# How to Celebrate Advent with a Jesse Tree

A Guide compiled by Tara Ziegmont <a href="http://FeelsLikeHomeBlog.com">http://FeelsLikeHomeBlog.com</a>

	2
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#### What is a Jesse Tree?

The Jesse tree is the family tree of Jesus. It goes back to the very beginning, to Creation, it traces His family through the Old Testament, and it ends when He is born on Christmas day.

A Jesse tree is a little like an advent calendar, except that it emphasizes the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ.

Like any advent countdown, the Jesse tree has one ornament per day. Unlike a calendar, though, the Jesse tree tradition focuses on a Bible story, a character, a devotion each day.

In four weeks, we read about kings and common people, about widows and children and brave fighters. We read about the great and wonderful things that God orchestrated on our behalf.

And then we rejoice in His birth.

And we get presents, just 3 since that's what He got.

## How this guide came to be

Over the last three years, I have collected volumes of information on the Jesse tree tradition. It is my most favorite part of the Christmas season, and I have read about it voraciously.

There are a few really great resources available today, mostly online, but none of them focused on my audience – small children. I realized that I needed to write my own in order for it to really work well.

When I say that I wrote my own, I don't mean that I actually wrote most of the stuff in the pages that follow. I took pieces from all of the great Jesse tree devotionals that I found, and I compiled them into this guide. That's why this guide is now, and will always be, totally free.

This isn't a money-making guide; it's a means to spread the Good News of the birth of our Lord and Savior.

As your children get older, you'll want to look into <u>Ann Voskamp's Jesse</u> <u>tree devotional</u>, as well as the <u>Reformed Church of America's devotional</u>. Both are truly excellent, just a little meaty for young children.

## How to Make a Jesse Tree of your own

There are as many options for Jesse trees as there are families.

#### Our Jesse Tree

We started out with a slightly ugly, white Christmas tree that we found for a couple of dollars. It's around 2 feet tall, too small for all of the ornaments, but it cost almost nothing and we make it work.

#### Other "real" trees

Some families use their regular Christmas tree for their Jesse tree ornaments. I've even heard of families who place *only* the Jesse tree ornaments on their Christmas tree.

The nice thing about a regular tree is that you have lots of places to hang ornaments with string or hooks, and it's a normal-looking decoration.

I think a little potted evergreen would make a wonderful Jesse tree, too.

#### Branches

Some people place a couple of bare branches in a vase full of marbles and hang their ornaments on those.

#### Flat trees

I have seen Jesse trees made completely out of paper, cardboard, or poster board. I've also seen a few made out of felt or fabric. The idea is the same for all of these flat trees: you hang the whole thing on a wall and attach the ornaments with pins, velcro, or tape.

#### How to Make Jesse Tree Ornaments

#### Our ornaments

I made our ornaments using these drawings as pattern pieces, a dozen pieces of felt, some embroidery floss, and a pack of glitter paint pens. Here are a few of them, in various stages of assembly:





















#### Other hanging ornaments

My friend, Michelle, suggested making ornaments out of Shrinky Dinks. I think that's a spectacular idea, and it would be much easier than my felt ornaments were! Just make sure you punch holes in the designs before you bake them.

You could use small wooden shapes that you paint yourself, using the line drawings as patterns.

You could also find 28 little objects to hang on your tree. You may have to be creative, using a small rubber snake (rather than a snake wrapped around an apple) to represent the fall of man in sin.

#### Flat Tree Ornaments

If you want to make a flat tree and don't care if it lasts only one season, you could draw or print out a picture of a tree and print pictures that represent the ornaments, hanging them with tape. The images that appear on each page of the daily readings are collected together at the end of the book for easier printing if you want to make your tree this way. It's definitely the simplest plan, and if you laminate them, they would last a lot longer.

If your kids are old enough, you could print out line drawings <u>like these</u> and have them color the ornament each day during the Bible reading. Cut those out and hang them on the tree.

Alternately, you could make felt or fabric ornaments without stuffing to attach to your flat tree.

