

CHRISTMAS DAY FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

Parents: Make sure you have a picture sheet for each child. You may want to have crayons for younger children to color. Read through the devotional ahead of time and have Scriptures ready to read. You can read the commentary aloud or devise your own to move through the story. Print is in italics for discussion questions and directions. For an adult version, see www.soulatrest.com, Day Twelve.

Introduction:

What do you think it must have been like for the Almighty God to come to live as a person—eating and sleeping and dreaming and playing—just like you and I do every day? One man wrote a book where he described Jesus coming to earth like he was walking down a staircase that stretched all the way from the glory of heaven where everything was perfect, to our world, where there is a lot of suffering and sickness and pain. (*point out staircase on picture sheet*).

Today we will celebrate Christ's birth in a unique way—by journeying with Jesus through some key moments as he moved down that staircase. (*Explain to children that they will be looking for the right picture when you tell them, and will draw a line from it to the number on the staircase*)

Read: Philippians 2:6-8

First moment: The Bible tells us that God planned for Jesus to come to earth even before he created the world. Then he waited and waited and waited until just the right time and put things into place so that Jesus could be born as a baby, just like you were. (*have children point out picture, and draw a line to #1 on the staircase*).

Discuss: *Can you see Jesus there, standing on that staircase just before he let himself become small in his mommy's tummy? What kinds of thoughts went through His mind? Was he excited? How did Jesus feel about the journey he was about to go on; about coming to earth as a person?*

Read: Luke 2:1-7

Second moment: Our first glimpse of Jesus as he enters the world is in a stable that reeked of animal dung and moldy straw, where he lay shivering in the chill of night, with only his young parents nearby.

Discuss: *Can you imagine what it felt like to be there after you'd just been living in heaven? What would you say was the worst part? (Have children point out picture and draw a line to #2 on the staircase).*

Sing together: Away in a Manger

From that manger in Bethlehem, Jesus went further down that staircase as his parents became vagabonds, settling as strangers in a foreign land where they had to get jobs from Egyptians who

probably detested them. Later Mary and Joseph would establish their family in Nazareth, a town no one really liked or respected.

Third moment: When Jesus grew up, he went out into the wilderness to fast and pray for 40 days. Satan, his enemy, showed up there and taunted Him, daring Him to show everyone that he was God and could do anything he wanted. Jesus refused, and moved on down that staircase. *(Have children draw a line from picture to #3 on the staircase).*

For the next three years Jesus went around helping people—healing them, feeding them, showing them compassion and doing lots of miracles. On many lonely nights, he probably slept out in the fields and hills, praying to his heavenly father. Every day he did exactly what God wanted him to do, but some people didn't like it. They made fun of him and rejected him, and threatened to kill him.

Fourth moment: Down and down and down the winding staircase Jesus went until one day he was arrested. His closest friends ran away or pretended they didn't know him. One of them even betrayed him with a kiss. *(Have children draw a line from the picture to #4)*

Discuss: *What do you think Jesus wanted to do when people were so mean to him? Have you ever been treated badly by a friend you really liked? How did that feel?*

Read: Isaiah 53:3-7

Fifth moment: People made fun of Jesus, spit at him and slapped him, beat him with a whip and then marched him through the streets like a criminal. Finally, they hung him on a cross to die. For six hours Jesus descended to the lowest place possible as He took on the sins of the world. *(Have children draw a line from the picture to #5)*

Sixth Moment: But we know the story didn't end there. Jesus rose from the dead and ascended back to heaven. We will probably only understand what it really felt like for Jesus to go down that staircase when we see him one day, sitting on his throne, radiant in splendor, attended by angels and worshipped by saints from every tribe and tongue. *(have children draw a line from the picture to #6 on the staircase)*

Read: Revelation 4:1-11 (or for shorter reading, 1-3,11).

Spend a few minutes having each person offer a word of thanksgiving for the special blessings we have this Christmas because of what Jesus did.

Sing: Joy to the World

Merry Christmas!