



Christmas Devotional

GOD WITH US



GOD WITH US - CHRISTMAS DEVOTIONAL

"The Lord is always close to everyone who calls on Him sincerely and truthfully."
Psalms 145:18

One of the greatest comforts in the life of a Christian is knowing for sure that, even in a world that is evil and fallen, God is right there with us. We don't believe in a God who is far or too busy with His own greatness while we face life's challenges alone. He is close, always close to those who call upon Him!

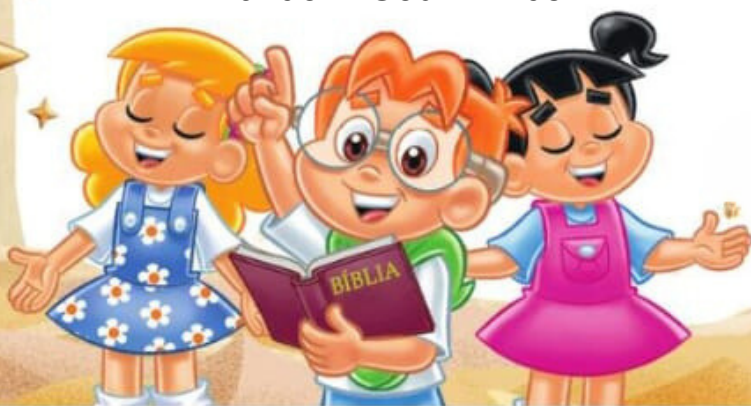
In the stories of the Bible, those who dared to believe in God experienced His sweet company and His very present help. Like the apostle Peter, who, when realizing he was sinking in the rough waters of the Sea of Galilee, cried out to the Master. Quickly, Jesus reached out His hand and held him back (Matthew 14:31).

This is the God we want to introduce to our children. We want them to trust in Him throughout their lives. A God who, despite being Almighty, became like a man and lived among us. He did for us what we could never do alone, saved us from the sin that trapped us, and promised to be with us every day, until the end of time.

Christmas is an opportune time to remember these truths and pass them on to our little ones. While we await the celebration of these data, allow your heart and that of your family to be warmed by the memories of Immanuel, God with us

ASTRUCTURE AND APPLICATION OF THE DEVOTIONAL

- 1- In the beginning – God with us
- 2- Joseph – A good man
- 3- Mary – Believing in the impossible
- 4- John the Baptist – The First to Greet the Messiah
- 5- Angels and shepherds – Messengers
- 6- Mages – Observing the signs
- 7- Emmanuel – God with us



We suggest that you choose a fixed time to go through the material. The time spent varies between 5 and 15 minutes, depending on how much detail you wish to go into. It is important that parents read all the material in advance and pray before each section that God will use them. Remember that this is not a series of stories, but the ministering of the Word of God, which is living and effective, capable of saving the lost, healing the sick and freeing the oppressed.

For each day of the Devotional, there is a theme, a reference verse and an application. Start by reading the title and the reference verse, if the story is not known to your children, summarize it before starting the lesson. It is important that they know the context from which the verse was taken from.

The lesson can either be read or used as a basis for approaching the subject. Allow yourself to be led by the Holy Spirit. God may use you to address issues that are specific to your family. And when ministering, remember that the kingdom of heaven belongs to little ones, that God reveals himself to them too and that the Holy Spirit is able to bring salvation into a humble young heart.

Always pray at the end of each lesson. Be grateful for what you learned, confess the sin that comes to light, and intercede. Invite the children to pray based on what they heard. It's a good way to teach them how to spend time with God.

Conduct this moment with lightness and joy. Make it so that your children look forward to this time. Think of things you can do together while meditating like snuggling in bed; have tea or chocolate and biscuits; have a picnic in the shade of a tree; set up a blanket fort in the living room; lie down on the ground in the backyard contemplating the sky. The more affective the moments in which the devotional is applied, the more memories will be created in your children and these, stitched together throughout their lives, will be part of your family's history.

The Devotional is also an excellent evangelism tool. An opportunity to bring neighbors or family together to share with more families what God has done on our behalf.

Now it's up to you! May God bless you on this journey and make your family desire to know Him more and more



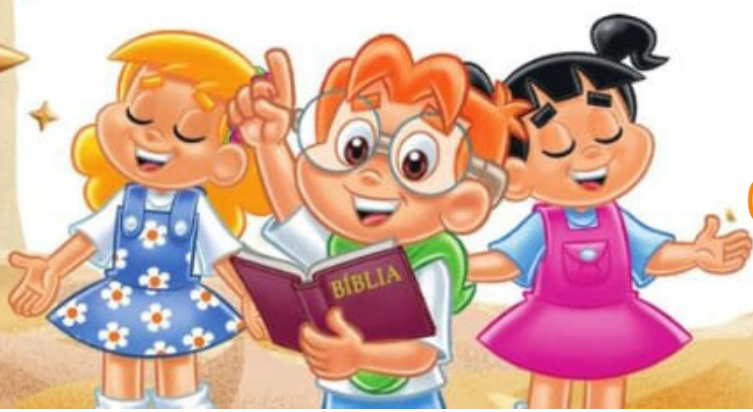
DAY 1 - IN THE BEGINNING - GOD WITH US

“ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.” Genesis 2:8

Before anything existed, God already was. He is superior to time, has always existed and will exist eternally. The Lord created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. He also created man in His image and likeness. And He did all this for His own glory (Isaiah 43:7), to manifest His great power.

