

"*The Adventure of Christmas* is a remarkable achievement. With captivating illustrations and a simple but compelling approach to storytelling, Ed Drew has written an inspiring Advent devotional, grace-filled and truth-soaked and entirely approachable. Each page from the Christmas story comes to life, and the questions and activities are thoughtful but not over-burdensome. I'm so grateful for this new doorway into Advent season with my family."

RANDALL GOODGAME, Slugs and Bugs; Author,
Jesus and the Very Big Surprise

"When you take a journey with children, you pack for every possibility. This devotional does just that as it walks families through the unchangeable map of Advent with questions and activities to engage even the most restless traveler."

CHERYCE BERG, Director of Children's Ministries,
College Church, Wheaton

"Another great resource for families from Faith in Kids! With its age-specific questions, there's something here to help you celebrate Jesus whatever stage your family is at. Ed writes with an unwavering commitment to God's word, a healthy dose of fun and realistic expectations about family life. This is a brilliant way to plan your 'Adventure' this Christmas."

DAN ADAMS AND GARETH LOH, Awesome Cutlery

"A short but meaningful daily Advent family devotional with something for all ages from under-5s to adults!"

VICTORIA BEECH, GodVenture

"A wonderful book which equips the whole family to discover the Christmas story afresh."

KATHARINE HILL, Director, Care for the Family

"What do our kids need this Christmas? More than anything they need to know and love God. Ed Drew helps make discipling our family easier—no matter what the age range! *The Adventure of Christmas* is truly the gift that keeps on giving."

BARBARA REAOCH, Author, *A Jesus Christmas*

"Faith in Kids have such a huge heart for encouraging the whole family to explore faith and they come up with so many great ways to do just that. *The Adventure of Christmas* is no exception. Simple enough to make it easy for any family to use but also packed with creative ideas, question starters for any age and lots of optional extras, this is a really helpful way to make the most of Advent together as a family."

LOU WOOLCOCK, Families Co-ordinator, Youth for Christ



Ed Drew

THE ADVENTURE OF CHRISTMAS

*A journey through Advent
for the whole family*


the good book
COMPANY

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Before you begin

The first Christmas was an adventure like no other.

The angels blazed brighter than any Christmas lights. Elizabeth and Zechariah's joy at their baby was beyond any grandparents' delight at a kids' Christmas play. Mary's preparation was more chaotic than any festive family gathering. Joseph's journey to Bethlehem was harder than any road trip to relatives. The shepherd's midnight arrival, bursting into the silence, was more entertaining than any family film night. The wise men's gifts were more precious than any sparkly wrapped present. King Herod's anger was more extreme than any family row you have witnessed.

Let the incredible adventure of the first Christmas light up your Advent.

In this book you will find 25 sessions. They're designed to start on 1st December and finish on Christmas Day—but they don't have to be used that way. Not all families will manage a Bible time every day; if you get behind, skip over the ones you missed and pick up the story or just catch up after Christmas.

We have written each Bible time to take you less than ten minutes. So find a place and a time to give yourselves ten minutes each day to listen, think, talk and pray. The sessions start with a prayer and a question to get your family going in the right direction. Then there are a few sentences to introduce where we are in the Bible and one idea to listen out for. You will be reading a few verses from Luke's and Matthew's Gospels. For families with young children there is usually an extra suggestion for when you read the passage to try to engage them more in the story, because not many four-year-olds find it easy to sit still for ten minutes. (But one day they will...) There's a question for each age group and a prayer suggestion to finish. After that there are a few optional sections to enjoy on the journey to school or in a moment before bedtime. Make it work for your family, because the Lord has made every family different.

God bless your family as you enjoy the adventure of Christmas together.

Top tips

- Doing a study a day until Christmas can be a challenge when December is so busy. You could just do the key stories to make it more manageable—these are marked with a star in the top right-hand corner. If you fall behind, you have not failed. Do the right studies on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and keep going with the others—if necessary, into January!
- Each day there are four questions, differentiated by age. Usually each day's questions build one on the other, to develop the big idea. So while the questions are aimed at the different age ranges, it will work best if you run through the earlier questions even if you don't have children of that age. And you know your kids better than I do, so if you think they will be able to think about the questions in categories older than their age, please go ahead and keep going through the questions! And adults could answer questions too—see next point!
- Remember that there is huge value in your children seeing their parents answering questions from the Bible, talking about their faith, showing that they don't have all the answers, and praying. It will have a lasting impact for children to see their parents engaging with the Bible, humbly accepting that they are a work in progress and praying to their own heavenly Father.
- Each day's reading has a suggestion for younger children to help them to engage with it. Under-5's need extra help to grasp what is happening in the story. There is a picture for each day. Ask your child to identify the people in the picture and to describe the action. You could use toy action figures to make a drama out of each story. This age group would be helped by having a children's picture Bible to see what is happening in the Bible stories. The Beginner's Bible and the Jesus Storybook Bible are good for this.
- There is a separate advent calendar/sticker journey that goes alongside this book. You don't need it to enjoy these devotionals! But if you'd like one, go to: thegoodbook.co.uk/adventurecal or thegoodbook.com/adventurecal

