive often times don't seem as special after a while.)

Bible Discussion:

There is one part of Christmas that NEVER changes or goes away, though. In fact, while all of the parts of Christmas like gifts, decorations, special music, etc... are nice, they are really just pointing to something way bigger and way more important.

Read: **James 1:17**

Ask: What does this verse tell us about gifts?
(They all come from God.)

What does this verse tell us about God?
(He gives good things; He doesn't change.)

Making it Stick:

This doesn't mean that Christmas changes are bad things. In fact, even though they are temporary, they can still bring us joy—especially if we remember where they come from. They can also point us to something far greater that will last forever if we let them. They can point us to the greatest gift of all—Jesus.

Hang the Making it Stick card (included on the last page) on your refrigerator, bathroom mirror, or another prominent place at your home. Practice the verse James 1:17 together as a family. You will be adding stickers with each devotional to help you remember the greater spiritual meaning the images point us to.

Pray together.



Week #2: Christmas Trees

Optional Family Activity:

If you haven't already, decorate your Christmas tree together. Gather your family around the tree. Have each person find their favorite ornament/decoration and share why it's their favorite.

Introduction:

Christmas trees are so much fun to decorate and really beautiful to look at.

Do Christmas trees last forever, though?

(No, as special as they are, Christmas trees are temporary—they don't last forever. We take them down after Christmas and have to wait until next year)

Christmas trees are more than just pretty decorations to look at. They can actually be reminders of an even greater story. In fact, the Bible is a big story that is actually all about what happened on two different trees. Let's read more about this together.

Bible Discussion:

Read: "The Terrible Lie" in The Jesus Storybook Bible (p. 28-35) or **Genesis 3**

Ask: What happened because of this tree?

(Sin entered the world, God's children would always be running away from him and hiding in the dark, their hearts would break and never work properly again, etc...)

Read: **1 Peter 2:24**

Ask: What happened because of this tree?

(Jesus died to rescue and heal us from our sin.)

Making it Stick:

Because of what happened on the first tree in the Garden of Eden, sin separated us from God. When we look at our Christmas tree, it reminds us of why Jesus had to come—we needed someone to save us from our sins. We couldn't fix this problem on our own. He was the only one who could rescue us.

Thankfully, our tree also reminds us of the second tree we read about. Because of Jesus' great love for us, He willingly took the punishment for our sin and died on the Greatest Tree of All—The Cross.

Place Christmas Tree sticker on "Week 2" circle. Have children draw a picture of what the Christmas tree points to on the empty box.

Pray together.



Week #3: Christmas Lights

Introduction:

Today, we are going to talk about darkness and light.

Can anyone think of a time where you've been some place really dark?

What does it feel like to be alone in a place that is really dark?

What makes it difficult?

Bible Discussion:

Being alone in the dark can be really scary. It makes us feel lost, out of control, lonely, and afraid. Did you know that the Bible talks about darkness a lot? In fact, Prophet Isaiah even talked about this before Jesus was born.

Read: p. 146 of The Jesus Storybook Bible or **Isaiah 9:2**.

Ask: What do you think he means by "darkness?" (*sin*)

Sin is darkness. It separates us from God. Isaiah isn't just talking about the Israelites in this passage. He's talking about all of us. We are all people walking in darkness. This same verse also gives us a promise, though. It says that a light will shine. Let's read more about this light together.

Read: "The Light of the Whole World" in The Jesus Storybook Bible (p. 184-193) or **John 1:1-9/John 8:12**

Ask: Who was the Light in this story? (*Jesus*)

What did the Light do? (*gives life, shines in the darkness, overcomes the darkness, gives light to every man, etc...*)

Making it Stick:

During Christmas, people use Christmas lights to decorate their homes and trees. These lights are beautiful and special, but they only last for a little while.

Even though Christmas Lights are temporary and don't last, they are still beautiful and can point us to something that will last forever if we let them.

Christmas lights shine in the darkness of night. When we see them, we can remember that Jesus came to be the Light of the world. He shines through the darkness of our sin. We aren't alone in the darkness.

Place Christmas lights sticker on "Week 3" circle. Have children draw a picture of what the Christmas lights points to on the empty box.

Pray together.

Optional Family Activity:

Drive around the neighborhood together to look at Christmas lights. Use this as a time to reflect on today's devotional in the car.



Week #4: Gifts

Introduction:

What is a gift?

(Something that is given to you freely. You don't earn it, it's just given to you.)

What are some gifts that you'd like to receive this year?

What are some of the gifts you received last year/two years ago?

Which list of gifts is easier for you to create?

Even the most special of Christmas gifts end up being something that ultimately doesn't last. It's what we call temporary. A gift may be exciting or something really good, but if we expect it to make us happy forever, it will let us down in the end. There is a gift, however that will always last. Let's read more about this gift together.

Bible Discussion:

Read: **Isaiah 9:6**.

Ask: What is given in this passage? (a son)

Who do you think this person is? (Jesus)

Read: **John 3:16-17**.

