

The Twelve Days of Christmas



*A Family Devotional Guide to a Twelve Day
Celebration of the Incarnation of our Lord*

Created By:

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Merry Christmas!

Thank you for purchasing the Twelve Days of Christmas Study! We hope that your family will find this celebration guide to be a great blessing to your worship this Christmas season. The purpose of this study is to help your family more fully enter into the rejoicing and delight offered to believers in the historical celebration of the Twelve Days of Christmas. As you read through each day, you will learn the many beautiful expressions of worship exhibited throughout various cultures and time periods in regard to Christmas celebrations. You will be given a thoughtful quote to ponder and discuss with your family each day. Your family will dig into God's Word together and strive to find application in your own lives. Poetry written by saints today and of old will encourage you as the beauty and wonder of the incarnation of Jesus Christ is communicated. And finally, you will be challenged to start new traditions of celebration as you develop the culture and identity of your own family. Although, as you will learn, the historical Twelve Days of Christmas is intended to be celebrated from December 25th to January 6th, this devotional celebration guide can be used anytime during the Christmas season – whether on twelve consecutive days or spread out when convenient for your family.

Throughout the Old Testament, God commanded His people to observe feasts and celebrations to commemorate His mighty acts of deliverance and provision towards His covenantal children. In addition to the feasts and celebrations, God commanded weekly Sabbaths and monthly new moon festivals that provided respite from the daily trials of labor and toil. We also have examples in Scripture of celebrations and observances not directly commanded by God but instituted by His people to remember God's extraordinary acts. The Feast of Dedication and the Feast of Purim were festivals that Jesus honored with His presence and serve as examples for us to also set aside times to remember the mighty acts of our Lord with joyful celebrations.

We live in a country that has largely been shaped by a nationalistic identity rather than a spiritual identity. Federally appointed holidays mark the seasons of life rather than church appointed holidays. A people's identity is formed largely by the calendar they follow and our traditions define us and communicate to our children who we are and what we believe. Beginning nearly 2000 years ago, our church fathers set aside specific dates to mark out days of remembrance and celebration for God's people to observe. Many Christians today may object to observing the church calendar by claiming that it is for Roman Catholics and not protestant believers. However, I ask you to consider this: our spiritual heritage did not begin with the Reformation of the 1500's but goes back much further. If God was pleased to preserve his precious bride through nearly 1500 years of catholic Christianity than isn't it the least we can do to simply acknowledge our church fathers through those many years? What the Old Testament feasts did for the Israelites, the Christian church calendar does for the people of God today and it is our heritage.

It has wisely been said, "Never take down a fence until you know why it was put up in the first place". Our church fathers knew the benefit it would be to the people of God to participate in holy celebrations. It served as a time to set aside the trials, sorrows, burdens and worries of life and fix our eyes upon the object of our celebration in thanksgiving and gratitude. Appointed celebrations remind us of what we have to be thankful for and discipline us to rejoice with the greater Body of Christ, weather we feel like it or not! The seasons of the church calendar has a long and

beautiful history for believers. Planned and purposeful observance of the Christian seasons and festivals serves as an important tool for education and discipleship to the next generation, as well as a vehicle for spiritual growth and vitality for ourselves. It honors our Lord when, in humility, we honor our church fathers in the direction they wisely led by practicing the discipline of celebration.

The first event on the church calendar joyously proclaims the incarnation of God himself accomplishing the glorious redemption of man in the celebrations of Advent and the Twelve Days of Christmas. In our modern culture today it is common to have single day celebrations but this was not always so. Throughout the Old Testament and the early church it was customary to set aside multiple days and, in some cases even weeks, to rejoice for a particular reason. The first record of the 12 days of Christmas is found in a hymn written by Ephraim Syrus, a prolific hymn writer and theologian of the 4th century. This twelve day celebration was then made official nearly 200 years later at the Council of Tours in the year 567. There had been disagreement between the eastern celebration of Christmas being January 6th and western dates of the celebration being December 25th. It is said that the original purpose for the Twelve Days of Christmas was to promote unity in the greater Body of Christ by joining the two celebrations into one. Christmas day is meant to open up a twelve day celebration to offer time to fully rejoice in and reflect upon the meaning of the incarnation. One day is simply not sufficient to rejoice in the wonder of God becoming man.