I'm sure there are lots of ways to make ornaments that I've never thought

	10
of. If you have ideas, please email me so that I can add them to the next version of this guide.	
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#### Now what?

So you've got a tree up some place, and you have a plan for the ornaments. You've printed out the 28 pages that follow, and they are in a folder or binder with your children's Bible and the tree.

What now?

At my house, we combine the Jesse tree and the advent wreath.

Just before dinner each night, Grace lights the candle or candles in the advent wreath.

After dinner, Grace gets to open our special Advent Box.



She passes out the candies, one to each of us, hangs the ornament on the Jesse tree, and we do our reading. (The colored cards are an old version of the pages that follow; they aren't in the box any more.)

I read the day's verse and talk about the ornament. Together, we sing the song. Next, either Joe or I reads the scripture referenced. We've used a

variety of Bibles over the years, but this year, we'll read from either the <u>Jesus Storybook Bible</u> or <u>The Story for Children</u>. If by chance, the story isn't in one or the other, I just summarize it from memory.

After all of the reading and singing is done, I ask Grace questions the emphasize the day's theme. We say the prayer, eat our candy, and blow out the candle from the advent wreath.

I set everything up for the next day, and we leave the dinner table.

That's it.

I can't think of a better way to emphasize the true meaning of Christmas than our Jesse tree tradition. I hope it's meaningful for your family, too.

# What about next year?

Advent can be as long as 28 days, when Christmas falls on a Sunday. This year, 2011, is one of those years, so you'll use all 28 of the pages that follow.

Next year (and subsequent years with fewer than 28 days in the advent season), just leave a couple out. Don't reprint the whole book; just put a post-it on the ones you plan to skip and simply skip over them.

You can choose which ones you keep and which ones you leave out. I leave out the ones I like least, the ones that are the least meaningful to me personally. You can do whatever you want, leave out whatever you want to leave out. It's your Jesse tree.

You probably shouldn't leave out Creation or Jesus. Just saying.

### Day One

Central character: God

Theme: Creation of the Earth & Man

Ornament: Earth

Verse: Genesis 1:1 - In the beginning God

created the heavens and the earth.

(NKJV)

Song: He's Got the Whole World in His

Hands

He's got the whole world in His hands, He's got the whole world in His hands, He's got the whole world in His hands, He's got the whole world in His hands.

Reading: Genesis 1: 26-31

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for making our wonderful Earth.



## Day Two

Central characters: Adam & Eve

Theme: Sin and sadness

Ornament: Apple with snake

Verse: Isaíah 53:6 - All of us, líke sheep,

have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the

LORD laid on him the sins of us all.

Song: Jesus Loves Me

Jesus loves me, this I know,

For the Bible tells me so

Little ones to Him belong,

They are weak and He is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me!

Yes, Jesus loves me!

Yes, Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.

Reading: Genesis 3: 1-19

Prayer: Dear Lord, please help us to do the right thing.

## Day Three

Central character: Noah

Theme: Promise

Ornament: The ark and rainbow

Verse: Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life int Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV)

Song: *Ríse and Shíne (Arky, Arky)* 

Rise and shine

And give God the glory, glory

Rise and shine

And give God the glory, glory

Rise and shine

And give God the glory, glory

Children of the Lord

The Lord said to Noah:

There's gonna be a floody, floody

The Lord said to Noah:

There's gonna be a floody, floody

Get those children out of the muddy, muddy

Children of the Lord

Reading: Genesis 6:11-14, 7:17-8:3, 9:8-13

Prayer: Thank you, God, for keeping all your promises to us.

Photo source: Flickr



#### Day Four

Central character: Abraham

Theme: Faithfulness

Ornament: Tent and camel

Verse: Genesís 12:2 - "I will make you into a

great nation, and I will bless you; I will

make your name great, and you will be a blessing."

Song: The Lord is my Shepherd

The Lord is my Shepherd, I'll walk with Him always He leads me by still waters, I'll walk with Him always Always, always, I'll walk with Him always. Always, always, I'll walk with Him always.

