



JESSE TREE

Family Guide

What is the Jesse Tree?

Jesse Trees have been used by Christians since medieval times to help tell the story of the Bible from creation all the way to the birth of Jesus. In the Middle Ages, many people could not read, but were still hungry to know the story of the Bible. So artists created ways to represent Scripture that didn't require words! Stained glass, carvings, tapestries and other symbolic representations told Bible stories that everyone could enjoy. The Jesse Tree was one such symbol used to tell the story of Scripture.

The Jesse Tree can be thought of as Jesus' family tree. Before Jesus was born, God crafted a lineage of ancestors in the faith who would foreshadow and celebrate the baby who would eventually be born to save the whole world.

One of Jesus' ancestors was Jesse, the father of the most beloved king of Israel, King David. A prophecy about Jesus from the book of Isaiah 11:1-4 says:

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;*



Christians believe that Jesus is that "righteous branch" that has been birthed from the family of Jesse. And Jesus himself taught that to truly understand the whole of Scripture, we must understand that not only this prophecy, but indeed the whole Old Testament was one big story that looked forward to Jesus' arrival. As we understand the physical and spiritual lineage of Jesus, we come to understand more about how God prepared the way for his most precious gift to us—his beloved Son.

Throughout the Advent season, read daily about how each person fits into the Jesse Tree, and see if over time you and your family can tell the story from beginning to end. Children (or crafty grown ups!) can color each character's ornament during the daily reading to deepen their experience. It really is the greatest story ever told!

Day 1: God the Father:

At the very beginning of our world, God the Father created everything. He created light and dark, sea and sky, sun and moon, and creatures of all kinds. He saved the best for last and created humankind in His own image. On the seventh day God rested and enjoyed his creation. He loved everything that he had made so much that one day many years later, he would send his Son to be a part of the world he had made.



Day 2: Adam and Eve:

Adam and Eve were the first man and woman that God ever created. They lived in a perfect and beautiful garden that God made for them to take care of and enjoy. There was only one rule: they could not eat from the tree that grew at the center of the garden. They disobeyed God and ate from it anyway, and so brought sin and death into the world. But God made a plan to undo the damage they had caused, by someday sending Jesus to make the world right again.



Day 3: Seth:

Seth was Adam and Eve's son. He grew up outside of the beautiful garden that Adam and Eve could no longer inhabit. But even in the broken world in which he lived, he still was made in God's image. Being made in God's image means that humans are created to be reminders of God's goodness and love. Someday God would send His son Jesus to be the perfect representation of God's image. He would not only remind us of God's love, but "Immanuel-God with us."



Day 4: Noah:

Noah was a friend of God. When Noah lived, the earth was filled with people who did not love God and did terrible things to each other. This made God so brokenhearted, that He decided to cleanse the earth of all these terrible things by sending a great flood. God told Noah to build an ark (or boat) to rescue his family, and two of every kind of creature on the earth. Someday God would send Jesus to be a kind of "ark" that would rescue people from the consequences of sin.



Day 5: Shem:

Shem was one of Noah's sons who survived the flood by being rescued on the ark. Many people believe that Shem was also a famous priest and king who was called Melchizedek. Most priests in the Old Testament offered sacrifices of animals, but Melchizedek offered a sacrifice of bread and wine. Many generations later, Jesus would be our king-priest who would offer his precious body and blood that we celebrate with bread and wine when we take Communion.



Day 6: Abraham:

Abraham wanted a son, but he thought he was too old. After all, he was 100! But God kept His promise and sent Abraham a son. God promised that He would bless all the people of the earth through the birth of this special son. Eventually, one of Abraham's descendants would be another special son that would bless the whole world—Jesus!



Day 7: Jacob:

Jacob was Abraham's grandson, and God gave him the new name of "Israel." Jacob had 12 sons and those 12 sons grew into the great nation of Israel that still exists today! Eventually, Jesus would come to Earth and pick out 12 men to be His special followers. These followers would grow into a great nation of God's children called Christians, and spread God's love all around the world!



Day 8: Joseph:

Joseph was one of Jacob's sons. He was his father's favorite, so his brothers were very mean to him. They even sold him as a slave to the faraway land of Egypt. Joseph had a very hard life there, but eventually God made him very powerful...second only to Pharaoh himself! Eventually, Joseph had a chance to repay his brothers for their cruelty. But instead of getting revenge, Joseph forgave his brothers and saved their lives. When Jesus came to Earth, the people around Him were very cruel to Him too. But just like Joseph, He forgave His tormentors and sacrificed His own life for their sake.