The Twelve Days of Christmas are important because they offer us a way of reflecting upon what the incarnation means in our lives and help us to commemorate the most momentous event in human history – the entry of God into the world He made. He shared in our humanity so that the dignity of human nature might be restored as we share in His divinity. May your family be blessed as you worship our Lord with a true sense of wonder and awe this holiday season.

*Blessings in Jesus,
Andie Davidson & Family*



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How to Use this Study...

You will find this study to be very flexible for the needs of your family. Although it is designed to be done on the historical twelve days of Christmas from December 25th to Jan 6th, you could do it anytime during Christmas season. Some families choose to spread it out throughout the month of December and some do it for twelve consecutive days in a row. The atmosphere of your home when you do the study is a very important aspect to consider. You may choose to do the study during your family worship time when dad is home, or you may choose to do it as a devotional part of your school day. Either way we encourage you to create a peaceful and relaxed atmosphere for your children. Simple acts such as lighting a candle or preparing warm cup of tea or hot chocolate to drink will make the time something special that you and your children will greatly look forward to. Some families choose to sit down around the Christmas tree in their pajamas just before bed and do the study together, others may do it first thing in the morning. No matter what your family chooses to do be sure to give it some thought as to what would most bless you and your children. The Christmas season can quickly turn into a hectic and rushed season where we hardly connect with our children when it should be one of the best times of the year to draw closer to the Lord with them.

Each day's study has seven components to it:

~ **Individual Devotional Page** - Towards the end of this document you will find twelve printable devotional pages for your child to complete on their own. Children ages 7-16 should be able to complete the individual Bible study pages. Simply print off pages 32-43 of this document for each child and insert into a 3 ring notebook to make your child's Bible Study Binder. You will find specific instructions to make your Bible Study Binders on page 46-47. After completing this Christmas Bible study we encourage you to choose another topical study for your child available for purchase at www.quiettimesforkids.com. Encourage your child to set aside twenty minutes each day to spend time alone with the Lord preparing their heart for your family devotional time. At the beginning of your devotional time, ask your child to share what they wrote out in their devotional pages.

~ **Quote** – Discussing quotes can be an excellent way to teach your children to think critically about ideas and apply truth to their lives. Read over the quote and discuss how it applies to the topic for the day.

~ **Scripture Verse & Devotional** – Be sure to have your Bible ready and encourage your children to look up the daily verse as it is read aloud. After reading it, read the devotional section aloud.

~ **Discussion Questions** – Each day there will be 2-3 discussion questions to help you and your children process and apply the truths you will be discussing.

~ **Celebration Ideas** – At the end of each day's study you will find numerous celebration ideas based on historical traditions that the people of God have done throughout the ages. It is a beautiful thing to witness the various expressions of worship in other cultures and can add to our worship to the living God as well! You may want to look over the celebration ideas in advance to choose what you would like to apply in your family or you can discuss them as a family and pick a few to do together.

~ **Poetry Reading** – The written word communicated in poetry is a gift from God. Saints through the ages have used poetry as a vehicle to teach theology and our Lord used poetry in the Scriptures to guide and instruct us. Begin by reading the poetry selections aloud to your children. Some of the poems may be hard to read fluently the first time through so you may want to read through them in advance to better communicate the truths to your children.

Printing the Study –

You will want to print pages 6-31 of this document. You could simply put the pages into a Binder or you could fold and put each day's study into twelve separate envelopes and place them in a decorative basket to open together each day. In our family I printed off two copies of the study and put one in a binder for me to look at in advance in order to prepare for that day and the other copy I put into individual labeled envelopes. My children find it fun and exciting to open the envelope for that day. On pages 44-45 you will find printable labels for your envelopes that you can cut and tape onto envelopes. The individual student Bible study pages begin on page 32. There are 12 days of Bible study pages so print one copy of pages 32-43 for each student.



