



ADVENT



CHRISTMAS



& EPIPHANY



FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE



WELCOME TO A JOURNEY THAT BEGINS WITH THE
ADVENT SEASON, UNFOLDS THROUGH THE JOYOUS
CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS, AND CULMINATES
IN THE EXCITING PERIOD OF EPIPHANY.

Our heartfelt prayer is that this guide becomes a tool for your family, fostering deeper bonds with each other and a more profound connection with the Lord.

Crafted with dedication and care, the Family Discipleship Guide is a labor of love from the Family Ministries Team at Wellspring Church. We are here to support your family's faith journey. Should you need guidance, encouragement, or simply someone to share your journey with, please feel free to reach out to us:

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THE SEASON OF ADVENT

Mary's Song

AND MARY SAID:

"My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors."

Advent Evening Prayer

Into our darkness, bring light

Awaken us to Your Presence

Into our cold, bring your warmth

Awaken us to Your Presence

Into our noise, bring your still, small voice

Awaken us to Your Presence

Into our quiet, bring your words

Awaken us to Your Presence

Into our busyness, bring your rest

Awaken us to Your Presence

Into our laziness, bring the work You have for us

Awaken us to Your Presence

Open our ears

Open our eyes

Open our souls

Awaken us to Your Presence

We are graced by the wonder of Your Presence.

We rest knowing Your light has come into the world and
the darkness will not overcome it.

We wait with anticipation of Your new world where joy and
peace abound.



BONUS CONTENT



HOPE

WEEK 1

BEGIN YOUR ADVENT JOURNEY BY LIGHTING THE
FIRST PURPLE CANDLE ON YOUR ADVENT WREATH
(OR ANY AVAILABLE CANDLE).



Scripture and Song: Read Mary's Song and listen to "Mary's Song" by Harvest Worship.

Advent Evening Prayer: Together, embrace this prayer found on the previous pages as you light the candle(s) each week.

Encourage your family to give praise to God for who He is (King of Kings, Creator, the Great I Am, always faithful, always present, God with us, Savior)

Discuss what it was like to be Mary at 13, a kind girl who did chores and memorized scripture. She was promised in marriage but unwed, pregnant and facing societal risks including stoning. Was she scared/ anxious as God dramatically changed her life plan?

Finding Hope in God: How did Mary find hope? Discuss how she praised God, quoted scripture, and sought wise counsel from her cousin, Elizabeth (who knew God). Share personal experiences of hope or situations where hope is needed.

Confession and Forgiveness: Mary recognized God as her Savior which meant she recognized her faults and she praised God because He blessed her so mightily. Through the humble state of confession may we open our hearts to God and to one another.

Say together: "Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen."

Affirmation: Speak over your family about walking in light and knowledge, being forgiven of sins, and knowing the depth of the Lord's love. Declare their newness in Christ and their identity as children of God.

End the week's devotion with the hope found in Philippians 3:20-21.

Closing Prayer: "We are citizens of heaven and our hope is in you, Jesus, as we eagerly await your return. We invite you to come into our hearts, minds, and souls as we slow down and focus on you this Advent."



WEEK 2

AS WE CONTINUE OUR ADVENT JOURNEY,
LIGHT TWO PURPLE CANDLES ON YOUR WREATH
(OR ANY TWO CANDLES AVAILABLE).

LAST WEEK, WE EMBRACED THE CANDLE OF HOPE,
ANCHORING OURSELVES IN CHRIST. TODAY, WE ILLUMINATE
THE CANDLE OF PEACE. OBSERVE AND DISCUSS THE
INCREASE IN LIGHT AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

Scripture and Song: Revisit Mary's Song and explore a different rendition of Mary's Song or The Magnificat (Latin, meaning 'Magnifies'). Allow the music to deepen your understanding of the scripture.

Take a moment to breathe deeply and pray for peace across the globe. Scripture speaks to the humbling of rulers and the exaltation of the humble. Pray for mercy for those in need, the persecuted, the innocent, and those who love Him. Reflect on Mary's remembrance of God's covenant with Abraham and her inner peace in knowing God's faithfulness in keeping His promises.

