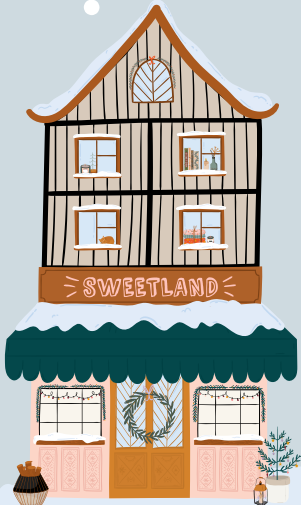


CHRISTMAS IS COMING!



Activities For Your Family



2021



HELPFUL HINTS:

Whether you have younger kiddos or older kiddos, you can adapt this activity book to fit your family's needs. The NiRV translation of the Bible is in plainer language most kids will understand. Some other Bibles we recommend for kids are:

The Jesus Storybook Bible
The Adventure Bible
The Rhythm Bible

The **Bible App for Kids** does a great job of telling the Christmas story in a language fit for them! Their episode titled "The First Christmas Gift" tells the story of Jesus coming to us. This free app is available for all iOS, Android, and Kindle devices.

Seek & Find SCAVENGER HUNT

Throughout this activity book, search for hidden items that remind you of Christmas! As you find them, check them off this list. Have fun scavenger hunting with your family!

SNOWGLOBES	4
DECORATED CHRISTMAS TREES	4
CANDLES	32
GINGERBREAD MEN	7
HEARTS	5
PRESENTS	10
5-POINTED YELLOW STARS	14
GINGERBREAD HOUSES	4
ICE SKATES	1

As you go on this adventure, take pictures, be creative, and make lasting memories as you learn even more about the reason we celebrate Christmas! And if you want, post and tag us on Instagram or Facebook. Use the hashtag:

#RHCHRISTMASISCOMING



Christmas IS COMING!

It truly is the most wonderful time of the year! This book has eight ideas and activities you can do with your whole family that will get you focused on Jesus and have some fun, too! Each idea will have you read the Christmas Story from the Bible and then embark on some family fun. Our goal is for you and your family to set aside intentional time reading and experiencing the story of Jesus and the gift God gave us through Him several times this Christmas season. Here's the thing...you can create your own adventure and set your own pace. Take just a minute to read through all the ideas so you can make plans that make sense for your family. **Helpful tip: we do suggest you save Idea #7 for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day!**

As a bonus feature, we've included an activity all about Hanukkah! Have you ever wondered what goes on in the celebration of Hanukkah and why it is significant in the story of Christmas? Although Christians don't celebrate it in its traditional sense, Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday that was very much a part of Jesus' story! We hope all the members of your family will enjoy learning how the Festival of Lights can help us see and understand Jesus.

We love your family and hope this activity guide helps you have meaningful and memorable conversations and adventures that allow you to make the very most of this Christmas season!

Merry Christmas!

Your Rolling Hills Family Ministry Team





Jesus is coming!

ENGAGE WITH THE STORY

As a family, start in the Old Testament and read Isaiah 7:14. Then, head over the New Testament and read Luke 1:26-38.

It's important for us to know that God promised Jesus was coming long before He actually came to earth. 400 years went by between the telling of Jesus coming (Isaiah 7:14) and then Mary learning He was going to be born. During those waiting years, people had to prepare because they wanted to be ready for Jesus! As a family, take a few minutes to talk about how to prepare to celebrate Christmas and how to make Jesus the center of that celebration this year.

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

While a grownup reads the story, start decorating for Christmas! When the story is over, turn on some fun holiday tunes and enjoy making your home ready for Christmas! You can even watch a Christmas movie—we suggest "The Star." If you want to get your house smelling like the season, simmer seasonal ingredients on your stove or in your slow cooker! (Recipe on the next page.)

DID YOU KNOW?

Over 50% of people put up their Christmas tree the day or week after Thanksgiving! And almost 70% take all their Christmas decorations down the first week of January.

What does your family do?

