



THE ADVENT INVESTIGATOR



A FACT-FINDING DEVOTIONAL FOR
STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

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Although many publishers do not capitalize terms, and particularly pronouns which refer to the Trinity, in this study CDM publications has capitalized those elements for clarity of reference.

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Introduction

This book is all about investigating Christmas. We're going to approach the familiar story of Jesus's birth like a journalist who wants to discover new details and correct any mistaken information. Investigative journalists dive deep, looking for credible sources with a new angle that sheds light on what was *really* going on. We'll use the investigative questions—*who, what, where, when, why & how*—to guide our research.

I hope that as you read this devotional—alone, as a family, or in another group—that you will be drawn into a deeper knowledge of the story of Jesus's birth. These readings explore the historical context of Jesus's birth, as well as the mysteries of *why* and *how* He came, and finally, what His coming means for our lives today.

The Components of Each Lesson

Each lesson contains a scripture reading and three questions. One of these questions is designed to fill out the "Investigator's Report," printed in the back of this book and available for download on my website (www.jamyedoerfler.com). Two additional questions will help you look more closely at the scripture reading and apply what you've learned to your life—these would make great discussion questions with your family.

Next is an opportunity to pray with some prompts that relate to the lesson.

Finally, each lesson comes with an opportunity to look up additional scriptures that relate to the devotional. You'll see these marked by an *asterisk in each reading.

There are two ways you can use this devotional:

1) alone or 2) together—with your family, in a classroom, or with another group.

If you are a student reading this book on your own, grab a pen and write down the answers to the questions as you

go. If you want to challenge your Bible reference skills, use the “Investigator’s Report” to give you the lesson’s Bible reference, and read it in your own Bible before reading the lesson here.

If you are a parent or teacher who will be using this book with your child or students, you may choose to give the young person(s) this book, which has the scripture passage already printed, along with the devotion. Then later, you can discuss the questions and pray together. Or, to encourage them to open the Bible on their own each day, you can give them the “Investigator’s Report,” which provides the Bible reference to look up and a comprehension question. Afterwards, you can come together and read the devotional aloud and answer the discussion questions. Ideally, this would be a daily activity together; however, if you can only manage discussion every few days, just select the most pertinent discussion questions.

You can find downloadable resources for use in a Christian classroom or homeschool setting on my website (www.jamyedoerfler.com).

The Schedule for These Lessons

Because life can be full during the Christmas season, there are only twenty lessons to complete during Advent. This gives you a little space to catch up when you need to! However, for those who want additional devotionals, there are four bonus lessons in the back which look at storylines and characters less central to the Nativity story. With these additional lessons, you can use this devotional every day from December 1-24, or the bonus lessons can be used in the week between Christmas and New Year’s.

No matter how you use this devotional, I pray that throughout this month, by considering the context for the incarnation of Christ, your hearts will respond in worship, and the significance of Christ’s birth will resound more loudly than all the earthly trappings around the holiday season.



What Do You Know about Christmas?

Think you know the Christmas story inside and out? Let's find out. Circle or check your answers to these questions now, and then come back at the end of the book and compare your answers against what you've learned over the month of December.

1. When was Jesus born?

- A. December 25, 1 AD
- B. Some other day in 1 AD
- C. December 25, 4 BC
- D. None of the above

2. How many kings visited Jesus?

- A. 0
- B. 3
- C. 7
- D. 10

3. Jesus was a descendant of Ruth:

- True False

4. Where was Jesus from? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Jerusalem
- B. Bethlehem
- C. Nazareth
- D. Heaven

5. When the angel visited the shepherds, what clue did he give so they knew they had found the right baby?

- A. The baby would be in a stable.
- B. The baby would be in a feeding trough.
- C. There would be a star over the building.
- D. The baby would have a halo over His head.