Day 9: Moses:

Moses was sent by God to lead God's people out of their bondage to slavery in Egypt. He gave God's people the Ten Commandments—God's special laws that they should follow. Many years after Moses' life, God would send His son Jesus to lead people out of their slavery to sin. And instead of giving them the law on tablets of stone, He would write His law on their hearts.



Day 10: Joshua:

After Moses died, Joshua became the new leader of the people of Israel. His job from God was to help God's people make their new home in the Promised Land. Jesus is like Joshua. He leads God's children from a life of wandering aimlessly in the desert, to a life in the "Promised Land" of God's favor, abundance, and blessings.



Day 11: Rahab:

Rahab was a courageous woman who helped save the lives of two Israelites who were trying to help their people inhabit the Promised Land. She hid them from their enemies, and in exchange the Israelites promised to keep her safe during the upcoming battle. So they would know which house not to attack, Rahab hung a red cord out of her window. That red cord reminds us of the blood that Jesus shed on the cross. Just like her cord kept her safe, Jesus' blood keeps us safe from the punishment for our sins.



Day 12: Samson:

Samson was one of the mighty men of Israel. He was stronger than any other man because he made a special promise with God. As a symbol of that promise, he never cut his hair. His enemies learned that if they cut his hair he would lose his power. They cut his hair and Samson lost his superhuman strength. He told God he was sorry, asked for help and his strength returned. With his strength back, Samson was able to defeat many of Israel's enemies. Jesus is like Samson in that He will someday use His supernatural strength to defeat all the darkness in the whole world, but unlike Samson, He cannot lose this power.



Day 13: Ruth:

Ruth was Jesus' great- great- great... (you get the idea) grandmother. She was widowed by her Jewish husband and returned with her mother-in-law to Israel and worshipped God with her. Widows generally had no security. It was only when Boaz, the relative of her late husband, married her that she found a future. One day, Jesus would be like Ruth's husband Boaz and welcome people from "every tribe and nation" into the loving family of God.



Day 14: Jesse:

Jesse (who the "Jesse Tree" is named after!) was the father of King David. The Bible tells us that Jesse's family would one day many years later produce another king even more wonderful than David. That future king would of course be King Jesus!



Day 15: David:

David was Israel's most beloved king and was called "a man after God's own heart." Before he was the king of Israel, David was a humble shepherd who took care of his father's sheep. One of David's descendants would be Jesus, the great "Shepherd King" of God's people.



Day 16: Solomon:

Solomon was David's son and was a great and powerful king in Israel. He grew so great because God gave him a special gift of wisdom. But in all of his power and riches, he turned away from God. Jesus would be like Solomon in His power and glory, but unlike the human king, Jesus would always love and serve His Father.



Day 17: Elijah:

Elijah was a prophet, or a messenger, that God sent to remind His people to turn their hearts away from sin and back towards His love. Elijah performed many amazing miracles to prove that it was God who sent him. Just like Elijah, Jesus would come to Earth and perform miracles to get people's attention, and hopefully turn their hearts back to God.



Day 18: Jeroboam and Rehoboam:

Eventually because of sin, the people of Israel split into two kingdoms with Jeroboam and Rehoboam as their two kings. It was a sad fact that God's people had divided into two separate entities, when they had previously always been united under God's rule. Someday Jesus would come and unite not only the descendants of these two kingdoms, but would form one family of His followers from every nation on earth!



Day 19: Isaiah:

Isaiah was another of God's prophets that was sent to warn people of the consequences of their sin. Even though eventually Isaiah's warnings about Israel's deserved punishment came true, Isaiah told them that a day was coming many years in the future when God would send hope to His people. God would send His Son to take all of the consequences for sin upon Himself.



Day 20: Jeremiah:

Jeremiah was also a prophet God sent to Israel. During Jeremiah's lifetime, Israel's enemies destroyed the special place where Israelites worshipped God—the Temple. But Jeremiah told God's people not to lose hope. He told them that one day God would send His son to help us worship God not only in special buildings, but "in spirit and in truth."



Day 21: Ezekiel:

Ezekiel was one of God's prophets, too. He told the people of Israel that God was sending a special king who would take tender care of them like a shepherd cares for his sheep. Also, when Jesus was caring for people on Earth, he called himself "The Good Shepherd."



Day 22: John the Baptist:

John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin! John's job was to tell the people of Israel that Jesus was coming...soon! When John was out telling people about God's son, John spotted Jesus in the crowd. The voice of Father God came down from Heaven and said about Jesus, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The One that God had promised to send since allllll the way back in the days of Adam and Eve had finally arrived! His moment had finally come!



Day 23: Joseph:

Even though God the Father was Jesus' dad, Joseph was the man who raised and took care of Jesus during Jesus' childhood. Joseph faced many hardships and dangers as he took care of Jesus. But God sent an angel to visit Joseph and reassure him that it was his privilege to care for God's treasured son.