Easy Christmas Stovetop Simmer

**2 ORANGES OR CLEMENTINES, SLICED
2 CINNAMON STICKS
5 WHOLE CLOVES
WATER OR CRANBERRY JUICE**

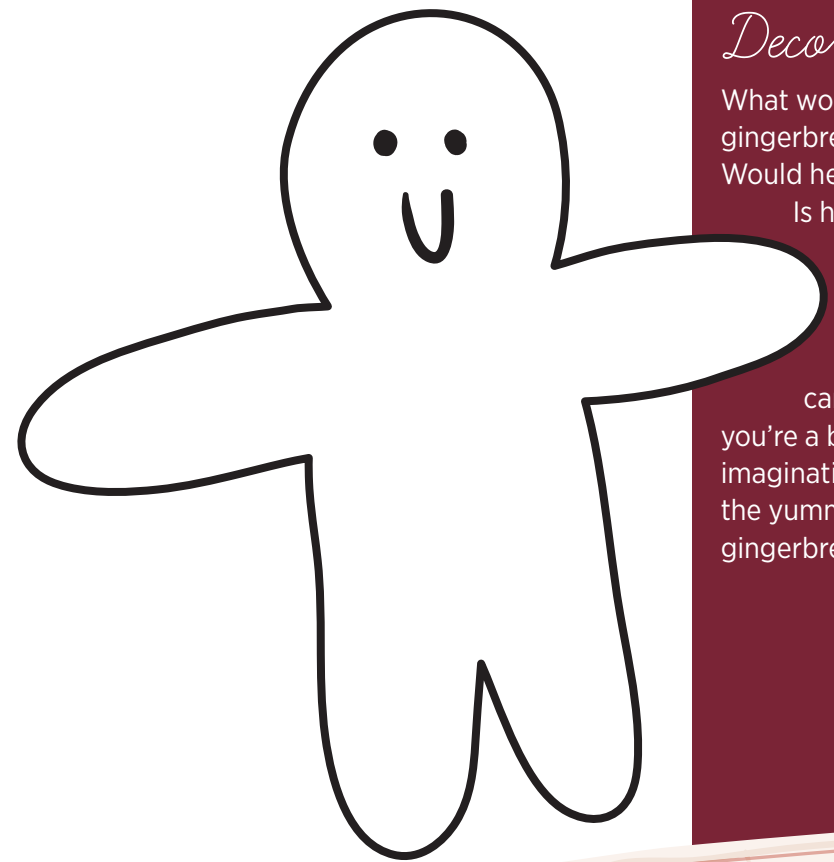
Nothing is better than when your house smells as holly and jolly as your mood! Combine all ingredients in a pot, and cover with 1" of water or juice. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer on the lowest setting on the stove.

To save overnight, remove from heat, cover with lid, and leave out at room temperature. To restart in the morning, repeat the steps above.

One of the beautiful things about this stovetop potpourri is that you can keep simmering and refreshing it until you're ready to change scents. Top off the liquid as many times as you need, and when the scent starts to fade a bit, just pop in a little more of each ingredient!

Try making your own custom spice mix to suit your taste using other Christmas-y ingredients like apples, whole allspice, cranberries, rosemary, or bay leaves!





Decorate It!

What would the perfect gingerbread man look like? Would he have buttons?

Is he wearing socks made of sprinkles?

Would he have swirly hair made from frosting, or a candy nose? Pretend

you're a baker. Use your imagination and decorate the yummiest-looking gingerbread man ever!

Mary and Elizabeth

ENGAGE WITH THE STORY

As a family, read Luke 1:39-45.

How neat is it for Mary and Elizabeth to be cousins and to be having babies at the same time? Elizabeth was quite old, and had waited a very long time to have a baby. Her baby was John the Baptist, and Mary was the mother of Jesus, God's Son. There's lots more to come for Jesus and John the Baptist as they grow up and share about who God is! As a family, spend time sharing some favorite family Christmas memories. Then take some time to thank God for those special memories and the ways He has provided for your family this year.