Twelve Days of Christmas Study Overview

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The Twelve Days of Christmas Study Introduction

(Read this out loud as a family before you begin the study)

Our family is going to celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas this year. Today, when most people hear the Twelve Days of Christmas mentioned they envision lords-a-leaping, maids-a-milking and a partridge in a pear tree. For many, the Twelve Days of Christmas is known only by this familiar song. However, there is a much deeper and more beautiful meaning to the historic Twelve Days of Christmas that is often overlooked. Very few Christians today know what took place nearly 1,400 years ago that should have a bearing on the way believers view and celebrate Christmas today.

In the early days of Christianity it was common for the leaders of the church to gather for councils in order to make decisions, correct heresy and embody Biblical teachings into doctrinal statements called creeds. Believers today owe the early church leaders a great debt for their faithful legacy of staunchly defending the truth of God's Word. It was at one of these very councils, the Council of Tours in 567, that the celebration of Christmas was the topic at hand. Up until that point, there had been a disagreement as to the correct date of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. The saints in the west had agreed on December 25th as the most likely date of the birth of the Lord, whereas the saints in the east celebrated on what is now called the Day of Epiphany, January 6th. This disagreement only added to the list of differences between the eastern and the western churches, harming the unity of the believers and providing great concern to the church fathers. Therefore, at the Council of Tours it was decided that the observance of [Christmas](#) was to be combined with [Epiphany](#). This formed a worldwide celebration for Christians everywhere known as the Twelve Days of Christmas – the twelve days between December 25th and January 6th. Historically, Christmas Day is meant to open up a 12 day celebration to offer time to fully rejoice in and reflect upon the meaning of the incarnation. One day is simply not sufficient for families to rejoice in the wonder of God becoming man.

Our church fathers knew the benefit it would be to the people of God to participate in holy celebrations. It served as a time to set aside the trials, sorrows, burdens and worries of life and fix our eyes upon the object of our celebration in thanksgiving and gratitude. Appointed celebrations remind us of what we have to be thankful for and discipline us to rejoice with the greater Body of Christ, whether we feel like it or not! The seasons of the church calendar have a long and beautiful history for believers. Planned and purposeful observance of the Christian seasons and festivals serve as an important tool for education and discipleship to the next generation, as well as a vehicle for spiritual growth.

Today is the first day of our Twelve Days of Christmas Celebration. I hope this will be a special time for us as we commit to slow down and meditate on the birth of Jesus together as a family. Each day we will read a quote and discuss it. We will need our Bibles so that we can look up Scripture and be encouraged by it. A special poem has been selected for us to read that will help us focus on the important aspects of the life of a believer. Finally, we will be given celebration ideas based on the historical practices of Christians throughout the ages. We will discuss these and decide what traditions we want to begin in our home. We may want to make this time special by enjoying hot chocolate or tea while we do it and lighting a pretty candle. There is also an individual Bible Study for you children that goes along with the family Bible Study. It would be great for you to share what you did in your own quiet time earlier in the day with our family. Our hope is that this time will bring hope, encouragement and refreshment to our family as we enjoy this study together – let's get started!



The Twelve Days of Christmas - Day One

Hope is Born

1. Begin by reading this quote and discussing the meaning:

*“A Little Child, a shining star,
A stable rude, the door ajar.
Yet in that place so crude forlorn,
The hope of all the world was born.”*

-Anonymous

2. Have someone look up this verse in their own Bible and read it aloud to the family:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 9:6-7

3. Read the following aloud and answer the questions together:

The Christmas season can be a very busy time for families. There is so much to do from shopping to cooking and spending time with families. In all the work and preparations it is important that we slow down long enough to really meditate on what the incarnation of our Lord is and how it affects our life. The word incarnation means the embodiment of God in the human flesh, such as Jesus Christ. When Jesus was born as a baby, hope was born to all mankind. Without the physical birth of Jesus Christ, no one would have had the hope of salvation and reconciliation to God.