All of God's creation was perfect! There was no defect, plague, disease or death. Nature and man lived in harmony and, best of all, Adam and Eve had access to God, for there was no sin.

In the beginning, everything was designed so that God would be with us, but sin, disobedience to the word of God, separated man from the Creator (Romans 3:23). In the next few days, we will go through the Bible discovering how God, in his perfect love, planned and executed a way to remake the communion that once existed between creature and Creator; the coming of a Savior who could reconnect humanity to God, the Messiah who would lead us to say once again: Emmanuel, God with us!



DAY 2 - JOSEPH - A GOOD MAN

“Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet[a] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 1:19,20

Joseph was a just and good man. Because of his fear of God, he gave us a beautiful example of obedience and how we should place the Lord's will above our own desires.

In biblical times, if a woman were to fall pregnant without being married, she was stoned to death. Joseph and Mary were not yet married when Mary told him about the angel's visit and about being pregnant with the Son of God. Worried about how to save her and the baby's life, Joseph planned to secretly leave her and run away, making it appear to people that he was the baby's father, but that he had not respected the marriage time. If he did so, Mary would not be killed.

Joseph's plan was good and noble. He was willing to sacrifice his reputation to protect Mary's. However, when warned by an angel not to run away, but to receive Mary as his wife, Joseph obeyed. He took care of Jesus in his childhood, meeting his needs and protecting the boy from death when he fled with him to Egypt.

Joseph considered God's plans better than his own. And this is one of the great examples he left us. Even if God asks you to do things different from what you dreamed of, choose to obey Him.



DAY 3 - MARY - BELIEVING IN THE IMPOSSIBLE

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.” Luke 1:38

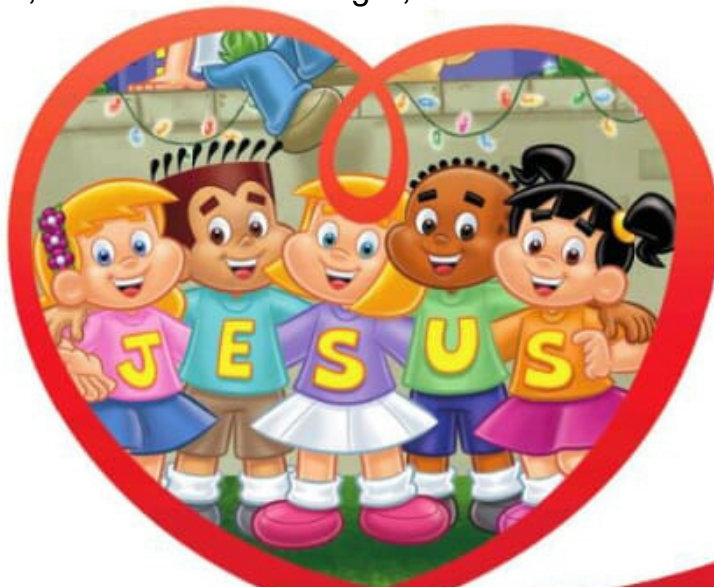
Of all the women of the tribe of Judah in her time, Mary was the one chosen by God to bring the Savior into the world. What was so special about her?

Mary had faith in God to an extraordinary extent. Faith is the certainty of things we do not see, but hope for. It's trusting that something that hasn't happened yet will happen, even if it's impossible in the eyes of men.

As a God-fearing young woman, Mary knew that pregnancy out of wedlock was something so serious that society punished her by stoning her. And even though she was aware of the risks, she dared to believe that the angel's message was true and that, as long as her body produced the son of God, she would be protected by the Lord.

In her response to the angel Gabriel, Mary puts herself in the place of a servant, showing that her life belonged to God and that she was willing to serve Him, even if it put her at risk. What a wonderful example Mary gave us.

The birth of Jesus gives us the guarantee that He will always be Emmanuel in our lives. This means that when we love Him and obey His commandments, He will be with us through thick and thin. When we face difficulties, when we are in danger, we can trust that His Word will be fulfilled in our lives!



DAY 4 - JOHN THE BAPTIST - THE FIRST TO GREET THE MESSIAH

But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.” Luke 1:43,44

Soon after the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would become pregnant with the Savior, she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John, later known as John the Baptist. The Bible tells us that John, even as a baby in his mother's womb, leapt for joy when he heard Mary's voice.

There is so much beauty in this passage! Life begins in the mother's womb before the baby is born. And John was the first to greet the Savior, jumping for joy in Elizabeth's belly. John was a man filled with the Spirit of God throughout his life, even while still in his mother's womb. He was sensitive to the presence of the Savior.