Ask: What is the "gift" of this passage? (Jesus; Eternal Life)

What do you think the gift of "eternal life" means? (Life that doesn't end with Jesus in Heaven.)

Making it Stick:

A gift is very special for a lot of reasons. One of the biggest reasons is that it's not something that we earn. We don't receive a gift because we do something to deserve it. It's the same way with the gift of grace that God gives us through Jesus. In fact, grace simply means undeserved love. This is the greatest gift of all. One that will last forever.

Place gift sticker on "Week 4" circle. Have children draw a picture of what the gift points to on the empty box.

Pray together.

Optional Family Activity:

When you have a really great gift, you don't want to keep it to yourself, you want to share it with others. Think of a way you could share this gift with someone else. Send a card, wrap a gift for someone in need, think of someone you could invite to church, etc...



Week #5: Christmas Music

Introduction:

Ask: How does music change right before Christmas?
What are some of your favorite Christmas songs?

Most of the time, we only sing Christmas music in November and December. By January, those songs are often gone. If you think about it, it might sound sort of silly to sing “Jingle Bells” in July. It wouldn’t make a lot of sense. Like you guys said, most Christmas music is temporary. It doesn’t last. The Bible actually talks a lot about singing/music. Let’s read a little more about this together.

Bible Discussion:

Read: **Psalm 96** or “The Good Shepherd” p. 130-135 in The Jesus Storybook Bible

Ask: What do these verses tell us about music/singing? *(It’s a way for us to worship and praise God for who He is and what He’s done.)*

Read: **Revelation 5:8-9**.

Ask: What do these verses tell us about music/singing?
(It lasts forever and is part of heaven.)

Making it Stick:

Earlier we talked about how a lot of the Christmas music we listen to is temporary—it doesn’t last. It doesn’t mean that singing/listening to Christmas music like “Jingle Bells” is bad or wrong. Even though those songs and the images they create are temporary, they can still be fun and point us to an even greater joy that will last forever.

Place music sticker on “Week 5” circle. Have children draw a picture of what Christmas music points to on the empty box.

Pray together.

Optional Family Activity:

Download and listen to “Light of the World” by Chris Tomlin or another worship/Advent song together as a family. Discuss the lyrics together as a family and/or have children draw pictures of the images that come to mind while they listen.



Week #6: Feast

Introduction:

Ask: What is your favorite special holiday food that you eat during Christmas?

Yum! You guys are making me so hungry. Eating special foods with family and friends is such a fun and delicious way to celebrate Christmas.

As good as that food is, does it last forever?

Eating a special meal with our family is a good gift from God, but it's not something that will last forever. There is a special family meal that God promises us in the Bible. Let's read more about it together.

Bible Discussion:

Read: **Isaiah 25:6-9** and **Revelation 3:20**

Ask: What happens at this meal? (*Feast/celebrate with God in heaven.*)

Who is at this meal? (*God, everyone who trusts in Jesus as their Savior.*)

This meal is special because it's a meal God has prepared for His family in heaven. Let's read some more about what God has prepared for those who love Him in heaven.

Read: **Revelation 21:1-7** or "A Dream of Heaven" in The Jesus Storybook Bible (p. 342-350).

Ask: How do these verses describe heaven? (*No more tears, no more pain, perfect in every way; a place of celebration, where all who believe will live with God forever.*)

Making it Stick:

These verses talk about how God will wipe away the tears from everyone's eyes. In heaven, there will be no more pain, hurting, sickness, or disease and there we will be able to worship God forever. I love that word forever, don't you?

Even though we know that anything we eat or drink on earth won't last, it can still be something that can remind us of the best celebration of all—the one we will have in heaven with Jesus.

Place the feast sticker on "Week 6" circle. Have children draw a picture of what a feast points to on the empty box.

Pray together.

Optional Family Activity:

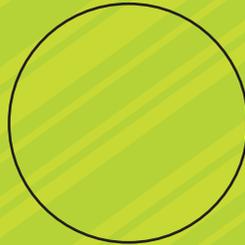
Bake cookies together as a family or share a special holiday meal to celebrate the promise of heaven.

Making it Stick

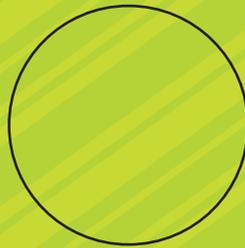
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James 1:17

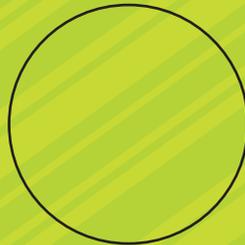
Week #2:
Christmas Trees



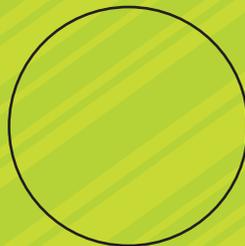
Week #3:
Christmas Lights



Week #4:
Gifts



Week #5:
Christmas Music



Week #6:
Feasts