- *What does the word ‘incarnation’ mean?*
- *How has the incarnation of Jesus affected our family?*
- *How would we be different without the incarnation of Jesus?*
- *In what other areas can we as believers be hopeful about as a result of the physical birth of Jesus?*

Celebration Ideas for our family

The first day of Christmas has historically been celebrated with what is called The Feast of the Nativity – or a Christmas day feast. The early North American colonists brought their version of the Twelve Days over from England, and adapted them to their new country, adding their own variations over the years. For example, the modern-day Christmas [wreath](#) may have originated with these colonials. A homemade wreath would be fashioned from local greenery and fruits, if available, were added. It was their tradition to make and hang the wreath together on Christmas Day. The wreaths would remain hung on each home's front door beginning on Christmas Night (1st night of Christmas) through Twelfth Night or Epiphany morning. Your family could enjoy making some type of wreath and displaying it in your home as a reminder to celebrate all twelve days of Christmas.

~ Finish by reading the poem on the following page and then close in prayer together ~

Christmas Candle

By John Piper

The sun had just begun to set
And Joseph's face, filled with regret
Appeared again. "We'll find a place,"
Said Mary, full of hope and grace.
"I know we will," she touched his chin
And bravely smiled, "Who needs an inn?
The sky is clear, the blankets thick
And warm; there's still good light to pick
A place among the rocks we passed.
God's first and best is often last."
More times than he preferred to think
Poor Joseph's faith would start to sink
And darkness gather like a foe
'Til Mary's hopeful heart would glow.
It wasn't that he feared the night,
Nor prowling beasts nor thieves to fight.
In fact, it wasn't fear at all
That made the tears begin to fall.
"It's all right, Joseph, I don't mind.
I'm sure it won't be hard to find."
"My God, you're pregnant, woman, look!
What kind of husband ever took
His wife to sleep among the rocks?
I'm not a shepherd with some flocks;
I am a man and you're my wife
With child." She hugged him to the Life
Within her womb and said no more.
Wise woman, she had learned before:
Sometimes you leave a man alone
To bear his load of love, and groan.
She'd kept it to herself all day
And every time they came she'd pray
"Not yet, O God, not on the road;
Your handmaid bears as big a load
As she can take. O Lord, please wait;
Please let the child, your child, come late."
She never burdened Joseph down,
Not even when they got to town,
Not even at the setting sun,
But only when the search was done.
He helped her down among the cocks
And hens. She smiled, "It beats rocks,
Especially for a night-time birth."
"I'm in no mood for silly mirth."
"Nor I." "How long have you known this?"
"No anger now, my love, let's kiss
The hour and kiss the ways of God.

Remember that his staff and rod
Are comfort, father David said."
She winced and quickly shaped her bed.
"I helped to make your day's load light;
Please, Joseph, carry me tonight."
"I'll get a midwife from the place..."
"Don't leave me here without your face.
My mother showed me what to do
And what I need right now is you."
Between the pains she tried to lie
In peace and stare into the sky,
And think of how she'd been prepared.
And then she said, "Joseph, I'm scared."
And he with steady eye and calm
Recalled for her the angel's psalm.
"He is the shoot of Jesse's rod;
He shall be called the Son of God;
His Kingdom shall not ever end.
Will not God then his birth attend?"
But Mary's face remained so grim:
"The promises are sure for him.
You know I never doubt God's word,
But, Joseph, I have never heard
A promise for myself but this:
'Some sword my own soul will not miss.'"
Again his eyes were steady, bright
Reflecting heaven's grace and light.
"Our book is full of promises;
Remember that one where it says,
No good thing does the Lord withhold
From those whose cares on him are rolled.
And: when your worries multiply
God's consolation hovers nigh.
And: steadfast love surrounds the girl
For whom Jehovah is her pearl.
And: God's a stronghold for the weak,
How happy those who his help seek."
Each time the birthing pangs withdrew
He gave her joyful words and true.
He carried Mary with the Word
And she delivered what she heard:
God's Yes to every ancient oath.
And now with lifted hands they both
Were filled with distant prophecy:
"To God alone all praises be,
And let the world a candle light
To celebrate this awesome night."



The Twelve Days of Christmas - Day One
Hope is Born



Look up Isaiah 9:6 and copy it down here:

What do you think this verse means?

Read this quote and try to draw a picture that illustrates its meaning:

*“A Little Child, a shining star,
A stable rude, the door ajar.
Yet in that place so crude forlorn,
The hope of all the world was born.”
-Anonymous*