Reading: Genesis 12:1-7

Prayer: Help us to obey You, even when we can't see Your great plan.

### Day Five

Central character: Sarah

Theme: Answered prayers

Ornament: Baby cradle

Verse: Genesis 21:1 - The LORD kept his

word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. (NLT)

Song: Whisper a Prayer In the Morning

Whisper a prayer in the morning,

Whisper a prayer at noon.

Whisper a prayer in the evening,

He will keep your heart in tune.

God answers prayer in the morning,

God answers prayer at noon.

God answers prayer in the evening.

He will keep your heart in tune.

Reading: Genesis 21:1-7

Prayer: Thank you, God, for answering our prayers.



#### Day Six

Central character: Isaac

Theme: Protection (God keeps us safe & is always watching out for us.)

Ornament: Ram



Verse: Genesis 22:8 - "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.

Song: My God is so great, so strong and so kind...

My God is so big, so strong and so mighty
There's nothing my God cannot do
My God is so big, so strong and so mighty
There's nothing my God cannot do
He made the trees
He made the seas
He made the elephants too
My God is so big, so strong and so mighty
There's nothing my God cannot do!

Reading: Genesis 22:1-14

Prayer: We praíse You, dear God, for looking out for us every day, in every situation.

#### Day Seven

Central character: Jacob

Theme: God is always with us.

Ornament: Ladder

Verse: Genesis 28:15 - "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."



Song: God Made Me

God made me, God made me In my Bible book it says that God made me.

Reading: Genesis 28:10-22

Prayer: Remind us each day, God, that You are with us, even when we feel alone.

# Day Eight

Theme: A Light to guide us

Ornament: Candle

Verse: John 8:12 - Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the



world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (NKJV)

Song: This Little Light of Mine

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine Let it shine, Let it shine, Let it shine,

Reading: Isaiah 9:1

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for sending Jesus to us to light up the world.

### Day Nine

Central character: Joseph

Theme: Forgiveness

Ornament: Coat of many colors

Verse: Romans 8:28 - And we know that

God causes everything to work togethert for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. (NLT)

Song: Kum Ba Yah

Kum bay ya, my Lord, kum bay ya; Kum bay ya, my Lord, kum bay ya; Kum bay ya, my Lord, kum bay ya, O Lord, kum bay ya.

Reading: Genesis 37:1-36

Prayer: Dear Lord, please help us to be kind and forgive generously.

#### Day Ten

Central character: Moses

Theme: Rules

Ornament: Ten Commandments

Verse: Psalm 119:11 - I have hidden your

word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. (NLT)

Song: The Wise Man Built His House Upon a Rock

The wise man built his house upon the rock The wise man built his house upon the rock The wise man built his house upon the rock And the rain came tumbling down

Oh, the rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
The rain came down
And the floods came up
And the floods came up
And the wise man's house stood firm.

The foolish man built his house upon the sand The foolish man built his house upon the sand The foolish man built his house upon the sand And the rain came tumbling down

Oh, the rain came down

And the floods came up

The rain came down

And the floods came up

The rain came down

And the floods came up

And the foolish man's house went "splat!"

Reading: Deuteronomy 5: 1-22

Prayer: Ríghteous God, thank You for giving us rules to guide us and keep us safe.

## Day Eleven

Central character: Rahab

Theme: Courage

Ornament: Rope

Verse: Joshua 2:15 - Then, since Rahab's house was built into the town wall, she let them down by a rope through the window. (NLT)

Song: *R-A-H-A-B* (Tune of B-I-N-G-O)



name-o

R-A-H-A-B, R-A-H-A-B, R-A-H-A-B

and Rahab was her name-o.

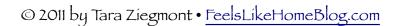
She hid the spies that came from God, with flax upon her roof-o.

She hid the spies that came from God, with flax upon her roof-o.

R-A-H-A-B, R-A-H-A-B and Rahab was her name-o.

Reading: Joshua 2:1-21

Prayer: Dear God, please give us courage to help others, especially when it is not easy.



