

Use this devotion guide each night with your family. Follow the five FAITH5 steps: **Share, Read, Talk, Pray, and Bless.**

DEVOTION ONE

Signs of the Son

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

— Mark 13:24–25

3 TALK

Billy was afraid of storms. If he was playing with his friends and the clouds started to gray or the wind picked up, he would jump on his bike and head for safety. Billy's mom would remind him each time he ran in the house, afraid of the storm: "Pay attention to the signs so you don't get wet or hurt." By looking for the signs of the storm, Billy could appreciate the power of the storm and find shelter from its force and danger.

There were great signs in the heavens and on earth when Jesus first appeared. A star appeared in the heavens. A young woman gave birth. A king trembled. The angels sang. The Bible says there will also be great signs when Jesus returns to claim His own.

As you prepare for Christ's coming this Advent, be aware of the signs. They point to something great that is right around the corner for you!

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying to you in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. Tell about a time you were caught in a storm. How did it feel?
3. What signs would you see to let you know Jesus is coming?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for sending so many signals announcing Jesus' arrival.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for entering into your life. Thank Him for your family "highs" of the day.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the signs of Christ and to help you point others to Him this Advent. Bring your family “lows” to God. Close in Jesus’ name.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

“May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ’s coming.”

“The future you shall know when it has come; before then, forget it.”

— Aeschylus

DEVOTION TWO

Son in the Clouds

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

— Mark 13:26–27

3 TALK

Lie on the grassy hillside and look up into the clouds (or gaze out the window). What do you see? Let your imagination run wild and turn the billowing shapes into ships and dragons and faces. What do you feel?

There are many different kinds of clouds. Some look like pillows or marshmallows. Some are gray, dark or smoky. Some clouds are high and vapor-like. Some are thick and billowy, like cotton. Others are low, heavy and dark, charged with lightning and filled with rain. Clouds circle the earth all the time. The same cloud blocking out the heat of the sun at noon could bring a cold rain shower later on the same day. Clouds are shifting constantly, changing shape and size, quickly forming out of nothing and evaporating just as fast. Some clouds are slow and steady. Others are unpredictable and dangerous.

Jesus said that when He comes again, He'll come "in clouds" with great power and glory. The Bible doesn't say when this will happen. It doesn't say exactly how it will happen. It only says that one day Jesus will return and, when He does, the whole world will see Him.

Jesus is coming this Advent, too. Will you see Him?

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying to you in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. Have you ever looked down on the clouds from an airplane? What was that like?
3. How is Jesus' return as unpredictable as the clouds?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for the beauty of the clouds and the promise of eternity.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for being the solid Rock of truth in an unpredictable world. Thank Him for today's "highs."

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you stay alert and to keep your eye on the clouds swirling in your life. Bring your family “lows” to God. Close in Jesus’ name.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

“May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ’s coming.”

“We steal if we touch tomorrow. It is God’s.”

— Henry Ward Beecher

DEVOTION THREE

Fig Tree Prophecy

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

— Mark 13:28–29

3 TALK

Some people who live in cold climates can sense spring's arrival before they see it. They can feel it in their bones. It's a snap, they say. No leaves or buds may have appeared, none of the songbirds have returned, but there is a brief moment in which they just know it's time.

Jesus said His arrival on earth will be very much the same. The signs of His coming will be known not by sight, but by faith. The signs will be born in hearts even before there is proof – maybe even before the last cold snow has melted. “Jesus People” will know His arrival before they see it.

You can't stop spring from arriving. It pushes the gnawing winter back and ushers in its time of warmth and rebirth. When Jesus is on His way, there will be no stopping Him, either. He will push the gnawing winter of death back forever and usher in the spring of eternity.

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying to you in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. Talk about the way spring arrives in your town. What are the signs?
3. Why do you think Jesus compares His arrival to the arrival of spring?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise* / *Thank* / *Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for offering you the resurrection of spring in Jesus Christ every day.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for teaching you to look for the signs of His arrival in your life. Thank Him for today's “highs.”