6. Jesus was related to John the Baptist:

- True False

7. Circle all the things we know about Jesus's earthly father, Joseph, from the Bible:

- A. His birth and death
- B. His ancestry
- C. His occupation
- D. What he looked like
- E. How old he was when Jesus was born

8. King Herod was happy to learn that the Messiah had been born:

- True False

9. Which of these carols about angels directly quotes Scripture?

- A. "Angels from the Realm of Glory"
- B. "Angels We Have Heard on High"
- C. "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing"

10. Circle all possible explanations for the star over Bethlehem:

- A. God created a special star for this purpose.
- B. A supernova exploded.
- C. God made an existing star extra bright for a period of time.
- D. Planets aligned so they appeared to make one bright star.



Why Did Jesus Come?

John's Account

You might know the story of Jesus's birth really well and think there's nothing left to learn. If you were asked to fill out the investigative questions, you might breeze right through them. *Who was Jesus's mom? No problem: Mary.* For young kids, that short "headline" answer is perfect. But as you get older, you can handle the more challenging stuff, so we're going to dig deep into the Christmas story like an investigative journalist.

Let's begin by investigating *why* Jesus came. Most of what we know about the Christmas story is simply *what* happened. But Jesus's coming to earth in human form wasn't a random act or spontaneous decision. Jesus gave up a lot to come here as a human baby. So, let's understand the motive (the reason behind an action) before we get into the details of the story.

I know this is an unusual place to start a Christmas devotional, but just hang in there. For the next three days, we're going to skip forward thirty years past Jesus's birth and listen to His reasons for coming to earth.

Read John 6:38-40. Circle the reason Jesus came.

³⁸"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

Right before Jesus said this, He had just miraculously fed 5,000 people with only a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish. Afterwards, He went off by Himself, because He knew if He didn't get away, the crowd was going to try to make Him

king. The next day, the crowds hunted Him down, looking for more food. (Sounds like teenagers to me.) But Jesus turned the conversation from food to spiritual things. He told them why He had come to earth.

Verse 38 begins, *"For I have come down from heaven . . ."* This is a pretty wild place to start! Before Jesus was on this earth, He was in heaven. You and I didn't exist until we were formed inside our mothers' wombs. But Jesus existed eternally even before the creation of the world.*

He then added, *". . . not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me."* Sometimes we must do someone else's will, which is another way of saying we must obey. You might not want to spend your evening doing homework, but you do it anyway (hopefully!) because it's the will of the adult teaching you. Jesus was completely and joyfully motivated to do the Father's will.

Finally, Jesus explained what His Father's will is: *". . . that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life . . ."* God wants to give us eternal life. What a great gift!

When Jesus hid from the crowds, it was because He knew they didn't understand why He had come. They could only think about how Jesus could give them food today and political freedom tomorrow. But Jesus came for a much greater and longer-lasting reason. In loving obedience to the Father, Jesus came from heaven to earth to make a way possible for us to have eternal life with Him.

Why? Because God loves us. The desire to give gifts to someone you love is one of the ways we're made in God's image. When you love someone, you enjoy giving them good things. (Animals don't buy gifts for those they love—unless you count your cat bringing you a dead bird as a "gift.") The best gift God could ever give those He loves is to spend eternity in heaven with Him. Right now, that might not sound like the best gift you could ever receive, but as you grow in your relationship with the Lord, that promise will seem better and better—just ask an adult.



Questions:

1. Why did Jesus come to earth, according to this passage?
2. What does verse 39 teach us about the people whom God has saved?
3. How does knowing God loves you so much that Jesus left heaven to give you eternal life give you hope for living your daily life?

Prayer Prompts:

- ★ Praise God because He promises the best gift of all to those who believe in Jesus.
- ★ Ask God to prepare your heart to not be like the crowds who wanted more earthly stuff but to have a heart ready to worship Him for who He is rather than what He can give us.



***FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION:**

Look up and read John 1:1 and John 8:58.
What do these two verses tell you about Jesus's
life before His birth on earth?