# Day Twelve

Central character: Ruth

Theme: God takes care of us.

Ornament: Wheat

Verse: Ruth 1:16 - But Ruth replied, "Don't

urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. (NIV)

Song: Isn't He Wonderful?

Isn't He Wonderful, Wonderful, Wonderful
Isn't Jesus my Lord Wonderful!
Eyes have seen, ears have heard
It's recorded in God's Word
Isn't Jesus my Lord Wonderful!

Reading: Ruth 1:15-2:13

Prayer: Dear God, thank You for taking care of us. Please provide for our family in the months and years to come.

# Day Thirteen

Central character: Jesse

Theme: Patience

Ornament: Tree stump with new shoot

Verse: Isaíah 11:1 - Out of the stump of

David's family will grow a shoot — yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from

the old root. (NLT)

Song: *Praise Him, Praise Him* 

Praise Him, praise Him, praise Him in the morning, praise Him after noon time.

Praise Him, praise Him, praise Him when the sun goes down.

Reading: Isaiah 11:1-2

Prayer: Lord, please help us to be patient while we wait for Christmas day.

#### Day Fourteen

Central character: Samuel

Theme: God has a plan for us.

Ornament: Horn with oil

Verse: I Samuel 16:12 - So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one."

Song: His Banner Over Me is Love

He brought me to His banqueting table
His banner over me is love
He brought me to His banqueting table
His banner over me is love
He brought me to His banqueting table
His banner over me is love
His banner over me is love

Reading: I Samuel 16:1-13

Prayer: We thank You, God, that You have a great plan for each of us. Help us to trust in You and rely on Your plan.



## Day Fifteen

Theme: Hope

Ornament: Watchtower

Verse: Psalm 31:24 - So be strong and

courageous, all you who put your hope in the

LORD!

Song: I've Got Joy in my Heart

I have the joy, joy, joy down in my

heart

Where?

Down in my heart!

Where?

Down in my heart!

I have the joy, joy, joy down in my heart

Down in my heart to stay

And I'm so happy

So very happy

I have the love of Jesus in my heart

Down in my heart

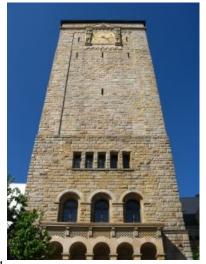
And I'm so happy

So very happy

I have the love of Jesus in my heart.

Reading: Habakkuk 2:1-4

Prayer: Lord, please be with us while we wait for Christmas day.



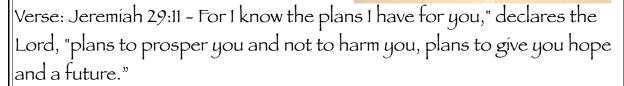
## Day Sixteen

Central character: Esther

Theme: God has a special job for each of

us.

Ornament: Scepter or tíara



Song: Haman Was a Mean, Evil Man (Written by Carolyn Warvel)
(Sing to the tune of "Zacchaeus was a Wee Little Man", the first two stanzas.)

Old Haman was a mean, evil man, A mean, evil man was he. He was meaner than an angry old flea, As mean as he could be.

When Mordecai would not bow to him, He had to make his plea. He went to the king and made him agree To sign an evil decree.

But Queen Esther was a very good queen, A very good queen was she. Without delay she began to pray And she sent to God her plea.

She went to the King and bowed real low, Even though she wanted to flee. She got the king to change his decree, The Jewish people were free! And then the king gave a new decree And Haman was no more to be.

Reading: Esther 4

Prayer: All-knowing God, open our eyes to the special plans you have for us.

#### Day Seventeen

Central character: David

Theme: Kings and Shepherds

Ornament: Crown

Verse: I Samuel 17:36 - I have done this to

both lions and bears, and I'll do it to this pagan Philistine, too, for he has

defied the armies of the living God! (NLT)

Song: Only a Boy Named David

Only a boy named David

Only a little sling

Only a boy named David

But he could pray and sing

Only a boy named David

Only a rippling brook

Only a boy named David

But five little stones he took.