Promises of God: Together, name the promises of God. There are so many: He will never leave us, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, His forgiveness, He will renew all things, and He will return. Let these promises guide your prayers for world peace, being specific in your petitions.

Peace in Families: How can we cultivate peace within our families? Read Philippians 4:4-9 together.

Discuss these questions:

- The opposite of peace can manifest as hurry, noise, irritation, or conflict. How does your family navigate and resolve conflicts? Are there unresolved issues?
- What does it mean for God's peace to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus?
- Have you experienced being falsely accused? How did you find peace?
- Where is gentleness evident in your family?
- Identify areas of anxiety. Do concerns about others' perceptions affect you? (Remember Mary and Joseph and what society thought of them)

Closing Prayer: "God, our Prince of Peace, in Your presence, we find the peace that surpasses all understanding. Bring peace to nations in conflict. Guide our hearts, souls, minds, and strength towards You. Help us to be a family of peace and restore relationships when conflict occurs. Bless us, Lord, and grant us peace as we worship and adore You."



WEEK 3

ON THIS THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT, LIGHT TWO PURPLE CANDLES AND THE PINK CANDLE ON YOUR WREATH (OR ANY THREE CANDLES YOU HAVE).

TODAY, WE FOCUS ON THE PINK CANDLE, SYMBOLIZING JOY. OBSERVE AND DISCUSS HOW THE LIGHT INCREASES WITH THREE CANDLES BURNING.



Scripture and Song: Read Mary's Song again and listen to another rendition of The Magnificat. Reflect on the varied expressions of these verses.

Today's candle represents Joy. Advent is a season of anticipation, akin to the Israelites' journey through the wilderness, awaiting the Promised Land. In a similar spirit, we await Jesus' return. Can we embrace this period of waiting with joy? Absolutely! Express your gratitude to God for the joy and laughter in your home and for His desire for us to experience joy and rejoice in Him always.

Mary proclaims, "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." She chose joy and faith over fear, doubt, and anxiety, showing us how God uses faith and humility to bring forth His greatest gifts.

Reflection and Discussion:

- Think about material desires or relationships you long for. Where might God be calling you to find joy in Him instead?
- Share moments that always make you smile or times you laughed until you cried.
- Recall something from this week that brought you joy.
- Discuss what makes you stand up and cheer.

Joyful Activity: Play "Eye Spy a Nativity" when driving around town. Cheer every time you spot a nativity scene!

Scripture Reading: Delve into Philippians 4, reflecting on joy as a gift and a fruit of the Spirit. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

Thanksgiving: Offer thanks and praise to God for the blessings in your life.

Encouragement in Tough Times: Share a moment or situation when it was challenging to be joyful. How can you support each other during such times? Share art, music, or aspects of creation that bring you joy.

Closing Prayer: "Lord, grant us hearts of gratitude to recognize Your goodness in all circumstances. Help us to embrace our journey with You, knowing deeply that the joy of the Lord is our strength. We acknowledge that apart from You, we can do nothing."



WEEK 4

AS WE APPROACH THE CULMINATION OF ADVENT,
LIGHT ALL FOUR CANDLES ON YOUR WREATH
(OR ANY FOUR CANDLES YOU HAVE).

TODAY'S CANDLE, THE LAST PURPLE ONE, SYMBOLIZES
LOVE. REFLECT ON THE GROWING BRIGHTNESS AS WE
ANTICIPATE THE COMING OF THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Scripture and Song: Read Mary's Song and listen to a different version of The Magnificat. Consider how each interpretation deepens your understanding.

In previous weeks, we lit the candles of Hope, Peace, and Joy. Today, we light the fourth candle, the candle of Love. Remember, "There is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). We celebrate God's all-encompassing love, present in every aspect of life.

EXPLORING LOVE:

Mary's Love for the Lord: Mary's love is evident in her willingness to sacrifice her reputation for God's plan. Her declaration of being called blessed reflects her awe and recognition of the significance of God's blessing for all.

God's Love: God's creation and sending of His Son to redeem us are profound expressions of His love.

Reflect on the nature of God's love. Is it conditional? Can we earn it? Discuss how God's love feels. Is God's love in a hurry or is it patient and gentle?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 to understand the attributes of love.