DID YOU KNOW?

Cookies weren't originally meant to be eaten! They were just meant to test the temperature of an oven.

Cooks would take a small dollop of cake batter and bake it as a means of gauging whether the oven was ready or not.



Sugar Cookies

- 1 C. GRANULATED SUGAR
- 1 C. BUTTER, SOFTENED
- 1 EGG
- 2 TSP. VANILLA EXTRACT
- 1/2 TSP. ALMOND EXTRACT
- 3 3/4 C. ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
- 1 TSP. BAKING POWDER
- 1/2 TEASPOON SALT

Preheat the oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, cream the butter and sugar with a mixer until light and fluffy. Beat in the egg, and vanilla and almond extracts. Add flour, baking powder, and salt. Once the dough mixes into a ball, you're done mixing. Do not chill dough. Divide dough into two balls for ease of handling.

On a floured surface, roll each ball into a circle approximately 12" in diameter and 1/8 inch thick. Cut with cookie cutters. Bake the cookies on an ungreased baking sheet with or without parchment paper. Bake for 8-11 minutes or until the cookies are lightly browned at the edges. Move the cookies to a cooling rack to cool completely. This recipe makes about 3 dozen 3" cookies.





Joseph

ENGAGE WITH THE STORY

As a family, read Matthew 1:18-25.

Joseph was given the special honor of being Jesus' earthly dad! For his every-day job, he was a carpenter. So he got to be creative and build some incredible things! And Jesus was a carpenter, too. How cool is that?

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Many ornaments on your tree have special memories attached to them! Whether bought or homemade, they are ones you cherish and put on your tree, year after year. As a family, make a homemade ornament. You may choose to make one or each family member make their own. Grab some supplies you have around the house, turn on some Christmas music, and create! As you make or "build" ornaments with your family, you get to be creative and build like a carpenter, too. As a family, spend some time sharing about your ornaments you made and why they are special to you!

Design YOUR TREE!

This tree looks a little sad without any lights or ornaments, doesn't it? Grab some markers, and help dress it up for Christmas! What do you think should go at the top? A star, an angel, or something completely different?



DID YOU KNOW?

The first Christmas tree ornaments were strands of candles, apples, nuts, and berries. What would you think if you walked in a friend's house and they had fruits and veggies hung on their tree today?



Jesus is born!

ENGAGE WITH THE STORY

As a family, listen to the Christmas Story on our Making History Parenting Podcast!

The promised king that had been prayed for and waited for was here...as a tiny baby, born in a stable because there was no room for Him anywhere else. The greatest gift we will ever receive or celebrate is Him! After listening to the podcast, talk about what it must have been like to have been there, in the stable with Joseph and Mary and in the fields with the shepherds. Imagine the sounds, the smells, but also the excitement and praise because Jesus came to earth! That's the best gift ever!

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Jesus is born! Now, that's something to celebrate! Make some hot chocolate or pick up a special treat, jump in your car, and take a ride around to look at all the Christmas lights through town while listening to the Christmas story told from some of our Family Ministry Team on our Making History Parenting Podcast! There may even be a few special guests who showed up to help us tell the amazing story of Jesus. Enjoy this time with your family!

Christmas Light SCAVENGER HUNT

- YARD NATIVITY
- INFLATABLE DINOSAUR
- THE GRINCH
- SANTA DRIVING SOMETHING OTHER THAN HIS SLEIGH
- MOVING REINDEER
- HOUSE WITH 10+ INFLATABLES
- LIGHTS SET TO MUSIC
- CHARLIE BROWN
- PENGUINS
- DRIVEWAY LINED WITH CANDY CANES
- CHRISTMAS TRAIN
- ANY CHARACTER FROM THE MOVIE FROZEN
- ANGEL
- BUDDY THE ELF
- "NOEL" SPELLED OUT
- FALLING SNOW PROJECTED ONTO THE SIDE OF A HOUSE
- POLAR BEAR
- NUTCRACKER
- SNOWGLOBE
- MINIONS
- HOLIDAY FLAMINGO

DID YOU KNOW?