And one little stone went in the sling

And the sling went round and round

And one little stone went in the sling

And the sling went round and round

And round and round

And round and round

And round and round and round

And one little prayer went up to God

And the giant came tumbling down.

Reading: II Samuel 5:1-5

Prayer: Thank You, God, for giving us the Good Shepherd, Your Son, the king of heaven and earth, to watch over and care for us.

# Day Eighteen

Central character: Elíjah

Theme: Praising God

Ornament: Altar with fire

Verse: I Kings 18:38 - Immediately the fire of the LORD flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the trench! (NLT)



Song: Give Me Oil in my Lamp

Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning Give me oil in my lamp, I pray Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning Keep me burning 'til the break of day

Sing hosanna, sing hosanna Sing hosanna to the King of Kings Sing hosanna, sing hosanna Sing hosanna to the King of Kings

Reading: 1 Kings 18:17-39

Prayer: We praise You, powerful God, for all You have done for us.

#### Day Nineteen

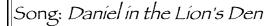
Central character: Daniel

Theme: Trust in God

Ornament: Líon

Verse: Daniel 6:22 - My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have not wronged you, Your

Majesty.



Daniel, Daniel,

Daniel, Daniel

Daniel in the

Lí, lí, lí, lí

Daniel, Daniel,

Daniel, Daniel

Daniel in the

Li, li, li, li

Daniel, Daniel,

Daniel, Daniel

Daniel in the

Li, li, li, li

Daniel in the lion's,

Daniel in the lion's

Daniel in the lion's den.



7	56
Reading: Daniel 6	
Prayer: Savior God, it is not always easy to love You more than anything else. Help us to trust and honor You each day.	
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### Day Twenty

Central character: Ezekiel

Theme: God's Word is food for our souls.

Ornament: Scroll

Verse: Ezekiel 3:10 - Then he added, "Son of man, let all my words sink deep

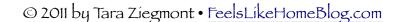
into your own heart first. Listen to them carefully for yourself. (NLT)

Song: The B-I-B-L-E

The B-I-B-L-E
Yes, that's the book for me
I stand alone on the Word of God
The B-I-B-L-E

Reading: Ezekiel 3:1-11

Prayer: Caring Father, thank You for Your Holy Word. Give us Your understanding and help us to stay close to You.



#### Day Twenty-one

Central character: Isaíah

Theme: Truth

Ornament: Rose

Verse: Isaíah 6:8 - Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this

people? Who will go for us?" I said, "Here I am. Send me."

Song: I'm in the Lord's Army

I may never march in the infantry

Ride in the cavalry

Shoot the artillery

I may never fly o'er the enemy

But I'm in the Lord's army!

Yes Sir!

I'm in the Lord's army!

Yes sir!

I'm in the Lord's army!

Yes sir!

Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for Your truth, and those who have been entrusted with it. Thank You for Your prophets.



#### Day Twenty-two

Theme: Peace

Ornament: Wolf and lamb lying down

together

Verse: Romans 12:18 - Do all that you can

to live in peace with everyone.

Song: Peace Like a River

I've got peace like a river

I've got peace like a river

I've got peace like a river in my soul

I've got peace like a river

I've got peace like a river

I've got peace like a river in my soul

Reading: Isaiah 11:6-9

Prayer: Loving God, help us find ways to bring peace to our world.



# Day Twenty-three

Central characters: Zechariah and Elizabeth

Theme: Faith

Ornament: Zechariah and Elizabeth

Verse: Luke 1:18 - Zecharíah saíd to the angel, "How can I be sure thís will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years."

Song: Standing in the Need of Prayer

It's me, it's me, it's me, oh Lord,
Standing in the need of prayer
It's me, it's me, it's me, oh Lord,
Standing in the need of prayer
Not my mother, not my father, but it's me oh Lord
Standing in the need of prayer
Not my mother, not my father, but it's me oh Lord
Standing in the need of prayer

Reading: Luke 1:5-25

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for the gift of our faith. Help us to share it with others.