The bible tells us in Acts 2:38-39 that there is a promise that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on the lives of those who believed in Jesus and also on their children. Even as a child, you can be filled with the Spirit of God. Just ask God with faith. This Holy Spirit guides us in our spiritual life. He helps us pray, He reminds us of what we learn in the Word, He warns us of sin when we are planning to do something wrong or when we have already done it. The Holy Spirit helps us to have a spiritual life close to God.



DAY 5 - ANGELS - MESSENGERS - PART 1

“Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” Luke 2:13,14

The work of a shepherd is as old as humanity and is generally performed by simple people. It is not easy to lead the herd to where there is food and water and protect them, day and night, from predator attacks. Being a shepherd meant walking a lot in the sun during the day and being cold on freezing nights.

In ancient times, even children helped herd sheep. And it was on one of the long nights of work, that the shepherds of Bethlehem, tired men and boys, had the most incredible vision of their lives: an army of heavenly angels singing in chorus in the sky, glorifying God and celebrating the birth of the Messiah.

God chose simple men to be the first to receive the news of the Savior's birth. And He did this to teach us that He loves everyone. From the most humble to the most important, everyone is included in the promise of Salvation. The Lord is not the God of one person or one nation, He is God with us!



DAY 5 - SHEPHERDS - CONTEMPLATING THE SAVIOR - PART 2

“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.” Luke 2:20

After marveling at the sight of the angels while they were with their sheep in the fields, the shepherds rushed to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph and the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, exactly as they had been told. They worshiped him and went around telling everyone they knew what had happened to them.

God's work is simple but wonderful. The Lord manifests himself to the most important men and also to the most humble. He wants everyone to know of his great love for us. When you hear this good news, do as the shepherds did and share it with everyone you know. Choose a person to whom you can tell today what you have learned in this lesson.



DAY 6 - MAGI - OBSERVING THE SIGNS

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.)” Matthew 2:1,2

The magi, or wise men, as referred to in the Bible, were probably Persians, a people originally from the region that is now Iran. The Persians were great observers of the stars and had contact with Israelite and Jewish culture when they dominated the Middle East a few centuries before the birth of Jesus. Out of curiosity, Daniel, Esther, Nehemiah and Ezra are biblical characters who lived during the Persian rule over the East.

Somehow, the magi knew of the prophecy that a king would be born to the Jews and spent time observing the heavens looking for signs that confirmed what they were expecting. Upon seeing the star, these men traveled more than 1,500 km to admire the Messiah. This distance, on the back of camels, could not have been covered in less than a month. That was a great effort.

When we know God and recognize him as our Father, we also need to strive to learn more and more about his Word. It will not always be easy to use the time we have to play or watch TV for time to pray and read the Bible; the time to play with friends, the time to go to Church and worship God. It will take commitment and dedication to grow in faith.

The magi spared no effort.
Are you willing?



EMANUEL: GOD WITH US

All this happened so that what was said by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled, which says: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel. (Immanuel translated is: God with us). (Matthew 1.22,23).

We've reached Christmas! The most anticipated day of December, where we celebrate birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. He, the only begotten Son of God, perfect and holy, descended from heaven and came into the world as one of us, to save us.

Since Adam, man has been struggling against the consequences of sin. The wrong things we do separates us from the holy and pure God. Far from the Lord, our life is not a good life. For centuries, men sacrificed animals to seek forgiveness for sins, but, when Jesus came into the world, He sacrificed Himself on the cross to pay, once and for all, the price for everyone's mistakes.

He was born as a baby, he was a child. He wentt through all the temptations we go through, but He resisted evil and never sinned. This is why His death frees us from sin. His innocent blood erases everything wrong we've ever done when we confess our faults to God. And, with a clean heart, we can walk with the Lord.

This is the great message of Christmas! Since we could not be with God for because of our failures, He Himself came to us through Jesus.

He is Emmanuel, God with us! May this message bring joy to you not only today, but every day of the coming year!

Merry Christmas!



THE DEVOTIONAL IS OVER, NOW WHAT?

This is the question that all parents ask themselves when children arrive excitedly asking: “What’s the story today?”

In addition to preparing families for the celebration of Christmas, one of the objectives of the themed devotionals we produce is to create the habit of seeking God at home. The Bible is very clear in giving parents the responsibility for planting the Word of God in the hearts of their children. It even instructs them to speak this word daily, at every opportunity (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

The Christmas Devotional experience serves to establish the foundations of daily family Bible study. On December 26th, open the Bible with your children and invite them to get to know Jesus a little more, the Savior who was born.

I always suggest that you start with the New Testament. The book of Mark is excellent for narrating the main events in the life of Jesus. Read small sections each day, apply what was read to the child's life and pray together. When you finish Mark, choose another book, and another... What matters here is not the amount of text read, but the frequency. A little bit a day, but every day will make a huge difference throughout the year.

Alternate between the old and new testaments, but don't lose the habit of worshiping God together. Even as children grow up and begin to have time alone with God, family time also plays the role of strengthening bonds, strengthening bonds and building the faith of everyone in the house in times of good and also in times of storm.