The custom of Christmas lights goes back to when Christmas trees were decorated with candles, which was a symbol because Jesus Christ is the light of the world!





The Angels and Shepherds

ENGAGE WITH THE STORY

Open your Bibles and read Luke 2:8-20.

Don't you just love this part of the Christmas story? The angels and the shepherds were so excited about the news of Jesus that they couldn't help but praise God and tell others about the news of His birth! When they saw Jesus, they were changed forever and had to share the news. As a family, spend time talking about how special the Christmas story is and ways you all can share the news of Jesus with everyone you know! Singing Christmas carols happens to be a wonderful way to share the story of Jesus with others as you spread Christmas joy!

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Listening to Christmas music is so much fun! And singing along is even more delightful! Bundle up, grab your family and friends, and go caroling on your street, around the corner, outside your favorite store, or anywhere else you can think of to spread Christmas joy! The birth of Jesus brings the world so much joy...He is truly joy to the world!

Christmas Carol WORD SCRAMBLE

OJY OT ETH RWDLO

KCED EHT SLALH

ELNIST GNHIT

WAAY NI A NEMGAR

EHT IFSTR OENL

RAMY IDD OUY ONWK

TI EAMC ONPU A TDIGHMIN REALC

EW RTEEH GKNIS FO OTENIR EAR

ENGSAL EW VAEH EHRAD NO IHHG



DID YOU KNOW?

The top three most sung Christmas Carols are:

- Silent Night
- God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen
- O Come All Ye Faithful

JOY TO THE WORLD; DECK THE HALLS; SILENT NIGHT; AWAY IN A MANGER; THE FIRST NOEL; MARY DID YOU KNOW; IT CAME UPON A MIDDNIGHT CLEAR; WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE; ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH



The Wise Men

ENGAGE WITH THE STORY

As a family, read Matthew 2:1-12.

The story of the Wise Men, also known as the Magi, is one of giving gifts! How cool is that? In fact, when they came to visit Jesus they brought very precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts were special because they were ones given to a king. And even though Jesus was just a baby, He was the promised King. The wise men knew they must honor Him with their special gifts. God gave us the gift of His Son, Jesus, and we have the special responsibility of sharing Him with the world!

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Christmas is a wonderful time of year to give and show kindness towards others! As a family, talk about ways you can give more than you receive. Discuss ways to serve and give of your time and abilities this Christmas season, or ways you can show love and kindness to your neighbors. Maybe it's raking leaves, helping buy groceries for someone, or serving at a local organization together. Serving and giving are two special ways that we can share God's love with the world!

Color A CARD!

As you serve those around you, be sure to invite people to one of our Christmas Eve services. It's sure to be a sweet time as we celebrate the birth of Jesus! Visit ROLLINGHILLS.CHURCH/CHRISTMAS for a full listing of our in-person and online Christmas Eve candlelight services. Maybe you could make Christmas Cards for your neighbors, inviting them to join you at church. Try it out here!



DID YOU KNOW?

The United States Postal Service has been delivering holiday cheer for 248 years! It will deliver about 15 billion pieces of mail and about 800 million packages between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day.



Welcome, Jesus!

ENGAGE WITH THE STORY

It's Christmas! Spend time reading the entire Christmas story together.

This is a great time to read it from one of our story Bible suggestions, or even watch it on the Bible App for Kids. An ideal passage from an adult Bible, if your kids are young and fidgety, is Luke 2:1-20.

Talk about your favorite parts of the story, recap and celebrate the amazing gift God gave us when He sent Jesus to the world!

Whatever you do, make Jesus the center of your Christmas celebration!

We wish you the very, merriest Christmas—full of Jesus and the hope His life brings to all of us! We love you and your family!



Celebrate JESUS' BIRTHDAY

1. NATIVITY HIDE-AND-SEEK

Before you sit down to read the Christmas story together, hide the pieces of your family's nativity around the room. When each character gets introduced as you read, see who can find them first and bring them to the manger!