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# Day Twenty-four

Central character: John the Baptist

Theme: Prepare

Ornament: Seashell

Verse: Luke 3:4 - Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the LORD's coming! Clear the road for him!"

Song: Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam

Jesus wants me for a sunbeam, To shine for Him each day; In every way try to please Him, At home, at school, at play.

A sunbeam, a sunbeam,
Jesus wants me for a sunbeam;
A sunbeam, a sunbeam,
I'll be a sunbeam for Him.

Reading: Matthew 3:1-6

Prayer: Holy God, forgive us when we do things that displease You. Make our hearts ready for Jesus.

# Day Twenty-five

Central character: Joseph

Theme: Goodness and kindness

Ornament: Hammer and saw

Verse: Matthew 1:24 - When Joseph woke

up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his

wife.

Song: God is so Good

God is so good,

God is so good,

God is so good. He's so good to me.

God loves me so,

God loves me so,

God loves me so. He's so good to me.

God answers prayer,

God answers prayer,

God answers prayer. He's so good to me.

Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

Prayer: God, help us to hear Your voice when You call us.

#### Day Twenty-six

Central character: Mary

Theme: Purity

Ornament: Lilies in heart

Verse: Luke 1:45 - You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.

Song: Do Lord

I've got a home in gloryland that outshines the sun, (Oh Lordy) I've got a home in gloryland that outshines the sun,

I've got a home in gloryland that outshines the sun, Away, beyond the blue.

Do Lord, oh do Lord, oh do remember me, (Oh Lordy) Do Lord, oh do Lord, oh do remember me, Do Lord, oh do Lord, oh do remember me, Away, beyond the blue.

Reading: Luke 1:26-38

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, that nothing is impossible with Your help.



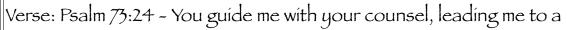
#### Day Twenty-seven

Central character: The Journey to

Bethlehem

Theme: Guidance

Ornament: Town



glorious destiny.

Song: O, Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem

How still we see thee lie

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep

The silent stars go by

Yet in thy dark streets shineth

The everlasting Light

The hopes and fears of all the years

Are met in thee tonight

Reading: Luke 2:1-5

Prayer: Guide our journeys, wherever they take us, Holy God.



# Day Twenty-eight

Central character: Jesus

Theme: Savior

Ornament: Star

Verse: Luke 2:10-11 - Then the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold, 1



bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Song: Joy to the World

Joy to the world! the Lord is come;

Let earth receive her King;

Let every heart prepare him room,

And heaven and nature sing,

And heaven and nature sing,

And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Reading: Luke 2:6-21

Prayer: Thank You, heavenly Father, for the most wonderful gift of Your son, Jesus.

#### Ornaments Needed:

- 1. Earth
- 2. Apple & snake
- 3. Ark & rainbow
- 4. Tent & came
- 5. Baby cradle
- 6. Ram
- 7. Ladder
- 8. Candle
- 9. Coat of many colors
- 10.10 Commandments
- 11. Rope
- 12. Wheat
- 13. Tree stump with new shoot
- 14. Horn of oil

- 15. Watchtower
- 16. Scepter or tíara
- 17. Crown
- 18. Altar with fire
- 19. Lion
- 20. Scroll or Bible
- 21. Rose
- Wolf & lamb lying together
- 23. Zechariah & Elizabeth
- 24. Seashell
- 25. Hammer & saw
- 26. Lilies in a heart
- 27. Town
- 28.Star

Remember that these are just my suggestions. You can use whatever items you can find or whatever makes sense to you.

Please feel free to print and use the photos in the pages that follow. They're the same photos that appear on the daily devotional pages, but in a more condensed form for easier printing and cutting.









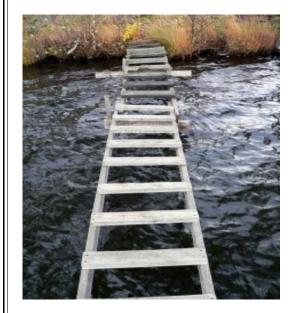








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