If your family are new to family Bible times, or if you are restarting them after a break and you face some opposition to the idea, here are a few things you might find helpful:

- You could set a timer for ten minutes (and hide it, so that the ticking seconds aren't watched!) and promise that when the alarm goes off, you will stop the conversation and everyone will pray in response. Keep that promise, no matter how far you've got. (If your children are currently more malleable, then don't use a timer, as it may set an expectation that the ten minutes will be a form of a torture.)
- Set an expectation that this time together will be the highlight of the day. Jesus likened God's words in the Bible to bread (Matthew 4:4)—your family needs this ten minutes each day to survive just as much as they need food to eat. When you have finished a Bible time, find reasons to praise your child or to highlight a success. Let them know that their engagement, understanding and enthusiasm matter to you.
- Ask your children to help make the decisions about how your family Bible times will work (not whether they will happen—that's your call, not theirs—but how they will happen).
 - What time do we want them?
 - Where do we want them to happen so that they are a great opportunity to learn and concentrate?
 - What will need to be done before we can sit down together each day?
 - What role can each of us play to make them happen?
- Don't be disappointed if not every day feels easy or enthusiastic. If you can manage to do three or four family Bible times so that there is a sense of an expectation and a routine, then they will usually improve. As always with children, there will be days that are a struggle. Those days will show you your need of Jesus Christ in your parenting—which is no bad thing!
- Change the plan if the plan isn't working.

God bless you in this. Take a moment to pray for your efforts. If you don't already feel dependent on Jesus Christ in your parenting, you are about to!

	DAY	PASSAGE	TITLE	KEY WORD
✦	1	Luke 1 v 1-4	The eyes that saw	Luke
	2	Luke 1 v 5-10	Zechariah & Elizabeth	Zechariah & Elizabeth
	3	Luke 1 v 11-17	One to go before the Lord	Get ready
	4	Luke 1 v 18-25	No words to explain	Believe!
	5	Luke 1 v 26-27	A girl named Mary	Mary
✦	6	Luke 1 v 28-33	A baby with a throne	King
	7	Luke 1 v 34-38	How?	Son of God
	8	Matt 1 v 18-19	A boy named Joseph	Joseph
✦	9	Matt 1 v 20-21	He will save us	Save
✦	10	Matt 1 v 22-25	God with us	Immanuel
	11	Luke 1 v 39-45	Leaping for joy	Blessed
✦	12	Luke 2 v 1-5	Off to Bethlehem	Bethlehem
✦	13	Luke 2 v 6-7	The big birth	Born!
✦	14	Luke 2 v 8-12	Burning up the night	Shepherds
	15	Luke 2 v 13-14	Turn up the music	Praise
✦	16	Luke 2 v 15-17a	See the baby	Seen
✦	17	Luke 2 v 17b-20	Sharing the story	Tell
✦	18	Luke 2 v 25-33	A promise kept	Simeon
	19	Luke 2 v 36-38	A very focused widow	Anna
✦	20	Matt 2 v 1-3	Men from the east	Wise men
✦	21	Matt 2 v 4-8	To Bethlehem	Herod
✦	22	Matt 2 v 9-12	On your knees	Worship
	23	Luke 2 v 39-40	A strong and gracious Saviour	Growing
✦	24	Luke 2 v 16-18	Back to the manger	Amazed
✦	25	Recap	Merry Christmas!	The King has come

Note: The **KEY STORIES** are the ones marked with a star. ✦

How to use the Advent calendar

On the opposite page you'll see a "calendar" with a key word or phrase and an icon for each day. These words will help you to remember where you've been.

Your child might also like to colour in each day as you finish it. Maybe they could choose some Christmas colours or glitter pens.

You can also download and print out a version of this calendar from www.thegoodbook.com/the-adventure-of-christmas. You could suspend a piece of string or ribbon across the room where you'll do your Bible times, cut out the calendar icons, and then hang them up on the string/ribbon day by day.

Advent Calendar





DAY 1

The eyes that saw



Where are we going today?

We can trust what we read, because Luke spoke to those who met Jesus and then wrote down exactly what happened.

Pray: Dear Father, thank you that we can get ready for Christmas by hearing what really happened during that first Christmas. Amen.

Ask a quick question

What is the most amazing thing you have ever seen with your own eyes?

Link: Today we're going to see that Luke spoke to those who saw what happened that first Christmas. He wrote down exactly what they told him.

Today's story

- *Where are we in the Bible?* This is the very start of Luke's true story of Jesus' life. Luke starts by explaining how he wrote his Gospel and why. He's writing to an important friend (who he calls "your Excellency") who was a follower of Jesus.
- *Look out for why* Luke says we can trust what we read in his Gospel.
- *Read the passage.* For young children, use the pictures to explain as you read.

Luke 1 v 1-4

¹ Many have tried to give a history of the things that happened among us. ² They have written the same things that we learned from others—the people who saw those things from the beginning and served God by telling people his message. ³ I myself studied everything carefully from

the beginning, your Excellency. I thought I should write it out for you. So I put it in order in a book. ⁴ I write these things so that you can know that what you have been taught is true.