Unconditional and Sacrificial Love: Discuss the concept of unconditional love and what sacrificial love looks like in practical terms within your family. Encourage and validate acts of sacrificial love you observe in your home.

Family Activity: Parents, consider writing a love letter to each child and spouse this Christmas. Highlight positive traits, expressions of love, growth areas, and fond memories from the year. Use the QR code for examples and inspiration. This could become a cherished tradition.

Closing Prayer: "God, You are love. We are grateful for Your Spirit within us, enabling us to love. Thank you for Your sacrificial love in sending Jesus to reunite us with You. May Your love permeate our home, our family, and our hearts. Help us to abide in You and to spread Your love to the world."





CHRISTMAS Day

THE ARRIVAL OF THE LIGHT

ON THIS SPECIAL DAY, LIGHT THE CHRIST CANDLE IN THE CENTER ALONG WITH ALL FOUR CANDLES ON YOUR ADVENT WREATH (OR ANY FIVE CANDLES YOU HAVE).

Scripture and Song: Read Mary's Song once more and listen to "Messiah" by Kari Jobe. Let the words and music resonate with the significance of this day.

Today, we light the Christ candle, the white candle at the heart of the wreath. This candle symbolizes the Light of the World piercing the darkness. On this day, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, born to a humble young couple in the modest setting of a stable. Far from the grandeur expected for a king, this humble beginning was part of God's intricate plan and promise. Scan the QR code for historical/cultural insights.

Jesus' birth is the fulfillment of prophecy, the embodiment of hope, peace, joy, and love. He came to save the lost and to usher in a new understanding of kingship. As the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He took on flesh to reach all people, desiring reconciliation and a deep, personal relationship with each of us.

Reflection and Celebration:

- Reflect on the humble circumstances of Jesus' birth and the profound implications of His arrival.
- Discuss how Jesus' life and teachings challenge our assumptions about power, leadership, and love.
- Celebrate the universal and inclusive nature of Jesus' message and mission.

Read Luke 2:4-14

Closing Prayer: "Lord Jesus, Light of the World, we rejoice in Your birth. On this day, we remember Your humble beginnings and the magnitude of Your sacrifice. You came for all, to bring reconciliation and hope. Help us to live in the light of Your love and to share it with everyone we encounter. Amen."



BONUS CONTENT



CHRISTMASTIDE

THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

CHRISTMASTIDE, ALSO KNOWN AS THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS, BEGINS ON CHRISTMAS DAY AND EXTENDS UNTIL THE EVE OF EPIPHANY.

In our modern culture, the tradition of observing these feast days has somewhat faded, but let's revive it! With many children home during this period, it's a perfect opportunity to extend the festive spirit. Consider spreading out your gift-giving, enjoying Christmas movie marathons, reading all the Christmas storybooks you have, building gingerbread houses, and more. Embrace the idea of slowing down during Advent, resisting the rush to fit everything into the days leading up to Christmas. Instead, continue celebrating the Incarnation of Christ throughout these 12 days. Start a new tradition of placing blessings in a jar, where each person picks one and blesses someone accordingly.