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the signs of Christ and know Him when He enters your world. Bring your family “lows” to God. Close in Jesus’ name.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

“May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ’s coming.”

“Don’t ever prophesy: for if you prophesy wrong, nobody will forget it; and if you prophesy right, nobody will remember it.”

— Josh Billings

DEVOTION FOUR

The Father Knows Best

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

— Mark 13:32

3 TALK

Do you know anyone who can predict the future? In the ancient world people would often pay priests to sacrifice animals just to get a glimpse into the future. Interesting, huh?

Today people use all kinds of other silly devices to try to find out what is going to happen to them. Some pay psychic friends, palm readers and astrologers for a glimpse into tomorrow. Some read fortune cookies and horoscopes for advice. Some even believe the meteorologists on television! (With all of their fancy Doppler, they are only right 70% of the time.) Who really knows what will happen tomorrow?

Many people have come forward claiming to have inside knowledge about end times. They pull out obscure verses from the Bible to build entire arguments about the “when” and “where” of Jesus’ return. They warn you that unless you believe you’ll be marked by the beast and left behind when Jesus comes. Some sound rather convinced and convincing. Are they right?

Before you go believing any of them, remember this: When Jesus’ followers asked Him to tell them when the end of the world would happen, He wouldn’t do it. He said “no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” If someone says they have an inside track on the end of the world, they’re saying they know more than Jesus!

Questions:

1. What do you hear God’s voice saying to you in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. Look up your horoscope online. Is it accurate? Why or why not?
3. What would you say to someone who said they could predict the world’s end?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for always being in control of the future, even of Jesus’ arrival on earth.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for arriving in your life. Thank Him for today's "highs."

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you stay dependent on God and aware of Jesus' coming. Bring your family "lows" to God. Close in Jesus' name.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

"May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ's coming."

"We may not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future."

— Corrie ten Boom

DEVOTION FIVE

Keep Awake

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at the cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all; Keep awake."

— Mark 13:33–37

3 TALK

Do you like to stay up late? Do you wait for the weekend so you can stay up past 10:00 p.m.? Have you ever stayed up all night? In the verse for today, Jesus warned his followers to "keep awake." Does that mean you can never go to sleep? When you are so tired you can't keep your eyes open, it feels great to crawl under warm covers. No one can stay awake forever. So what does it mean? It means God wants you to be aware of Jesus.

Have you ever struggled to stay awake? Have your eyes ever grown heavy after lunch at school or in church? The human body needs sleep more than it needs food. Sleep is a refreshing gift, but too much sleep at the wrong time can be dangerous.

Jesus told His followers to keep awake and stay alert for His coming. He promised that He would come back, but warned it would be at a time when people least expected it. Advent is a time to stay alert. Keep awake! Jesus is coming soon.

Questions:

1. What do you hear God saying to you in the Bible verse? The quote?
2. What are the signs your body gives you when it's tired?
3. How can you as a family stay spiritually awake this Advent?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for watching over you.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for giving you alert minds. Bring today's "highs" to Him in thanks.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to keep you alert and ready for the unexpected. Bring your "lows" to God. Mark each other with the sign of the cross and close in Jesus' name.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

"May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ's coming."

"Some ordinary day will come—perhaps so full of tasks that we have little thought of Him—and yet that very ordinary day will be the day our Lord comes."

— Horatius Bonar

DEVOTION SIX

Who Is the Star?

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

— Mark 1:1–3

3 TALK

What is some good news you heard today? Good news can be about anything—family, friends or events. When you hear good news you feel happy and excited. You even might feel good about the person who brought you the news.

John the Baptist was a messenger bringing good news. John was not only the messenger of news, but John was also a sign! Nine hundred years before his birth, the prophet Isaiah predicted that someone like John would come to prepare the way for God's Messiah.