Day 24: Mary:

Mary was Jesus' mother. She also faced danger and risk as the mother of God's son. But God also sent an angel to Mary. The angel assured her that it was a great honor and unbelievable gift to be Jesus' mother. Mary welcomed Jesus into her life, just as God hopes that everyone will do!



Day 25: Jesus:

God's special Son...the one that Israel and the entire world waited for. God loved the world so much that He sent His beautiful Son to die in our place. This tiny little baby that rested in Mary's arms would one day grow up and die on the cross...and miraculously resurrect three days later. In His loving death and powerful resurrection, He would undo all the pain and sin that entered the world through Adam and Eve. He would make "all things new." Amen!



Generous Hearts

The Season of Giving

Why is Christmas associated with giving? While our modern culture might view the tradition of gift giving as a stress-filled seasonal obligation, this tradition actually has its roots in God's generous heart for us. From the very first pages of the Bible, God's plan to send His Son to redeem humanity was clear. God's lavish gift of His beloved Son has prompted humans to offer their gifts back to Him in response ever since. Every gift given is a sign of the Kingdom of Jesus breaking into today's world.

In the first Christmas story, we see wise men from the East laying gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh at the feet of the tiny King Jesus. Later, during the days of the early Church, St. Nicholas (who formed the basis of our modern day Santa Claus), was known for exhibiting loving generosity towards others. Tradition tells us that St. Nicholas rescued three young women from being sold into slavery by dropping bags of gold through an open window in their home. His generosity saved them from a terrible fate...sounds a little like Jesus, right?

Some families choose to embrace St. Nicholas as a part of their Christmastime celebrations instead of Santa Claus. What's the difference between the two? Well, they both wear pointy red hats and enjoy giving gifts...but one points towards general Christmas cheer (which is great!) and the other points to Jesus (which is way better!). Consider learning more about St. Nicholas and how his life can serve as an inspiration in your life by visiting: <https://theartofsimple.net/st-nicholas-the-real-santa-claus/>. This blog post is chock full of many St. Nicholas related resources for all ages.

No matter where you draw your inspiration for giving gifts, Christian generosity can always be traced back to the generosity we have received from God Himself. Giving thoughtful and meaningful gifts to our loved ones, as well as those in need, is one way to share God's overflowing generosity to us.

On the next page, are some ideas, large and small, that you, your family, or your group can use to give generously. Let them prepare your hearts not only to celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas but also for the advent (coming) of the rule and reign of our generous King Jesus.

Outreach Opportunities

HALOS

HALOS (started by a member of Holy Cross!) provides assistance to kinship caregivers in the Tricounty area who have assumed the care of abused or neglected children in their extended family. Over 74,000 of South Carolina's children live in the full-time care of grandparents or other relatives so that they will not have to enter the foster care system.

Kinship caregivers typically have to make the decision to take in a beloved child with little notice. They usually don't have the resources to purchase the car seats, beds or cribs needed to keep the children safe. We can help! Consider purchasing any of the following as an individual, family, or lifegroup. And if you are planning to attend the Children's Family Christmas Eve services, bring some diapers with you. We will be collecting them in honor of baby Jesus and passing them along to our friends at HALOS.

Wish List:

- New Twin Beds, Bunk Beds, Toddler Beds, and Cribs
- Diapers (Newborn through Size 5), Pull-Ups, and Baby Wipes
- New Car Seats and Booster Seats
- Infant and Toddler Toiletries
- Gift Cards to WalMart/Target for emergency needs
- Unrestricted monetary donations

CHARLESTONHALOS.ORG

Phone: (854) 444-3716

Donate Financially

The ongoing ministry and expenses of Holy Cross are provided by the consistent generosity of our people. Consider a special Christmas offering or set up a regularly scheduled gift to support our church. You can learn about all the ways you can give and set up recurring gifts on our website. HOLYCROSS.NET/GIVE

Buy Groceries

Holy Cross partners with East Cooper Community Outreach (ECCO) throughout the year to do grocery bag Sundays, but they are always in need of food and clothing donation to feed more than 400 low-income families in our community. This is a very practical and local need you can meet. Go to their website for their current wish list of items and drop-off times throughout the week. ECCOCHARLESTON.ORG

Serve at Church

Giving of your time and talents is an incredible way to be generous. Coming up this month we have several opportunities to serve together. The details are at HOLYCROSS.NET/EVENTS Want to find a spot to serve regularly? You can join a ministry team at Holy Cross. Check out HOLYCROSS.NET/SERVE to learn about our teams.