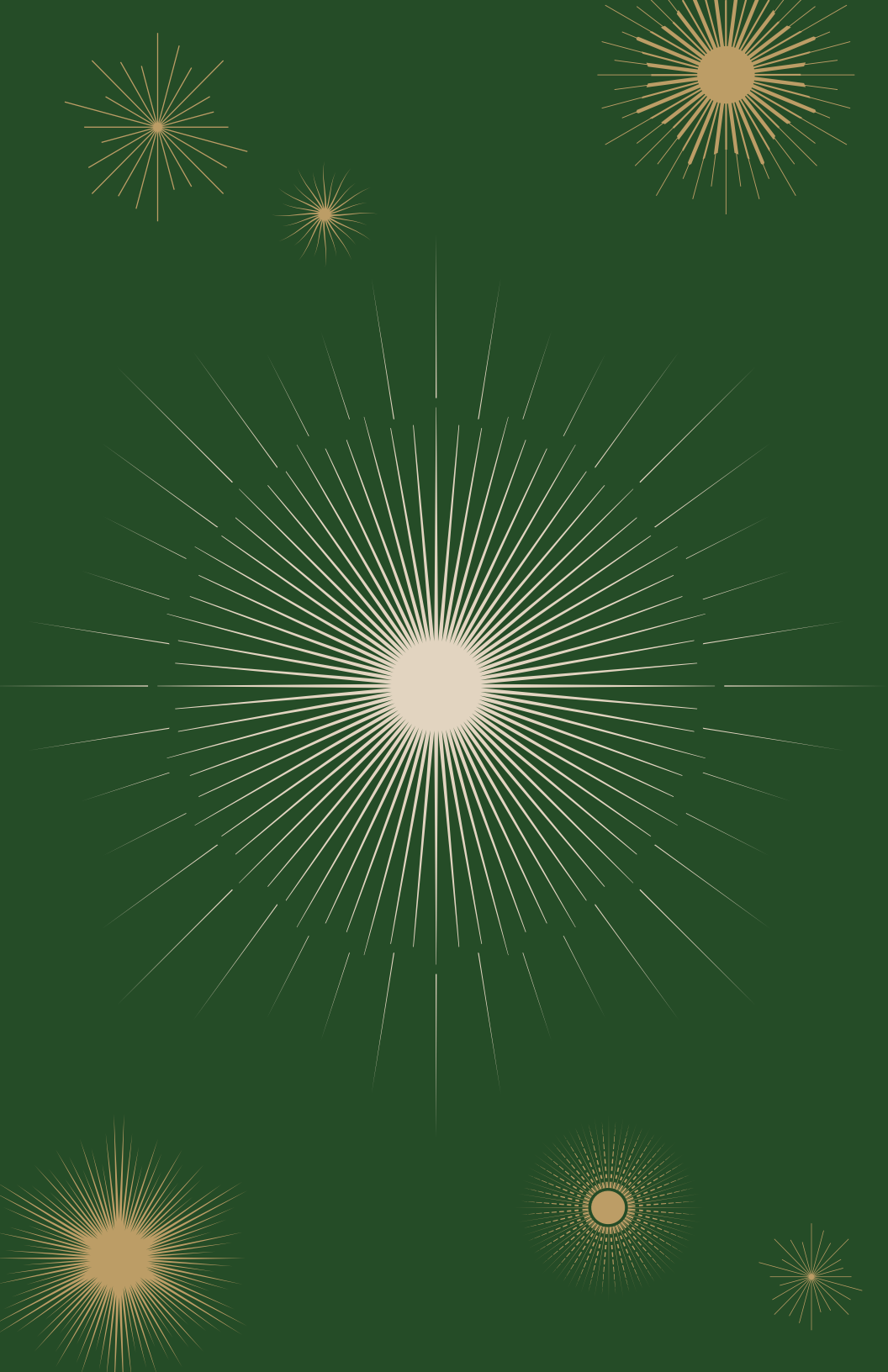
There are twelve official days of celebration, each focusing on key events in the narrative of the Incarnation of Christ. For detailed information on all the feasts, collects, and readings, please scan the provided QR code.



HERE ARE THREE EXAMPLES OF THE FEASTS FROM "SACRED SEASONS" BY DANIELLE HITCHEN:

- **Feast of the Holy Names:** Reflect on the various names of Jesus and their meanings – Jesus (the Lord saves), Christ/Messiah (anointed one or deliverer), Emmanuel (God with us), Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace. Consider what Christ calls us – chosen, beloved, adopted, precious, known, and seen. Share with your children the meaning or story behind their names. If your child is adopted and the meaning is unknown, explore this together, or discuss what the name might mean to them.
- **Feast of the Holy Family:** This day is dedicated to remembering the covenant work God accomplishes through families. Reflect on the faithfulness and obedience of Joseph and Mary, as well as Zechariah, Elizabeth, the shepherds, and the Magi. Consider the challenges each faced in their obedience. Identify with a person or group from the story and discuss who you find hardest to understand or empathize with.
- **Feast of the Innocents:** Commemorate the innocent boys who were tragically killed by Herod in Bethlehem in his attempt to eliminate the baby Jesus. While this is a somber and intense part of the story, it holds significant meaning, reminding us of the darkness into which Jesus was born. Let us also remember those who are currently in harm's way, unjustly facing death, or persecuted for their faith.





