

Jesse Tree Introduction:

Christmas. The very word evokes profound meaning in all of us. For many, this time of year is filled with excitement and anticipation, but when the day finally arrives, we are left feeling like something is missing. Perhaps this is because many of our traditions, while good, are not centered around Jesus. If we are not intentional with our time, try as we might, the season will come and go with very little thought of the real reason we celebrate!

What if there is a better way?

This year, we're offering our church family a resource that will help them create a new tradition leading up to Christmas - *Journey to Jesus: A Jesse Tree Advent*. Many of us are familiar with the idea of advent, which comes from the Latin word meaning "coming." But the idea behind Jesse Tree might be new. It comes from Isaiah 11:1, which prophesies of a "shoot" that will sprout from the stump of Jesse's family tree. It is a promise of hope in the coming Messiah and Savior, foretold long before his birth. In the stories of Jesus' ancestors, we can see a foreshadowing of his own life, death, and resurrection.

Will you join us this year?

Together, we will commit to be intentional with our time and set aside just a few minutes every day. Together, we will be like Habakkuk and set a watch post and wait with anticipation for God's answer to the problems of this world. Together, we will be like Zacchaeus who climbed up a tree to get a better glimpse of Jesus. Together, as we spend time each day in God's Word, our hearts will be prepared and our minds will be focused on the real reason we celebrate Christmas.

This year, we will start a NEW Christmas tradition that will remind us again that ALL of the stories in Scripture point to Jesus and show us why his arrival on this earth as, "God made into flesh," was the BEST gift ever!

We are excited to see how God will move in our hearts this year, as we WAIT together in anticipation of the day we get to celebrate the advent of the Promised Messiah.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask! We are more than happy to help!

Email Cheri Hogrefe: cheri@providencechurch.com.

Thank you for joining us on this journey!

Jesse Tree Advent Reading plan:

December 1: The Shoot from Jesse's Tree	Isaiah 11:1-5, 10
December 2: The Watchtower	Habakkuk 2:1; 3:2, 16b-19
December 3: In the Beginning	Genesis 1:26a, 27-28, 31; 2:7
December 4: The Serpent Crusher	Selections from Genesis 2-3
December 5: God Shows Mercy	Selections from Genesis 6-9
December 6: Abram's Faith	Genesis 12:1-4, 7
December 7: God's Covenant with Abram	Genesis 15:1-6
December 8: Son of Laughter	Genesis 21:1-7
December 9: God Provides a Substitute	Genesis 22:1-2, 6-14
December 10: Coat of Many Colors	Selections from Genesis 37 & 50
December 11: Engraved on His Hands	Selections from Deuteronomy 5
December 12: Scarlet Cord	Selections from Joshua 2
December 13: Kinsman Redeemer	Selections from Ruth 1-4
December 14: Shepherd King	I Samuel 16:1, 6-7, 10-13
December 15: Living Temple	1 Kings 5:1-5; 6:11-14
December 16: Elijah's Contest	Selections from I Kings 18
December 17: A New Kingdom	Isaiah 11:1-4b, 6-10
December 18: Jonah & the Whale	Selections from Jonah 1-3
December 19: House of Bread	Micah 5:2-5a
December 20: Zechariah & Elizabeth	Luke 1:5-20
December 21: John the Baptist	Matthew 3:1-6
December 22: Gabriel Visits Mary	Luke 1:26-38
December 23: Joseph's Dream	Matthew 1:18-25
December 24: Census in Bethlehem	Luke 2:1-5
December 25: Our Savior Arrives	Luke 2:6-21

Preschool families! Here's a few helpful tips for introducing Jesse Tree:

The basic idea of a Jesse Tree Advent is this:

1. Read one Bible story per day that begins on December 1st, and ends on Christmas Day with the birth of Jesus.
2. Hang an ornament each day with a picture and verse that is a visual reminder of the story. *(Pictures of the ornaments are also provided so your children can color!)*

How to explain it to your **Toddler**:

For a toddler, I'd explain very little. Just do it! If you can keep your Jesse Tree activity short and sweet and at the same time each day, the toddler will learn what to expect. Maybe it's with breakfast or after nap time. Give this activity a name and say it every day. *("It's time to read our Jesse Tree Advent.")* Put that day's ornament & Bible story out on the table. Read as much as the toddler can sit through while they're eating a snack. *(Feel free to skip paragraphs or paraphrase!)* When the reading is done, let the toddler hang the ornament on the tree. I bet after a few days, your toddler will know what to expect and get excited about it even though they don't really understand the meaning of a Jesse Tree. You can always say something super simple like, *"The Jesse Tree ornaments tell the story of God's plan to send Jesus to save us from sin. This is the true meaning of Christmas."*

How to explain it to your **Preschooler**:

For a preschool child, I'd introduce the idea on November 30th, the day BEFORE you are going to start. *"This December, we're going to celebrate Advent! Advent means 'coming,' and it's a month when we celebrate that Jesus came to earth as a human to save us from sin. To celebrate the Advent season, we're going to read from the Bible every day and hang an ornament on the tree that goes with the story. These are called Jesse Tree ornaments because Jesse was one of the great-great-great-great-great-grandparents of Jesus."*

How to create a lasting tradition:

- >> Be Consistent: For preschool children, consistency is everything. Pick the right time of day for your family and stick to it!
 - >> Be Concise: Short devotionals can be just as meaningful as long ones, so keep the main thing the main thing!
 - >> Be Prepared: This includes the content of the devotional, but most importantly, whatever you need to engage the kids. You might want to have a basket of supplies that you pull out each day. This keeps everything in the same spot, so you don't have to waste time playing hide and seek to find what you need.
 - >> Be Prayerful: Bathe these times in prayer before and after they happen. Ask God to soften your children's hearts and give them a joyful spirit to receive these stories and believe they are true.
- We will also be praying for your family as you set out to create new Christmas traditions focused on Jesus!

All scripture quotations are from the New International Early Reader's Version (NIRV).