John the Baptist had all of the talent and passion of a star. He had the voice, the message and the look that would attract attention. When he appeared in the wilderness preaching repentance, people emptied the cities and traveled long distances to see him. He had a powerful piece of good news and a powerful way of getting it across – dunking them in the river Jordan. But John didn't spend much time in the spotlight. His ego didn't take over the show. Instead, he knew his place and happily pointed the people to the true star – the main event – who was just around the corner.

The Messiah is coming for you this Christmas. Jesus is almost here. Are you ready?

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying to you in the Bible verse? The quote?
2. Have you ever tried out for a lead role in a play, only to be assigned a lesser role? How did you feel?
3. What are you doing to prepare your home and family for Christ's coming?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for people who point the way to Jesus.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for giving His life so that you might have eternal life.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare your heart for the birth of Christ in you. Bring your highs and lows to God and close in Jesus' name.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

"May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ's coming."

"There is no limit to what can be accomplished when nobody cares who gets the credit."

— Anonymous

DEVOTION SEVEN

House Cleaning, John's Style

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

— Mark 1:4

3 TALK

Who is the most surprising person you know? Do you know anyone who pulls rabbits out of hats, pulls fun out of boredom or pulls smiles out of sadness?

John the Baptist surprised people. Like a call you didn't expect, he suddenly appeared and called the people to repentance. Like a mirror that suddenly appears in a dark hallway, he showed people a reflection of their sins. He jolted them out of their comfort zones by proclaiming a baptism of repentance and challenged them to admit their bad choices to God and turn to obedient, holy and right living. He didn't confront them to make them comfortable. He didn't expect any "nice sermon today, pastor," responses. He confronted them to make them ready for God's Messiah. To John the only way to get ready for God was to clean house!

John didn't give the people any easy outs. After hearing him, people had a decision to make. Were they going to stand with God or continue in their sinful lives? That was the choice. Were they going to hit the river and be cleansed or hit the road and go home, unchanged?

John is still calling. He is calling you, asking if you are ready to repent of your sins. He wants to clean your house and heart this Advent. How will you answer?

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying to you in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. Tell about a time when life surprised you and you had to make a tough choice. How did you feel?
3. What sins are weighing on you? What could you repent?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for surprising you with love.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for giving you the opportunity to repent. Thank Him for today's "highs" your family experienced.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make good choices in your life. Ask for strength to forgive. Bring your family "lows" to God. Close in Jesus' name.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

"May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ's coming."

"There is no better measure of a person than what he does when he is absolutely free to choose."

— Wilma Askinas

DEVOTION EIGHT

A Show or a Doctor?

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

— Mark 1:5

3 TALK

Some of the people who went to see John the Baptist were just looking for a great show. In a day before radio, television and movies, the traveling preacher was often the only show in town. His message took second place to the entertainment factor. The camel hair coat, the “bug eating” routine and the wild-eyed eccentric were worth the time and the price of admission.

Some of the people who went to see John were looking for a doctor. Their lives, their land and their dreams were sick. They desperately needed to know there was hope. They deeply wanted to see a future. If they took his remedy – the harsh pill of repentance – and were baptized, they had a chance for life. This was what they wanted and needed.

Did anyone in the crowd know what John really offered? Did anyone know how very close they were to God’s promised Messiah when they went down to the river to repent? John wasn’t simply a side show. He wasn’t simply a soul doctor. He was the voice the prophet Isaiah had predicted hundreds of years earlier. He was the one who would prepare the way of the Messiah who would change the world forever.

Don’t go to church looking for a show this Advent. Don’t pray the prayers of confession for a momentary “feel-good fix.” Go looking for Jesus. He’s right around the corner.

Questions:

1. What do you hear God’s voice saying in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. If you were ill, how far would you travel for a doctor with a cure?
3. How much of your church experience is a “show” and how much is an encounter with Christ?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for calling you out of the ordinary to meet the living Christ.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for the gift of life. Thank Him for your family “highs” this day.

Ask:

Ask the Spirit to bring you to true repentance. Bring your lows to God in prayer.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

“May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ’s coming.”