EPIPHANY

IN THE SEASON OF EPIPHANY WE ARE FILLED WITH
WONDER AT THE MANIFESTATION OR APPEARANCE
OF THE MESSIAH. WE JOYFULLY CELEBRATE THE
MESSIAH'S ARRIVAL FOR ALL HUMANITY.

In this spirit of awe and gratitude, let us join our hearts in prayer:
'Dear Jesus, in Your humble descent, You came down to take away
the sin of the world. Illuminate our lives with your radiant light, and
use us to share your light and glory here on earth. We pray in the
name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.'

For a deeper immersion into the rich traditions of
Epiphany, including unique practices like the chalking
of doors, the festive Candlemas, or the delightful
tradition of baking a King's cake, scan the QR code for
a treasure trove of celebratory ideas.



BONUS CONTENT



WORSHIP

IMMERSE YOURSELVES IN THE SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS OF WORSHIP MUSIC.

A recommended track to start with is "Manger Throne" by Phil Wickham. Print the lyrics and gather as a family to delve into its profound message. Here are some lines to ponder:

You chose meekness over majesty,
Wrapped Your power in humanity.
Glory be to You alone,
King who reigns from a manger throne.
My life, my praise, everything I own,
To Jesus the King on a manger throne.



As these words resonate, consider crafting your own family anthem of praise for Epiphany. Draw upon a meaningful revelation from Advent or a unique way to honor Jesus in the upcoming year.



Reflect deeply on how the Incarnation of Christ influences our daily existence. The lyrics, "My life, my praise, everything I own to Jesus the King on a manger throne," capture this beautifully. Take moments together to exalt Him, acknowledging His supreme kingship – "Glory be to You alone, Jesus! Thank you for your boundless love, for bearing our sins, and triumphing over sin and death."



Pray earnestly for those who have strayed from Jesus or are yet to know Him. As a family, seek the Lord's guidance on how to extend His love to those you've named. Perhaps consider dedicating one meal a week to invite someone who is lost, struggling, or grieving into your home.



Share personal experiences of encountering Christ. When and where have you felt transformed by Jesus? Discuss unexpected encounters with God, or times when Jesus guided you through doubt or anxiety to a place of deeper trust and faith. Narrate stories of God's faithfulness, sharing your testimony with each other. Choose a day each week for sharing 'God sightings' – perhaps during dinner – to regularly acknowledge His presence in your lives.





FORMATION

AS PARENTS, TAKE A DEDICATED NIGHT TO REFLECT ON AND PRAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN'S (AND SPOUSE'S) RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS. CONSIDER THEIR UNIQUE GIFTS, TALENTS, AND AREAS FOR GROWTH.

REMEMBER, GOD IS CAPABLE OF DOING IMMEASURABLY MORE THAN WE CAN ASK OR IMAGINE!

In Sarah Cowan Johnson's book, "Teach Your Children Well," she explores these four vital aspects of spiritual growth:

1. **UP** - Being with Jesus: Engage in worship, scripture reading, and prayer. These are the pillars of nurturing a close relationship with Jesus.
2. **IN** - Becoming like Jesus: Pursue transformation into His image through practices like confession, silence, or journaling. These activities foster healing and personal growth.
3. **OUT** - Doing what Jesus did: Demonstrate Jesus' teachings to the world through acts of hospitality, generosity, and compassion.
4. **WITH** - Following Jesus together: Emphasize the importance of community. We all need spaces to gather, worship, and celebrate as one body in Christ.



Hold a family discussion about these categories. Identify your strengths and areas where you wish to grow. Consider where the Lord is guiding your family's spiritual journey in the coming year.