2. COLORING SHEET

Find and print an age-appropriate coloring sheet for your kids. Let them color while you read the story to them to help keep the wiggles away! Older kids and teenagers could draw their own rendering of the nativity scene.

3. BIRTHDAY CAKE

Bake a birthday cake or cupcakes for Jesus! Decorate your dining table for a birthday party during Christmas Eve dinner or breakfast on Christmas morning. Light a candle, sing Happy Birthday, and say a special prayer thanking God for the amazing gift of His Son.

4. PLAY GAMES TOGETHER

No celebration is complete without some fun! After you've read the story together, try playing one of the fun Christmas-themed games we've detailed to the right.

GAME TIME!

Do You Hear What I Hear:

Seal Christmas bells in bags or boxes. Place 1 jingle bell in the first box, 2 bells in the second box, 3 bells in the third box, and so forth. Players take turns to shake the 5 boxes, and guess which box contains 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 jingle bells. The person who gets the most correct answers wins!

No More Room:

Divide into teams of equal numbers. Give each team one sheet of newspaper (or wrapping paper, if you don't have any). Place the paper on the floor. All team members must stand on the piece of newspaper, with no parts of their bodies touching the walls or surrounding objects. Remain standing for 5 seconds. Fold the newspaper in half and repeat. Keep doing this until only one team remains!

Good News!



But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.

Luke 2:10-11 (NIRV)



Hanukkah

Parents: Have you ever wondered why we don't celebrate, more fully, the festivals and holy days from the Old Testament? Do you wonder why we don't more naturally connect to Christianity's Jewish heritage?

Kids: Do you wonder what it means when a friend at school or character on TV talks about or celebrates Hanukkah? Have you ever thought about how Jesus may have celebrated Christmas? Did He actually call it that?

There really is a lot to be said about Hanukkah and a big really important way that Hanukkah may help us see and understand Jesus. And the more we understand Jesus, the better we are at celebrating Christmas.

HERE'S THE BACKGROUND:

Did you know that there's about a 400-year gap between the book of Malachi at the end of the Old Testament and the book of Matthew, at the start of the New Testament? God wasn't absent during that time and His people, the Jews, were still growing and seeking Him, on one hand...but still failing and making mistakes, on the other. They were also being ruled by other nations, which made it hard to fully know and seek God.

Hanukkah is an 8-day celebration called the **Festival of Lights**. The word "Hanukkah" comes from a Hebrew word that means "dedication or consecration." In 200 BCE (between the Old and New Testament), Antiochus III of Syria defeated the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt and Judea became part of the Seleucid Empire. In 175 BCE, Antiochus IV Epiphanes expelled the Jews from Judea and outlawed Judaism. That means he said they couldn't worship God. He looted Israel's temple and erected an altar to Zeus inside. He banned their customs and ordered that pigs (which the Jews consider unclean animals) be sacrificed on the altar in the Holy of Holies. He disrespected God's temple and God's altar in a major way.

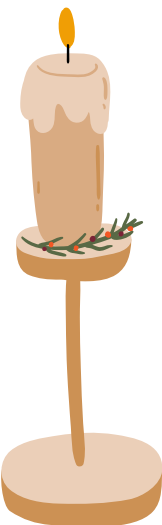
Mattathias, a Jewish **Rabbi** (or priest), and his five sons staged a revolt against Antiochus. A year or two into this war, Mattathias died, leaving his son Judah as leader. Judah became known as Judah "the hammer" or Judah Maccabee, thus the name the Maccabean Revolt. Under Judah's leadership, Antiochus was defeated! With the battle won and the temple reclaimed, it now had to be cleaned and rededicated before they could properly worship. Legend tells us that they only had enough oil to burn the **menorah** (which is a candle stand) for one night. This was a problem, since the **Talmud** (which is a Jewish instruction manual for their Rabbis) prescribed that the candles be burned throughout the evening every night while the new altar was being built and the temple cleansed. Miraculously, the candles burned for eight days, the exact amount of time needed to press olives into new oil. An eight-day Jewish festival was declared to commemorate the miracle.