“If the people don’t want to come, you can’t stop them.”

— Yogi Berra

DEVOTION NINE

The Radical's Message

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'the one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.'

— Mark 1:6–7

3 TALK

Why do you wear the clothes you do? Maybe you like the style, you have no other choice, you don't care what you wear, or maybe you want to draw attention to yourself. Who knows? Do you notice what other kids wear? Are some kids treated better or worse because of what they wear? Clothes seem to be important. It is uncertain what John's reason for wearing camel hair was, but it was a very unusual fashion choice. One could imagine him being made fun of for his "style." John might have been striving for simplicity, but his choices seemed to draw more attention. Attention may have been what John wanted the most—not for himself. John wanted attention for the one "coming after him." To attract attention you often have to be different.

John was a signpost pointing to Jesus. He said he was unworthy to even stoop down and touch the ties of Jesus' sandals. But it didn't stop him from being the best possible signpost for which God could have asked! Even though he dressed differently and ate odd food, his task was what was important to him. He knew he was preparing the way for Jesus. Jesus was his focus. Next time you are tempted to think about the way someone else is dressed, you might want to think instead of the One who doesn't care how anyone is dressed—the One who loves you just the way you are! Who knows: that person may be on special assignment from God!

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying to you in the Bible verses above? In the quote?
2. Talk about the clothes you wear and why you wear them. Tell about someone who is ridiculed for the way they dress. How do you suppose that person feels?
3. What are some ways you and your family could be "signposts" for Jesus?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for loving you just the way you are.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for providing you with the clothes you wear.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit for courage to be a signpost to God. Ask for healing and help with your highs and lows and then close with a blessing.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

“May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ’s coming.”

“Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.”

— C.S. Lewis

DEVOTION TEN

Water and the Holy Spirit

1 SHARE

Your Highs & Lows for the day with one another.

2 READ

Scripture Verse and Highlight it in your Bible:

"I have baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

— Mark 1:8

3 TALK

Have you ever seen an antique telephone in a museum? In the early days of the telephone, people called "operators" sat at huge walls filled with wires and plugs to make phone connections by hand. Often, if the connection was taking a long time, the operator would break in on the line and say, "I'm trying to connect you," to assure the waiting caller that they were not forgotten. Once the call was connected the operator would simply fade away and leave the people to their call.

John the Baptist knew his role. He was there on the scene to connect God's people to God's Messiah. He told the people around him that he wasn't the Messiah. He wasn't even worthy to untie the sandal of the Messiah. (Untying sandals was the job of a lowly slave.) Instead, he was the person making the connection, the tool God was using to prepare a nation to meet their Savior.

It is difficult to do one's work without recognition. It takes a deep level of maturity to prepare something for someone else, then fade from view. John did just that. He wasn't in it for his own glory. He did it all for the glory of God's Messiah.

As you prepare for Christmas, remember John. He knew what mattered and who mattered as the Messiah approached. He pointed everyone to Jesus.

Questions:

1. What do you hear God's voice saying in the Bible verse? In the quote?
2. Talk about a baptism you saw. What do you remember the most?
3. Who are some people who have helped connect you to God? Have you thanked them recently? Do they know how important they are to you?

4 PRAY

Use a *Praise / Thank / Ask* prayer:

Praise:

Praise God for sending the Messiah, Jesus, to save you.

Thank:

Thank Jesus for people who have helped connect you to God. Name them in thanks. Thank Him for the “highs” your family experienced this day.

Ask:

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you give God the glory in every aspect of your life. Ask for help with the “lows” your family experienced this day. Close in Jesus’ name and bless each other with the sign of the cross.

5 BLESS

Bless one another with the sign of the cross and say:

“May your eyes be open to the signs of Christ’s coming.”

“God loves us the way we are, but too much to leave us that way.”

— Leighton Ford

Copyright © Faith Inkubators. For use by Faith Inkubators Advent B current annual licensed members only. Any other use is prohibited.
www.faithink.com