Consider purchasing a journal for everyone in the family and writing about these prompts:

1. **Ignatian Exercises:** Allocate 5-10 minutes each day for quiet reflection. Visualize a peaceful setting and invite Jesus to join you. Observe His actions and listen for His words. Record your impressions and evaluate them against scripture or discuss them with a trusted Christian friend. Scan the QR code for more Ignatian exercises.
2. **Personalizing Gospel Promises:** Read the Gospels and personalize each promise and command of Jesus. For instance, insert your name into passages, like "(your name) follow me." Reflect on these personalized messages and jot down any insights received.

For parents grappling with time constraints, scan the QR code for reflections and suggestions for managing your time, attention, and effort efficiently and meaningfully.





MISSION

HOSPITALITY, OR **HAKHNASAT ORCHIM** IN HEBREW,
STANDS AS A CORNERSTONE OF JEWISH VALUES,
DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE ACT OF LOVING GOD
AND OUR NEIGHBORS.



How is your family called to embody this virtue? God cherishes both grand gestures and simple acts of kindness. Consider inviting someone who might feel lost or lonely to share a meal at your table. Remember, it's the warmth of your welcome, not the extravagance of the meal, that leaves a lasting impression.

Pause and ponder what “new thing” God might be unfolding through the Incarnation of Christ. How can your family attune yourselves to discern and embrace this calling? In what ways is Jesus incarnate in your family's life today? Sometimes, stepping out of our comfort zones and expanding our perspectives can open doors to new learning, prayer, and meaningful interactions with those from different walks of life. Seek God's guidance in preparing for these new experiences.



- **Cultural Exploration:** Embark on a journey to understand other cultures. For insights into how Epiphany is celebrated in the Arab world, scan the QR code provided.
- **Historical Context:** Deepen your understanding of Jesus' life by viewing it through Middle Eastern Eyes. Consider reading “Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes” by Kenneth Bailey for a unique perspective.

ENGAGE YOUR CHILDREN IN THIS EXPLORATION.
ASK THEM WHERE AND WHEN THEY FEEL GOD'S CALL
TO SERVE. CHILDREN OFTEN HAVE INSIGHTFUL AND
CREATIVE IDEAS!

Here are some additional suggestions for embodying hospitality and service:

- **The Well:** Invite neighbors to join you in preparing and serving a meal on Sundays for those in need.
- **Families Care Group at Wellspring:** Provide support to families in fragile situations. Connect with Sarah for more details.
- **Neighborly Love:** Offer to babysit your neighbor's children, giving them a much-needed break.
- **Encouragement Through Words:** Write notes of encouragement for those who are ill, lonely, or simply as a surprise for your neighbors.

Should you wish to have a pastoral meeting to pray and discern where the Lord is leading your family, please feel free to contact any pastor or staff member at Wellspring.