In John 10:22, Jesus celebrated the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah. Isn't that exciting?! The Lord God, who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, and who was Himself the slaughtered lamb on the altar for our sin, honored and celebrated this festival. Now this temple of God, which was so grand in Old Testament days, is the lives of believers in Christ.

DID YOU KNOW?

Families, when you learn about Hanukkah and the reason for it, you really are celebrating Christ's Advent (coming or birth) into the world. You can also celebrate His coming into your life to occupy your temple and be your Savior. Jesus is who makes us clean and holy. So we dedicate, *Hanukkah*, our lives to Him. Jesus is the real Light. In Him there is no darkness. He has called us and caused us to be the light of the world, a light that burns miraculously and eternally for all to see.

Do you like this Festival of Lights? Does it help remind you to dedicate and rededicate yourself to God? Hanukkah and Christmas aren't at odds at all, and one might even help you keep the other better. The story, the legend, and the meaning of Hanukkah all point to Christ just as much as the nativity, the manger, and the carols. It's all about being ever dedicated to God, and shining His light for the whole world to see!



Celebrate THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

There are lots of great ways to celebrate Hanukkah—The Festival of Lights. Here are eight super easy ways to celebrate these eight great days!

1. LIGHT THE MENORAH

A menorah is a candleholder with nine candles. Eight of the candles represent the eight days it took to press olives into oil for the lamps of the temple, and the miracle that God provided. The ninth candle in the center is called the **Shamash**, and it means “attendant.” You use the Shamash to light the other eight candles.

Light the candles each evening. The first night, you only light one candle—the one on the far right. On each subsequent night, light one more candle. Start with the newest candle first, and move left to right. These days, menorahs are very easy to find. Check Amazon, Target, or look for DIY ideas on Pinterest and make your own!



2. DONUTS!

Because of the oil used to light lamps in ancient days, a traditional Hanukkah treat is dough fried in oil. Who could be mad at that?! Especially popular at Hanukkah are the donuts filled with jelly. Make a donut run with your family to your favorite local shop, or try making your own deep-fried confections at home.



3. PLAY DREIDEL

It's a super simple game played with a spinning top and chocolate coins. The four sides of the dreidel indicate what you do each turn. You either take one, give one, lose a turn, or take the whole pot of chocolate coins in the middle!



4. TELL THE HANUKKAH STORY

It's fun for kids to learn about the times between the Old & New Testaments and the faithfulness of the Jews who wanted to honor God in spite of really oppressive

people. It's also important they know that Jesus himself would've celebrated Hanukkah growing up! Consider adding a book about Hanukkah to your family's collection of Christmas stories.

5. SHARE A BLESSING

Do a donut delivery, or drop off some chocolate coins and a dreidel with game instructions to a friend. Be sure to tell them how Jesus is the real light of the world!

6. LATKES

Fried in oil, reminiscent of lamp oil again, shredded potatoes make a really festive side item. You can easily find simple recipes online. And if you're looking for a no-starch version, consider apple latkes! Yum!

7. HANUKKAH CRAFTS

These can be simple or complicated, whichever is your preference! Most craft stores carry at least a small selection of kid-friendly Hanukkah craft kits this time of year. Or try cutting potatoes to make festive Hanukkah stamps, dip them in paint, and make fun additions to your Christmas decorations!

8. RECITE THE BLESSINGS

There are traditional prayers and blessings that go along with the lighting of the menorah each day. They celebrate the sovereignty of God and His care for people. You can listen to them online, said or sung in Hebrew. Or, be creative and write your own blessing about how Jesus is the light of the world and how God is good all the time.



DID YOU KNOW?

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, there are 24 acceptable spellings for the word *Hanukkah*. So if you see a resource that says “Chanukah” or “Hanuka,” it's right, too!



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Merry Christmas



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