Question for 3s and 4s

Look at today's pictures. Luke is talking to people who met Jesus. Can you see where Luke is writing their story on his tablet?

Question for 5-7s

Listen to verse 4: "I write these things so that you can know that what you have been taught is true". Why did Luke want to write his Gospel? *(Luke wrote his Gospel so that his readers could be certain that what they had heard about Jesus was true. He spoke to the people who had seen Jesus in the flesh, teaching and doing miracles. Luke made sure that every detail in his Gospel about Jesus really happened.)*

Question for over-7s

Look at verse 2. From which people did Luke find out about what happened? What do you think Luke actually had to do to write his Gospel? *(Finding out what really happened is not as easy as it sounds. How did Luke find those eyewitnesses? People remember different details. There were no videos or photos, just the memories of people who were there to see Jesus. But Luke "studied everything carefully" and pieced it all together.)*

Question for teens

Is Luke's method different to how most people assume that the Bible came to be written, do you think? How does Luke's method change how we view his story of the first Christmas? *(We're not reading myth or legend. We're not reading what a bunch of early Christians made up one dark night. We are reading the facts of the first Christmas. We're reading history!)*



Think and pray

Pray asking God to help you as you learn from Luke's Gospel. Thank God for how Luke wrote his Gospel.



OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Want to get baking?

Make some edible eyewitness eyeballs! They could be made from marshmallows with chocolate buttons stuck on the top using chocolate spread, or a biscuit with a splodge of coloured icing and a chocolate chip in the middle.

Got time to chat?

Have you ever wondered how much of the story of the first Christmas is really history? With school Christmas productions, endless Christmas films and hundreds of years of traditions, it can be hard to work out what is made up and what is history. Do you think it matters?

Something more for the adults?

Sooner or later, we will be asked questions about the trustworthiness of the Bible. Some of those we know will just dismiss the Bible and our belief in it. We believe that at the first Christmas God became a baby who grew up to walk, talk, eat, cry and listen. Through the certainty of knowing about Jesus, we can decide to trust him as our Lord. Thank God for the certainty we can have in who Jesus really is.

DAY 2

Zechariah and Elizabeth



Where are we going today?

Elizabeth and Zechariah lived good lives for God. They had no children.

Pray: Dear Father, thank you that in the Bible we meet the people who were part of your plan for that first Christmas. Amen.

Ask a quick question

Do you know an elderly couple? What are they like?

Link: Today we're going to see an amazing elderly couple. Enjoy meeting them.

Today's story

- *Where are we in the Bible?* It's been 400 years since God last spoke to his people. No prophets. No angels. No words. But some of God's people are still trusting God in spite of the silence.
- *Look out for* the joy and the sadness of this elderly couple.
- *Read the passage.* For young children, point out the characters in the picture as you read. You could stop after verse 7.

Luke 1 v 5-10

⁵ During the time Herod ruled Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah. He belonged to Abijah's group. Zechariah's wife came from the family of Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ Zechariah and Elizabeth truly did what God said was good. They did everything the Lord commanded and told

people to do. They were without fault in keeping his law. ⁷ But Zechariah and Elizabeth had no children. Elizabeth could not have a baby; and both of them were very old.

⁸ Zechariah was serving as a priest before God for his group. It was his group's time to serve. ⁹ According to the custom of the priests, he was chosen to go into the Temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ There were a great many people outside praying at the time the incense was offered.



Question for 3s and 4s

Why might Elizabeth and Zechariah have sometimes felt sad?

Question for 5-7s

Look at verses 8-10. What exciting thing was Zechariah going to do that day? (What an honour! Tomorrow we'll find out what happened when Zechariah went into the Temple.)

Question for over-7s

Read verse 6. If that's what Elizabeth and Zechariah were like, what kinds of things do you think they did each day?

Question for teens

If you could meet Zechariah and Elizabeth at this point in their lives, what question would you ask them? What question might they have asked God?



Think and pray

Zechariah and Elizabeth kept living for God, doing good. Pray that God would help you to do the same.



! OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Want to get busy?

Can you think of an elderly couple in your church who live for God as Zechariah and Elizabeth did? They would love to hear that their goodness reminds you of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Give them a ring or send them a card. They'll be so pleased to hear from you.

Got time to chat?

It makes our hearts ache to hear that Zechariah and Elizabeth were so good and yet still life hurt so much. We sometimes think that if we serve God, he will make life easy for us. As Luke's Gospel continues, we are going to see how God uses Zechariah and Elizabeth's hurt for his glorious plan. Could God use your hurt for his glorious plan?

Something more for the adults?

Elizabeth says in 1 v 25, "In these days he has shown his favour and taken away my disgrace among the people" (NIV). Notice that word "dis-grace"? Sometimes God's grace appears to be missing in our painful circumstances. But at the first Christmas, God showed his favour to a hurting world. Pray that this Christmas God's favour might shine into the hurt and dis-grace of your life, and of those around you.