CONNECTION



FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

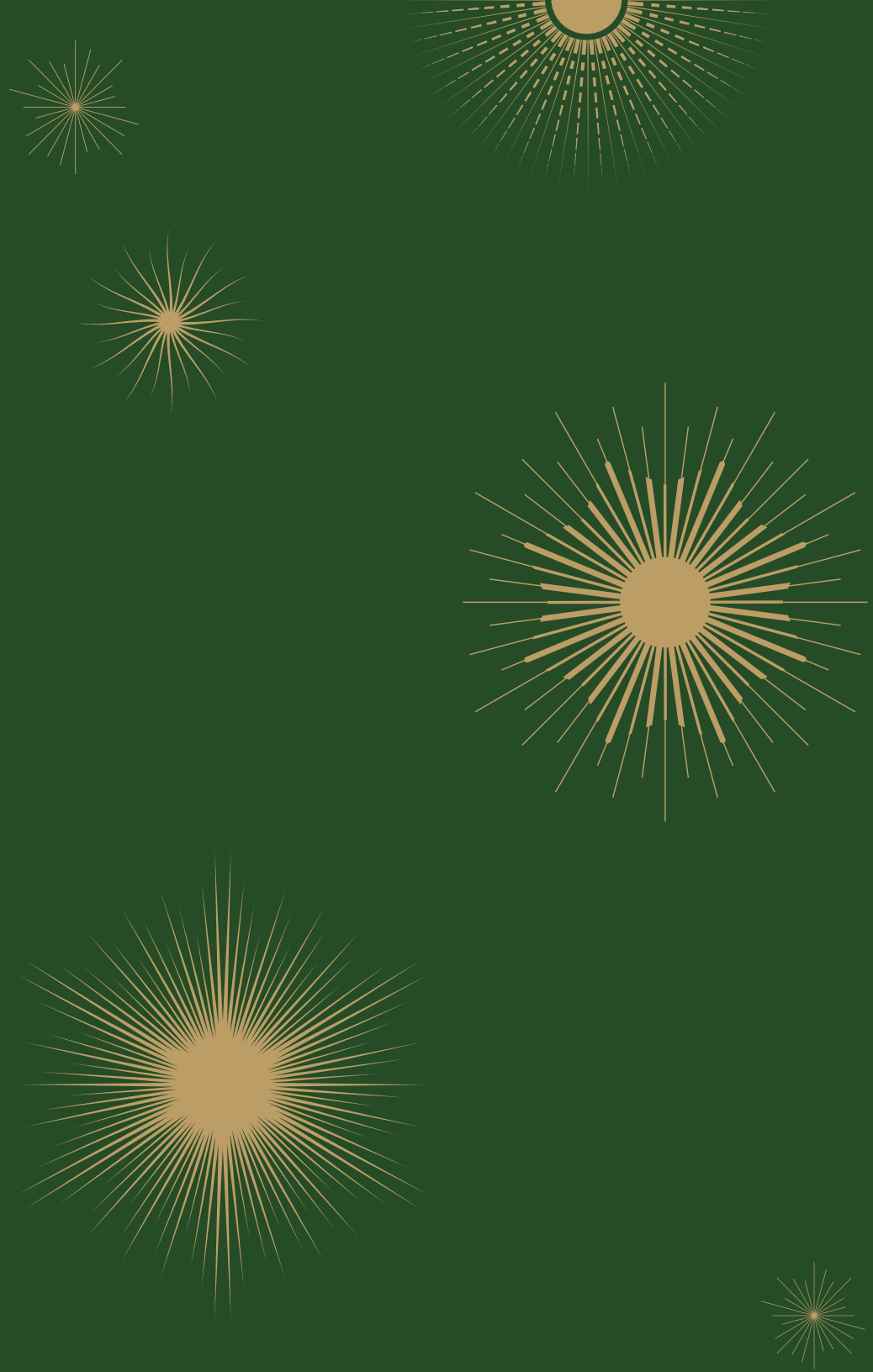
Embrace the joy of family bonding with a weekly movie night, featuring episodes of "The Chosen." Each episode offers a wealth of topics for observation and discussion, making for a meaningful and engaging family experience.

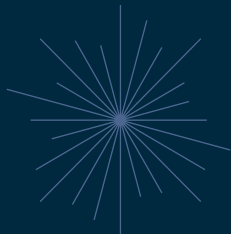
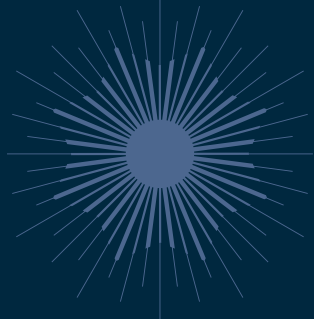
HEALTHY MARRIAGES

Remember, one of the most precious gifts you can bestow upon your children is the model of a healthy and thriving marriage. Make this year the time to deepen your bond with your spouse. Whether it's regular date nights, attending a marriage retreat, planning a weekend getaway, or exploring new ways to nurture your relationship, every effort counts. Continuous learning and growing together are key to sustaining a loving partnership.

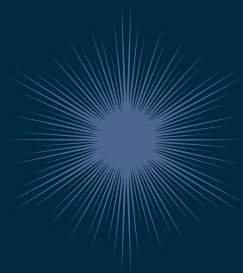
ONE-ON-ONE

Children cherish one-on-one moments with their parents. Consider setting up individual dates with each of your children. These special times are invaluable opportunities to strengthen bonds, create memories, and show your children they are loved and valued.





THIS FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE WAS LOVINGLY
ASSEMBLED BY THE TEAM AT WELLSPRING
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WELLSPRING
— CHURCH —



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