FROM THE MANGER



ADVENT CALENDAR

illustrated MINISTRY

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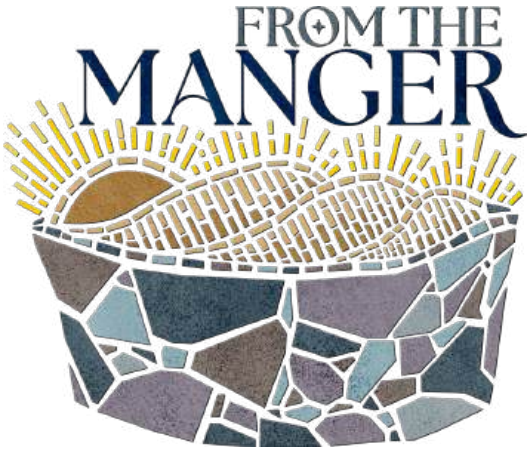
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FROM THE MANGER ADVENT CALENDAR

Hunger is a universal human experience, drawing attention to our most basic needs for food and nourishment and our more complex needs—peace, liberation, and meaning in this life. So, it's no wonder that the story of Jesus—the one who came to feed the hungry—begins, ends, and centers around food.

From the Manger gathers around the birth story in Luke 2, embracing the playful symbolism of a newborn Jesus being laid down to sleep in a feeding trough in a town called "House of Bread."

This *From the Manger Advent Calendar* invites you to reflect on the life-sustaining hope, peace, joy, and love Jesus brings and notice how the baby born in a bread town continues to feed a hungry world today. Beginning December 1, each day offers a simple activity for your family to complete together. We understand that life can get busy, so these activities are short and meaningful, keeping the focus on quality family time.

Display the calendar in a visible spot at home where everyone can see it each day and cut out the cards to use with the calendar. There are several ways you and your family can interact with the Advent Calendar. You can choose your own path by selecting a word from the calendar, coloring it in, and using the corresponding Advent Activity Card. Alternatively, you might randomly pick a card and then color or mark the related word on the calendar. For a more playful approach, you could hide cards around the house for a daily surprise. Another option is for each family member to choose their own word and card, then come together to share their thoughts. We hope this resource provides an easy, meaningful way to connect during Advent, creating lasting memories for your family.

Your thoughts matter to us. If you found this resource helpful or meaningful, we'd love to hear from you! Any suggestions or ideas for improvement are always welcome. You can reach us at **info@illustratedministry.com** or connect with us on the following social networks:

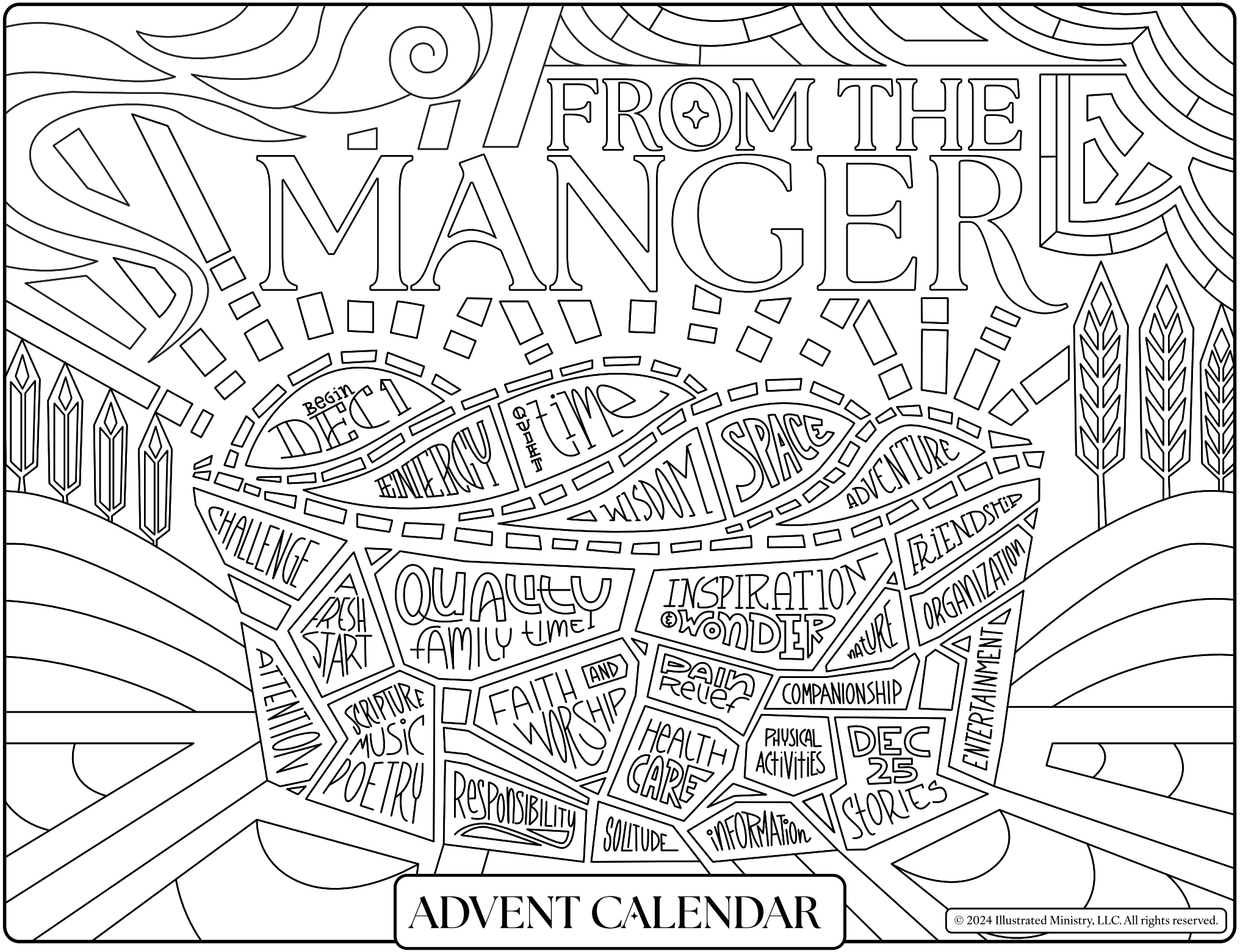
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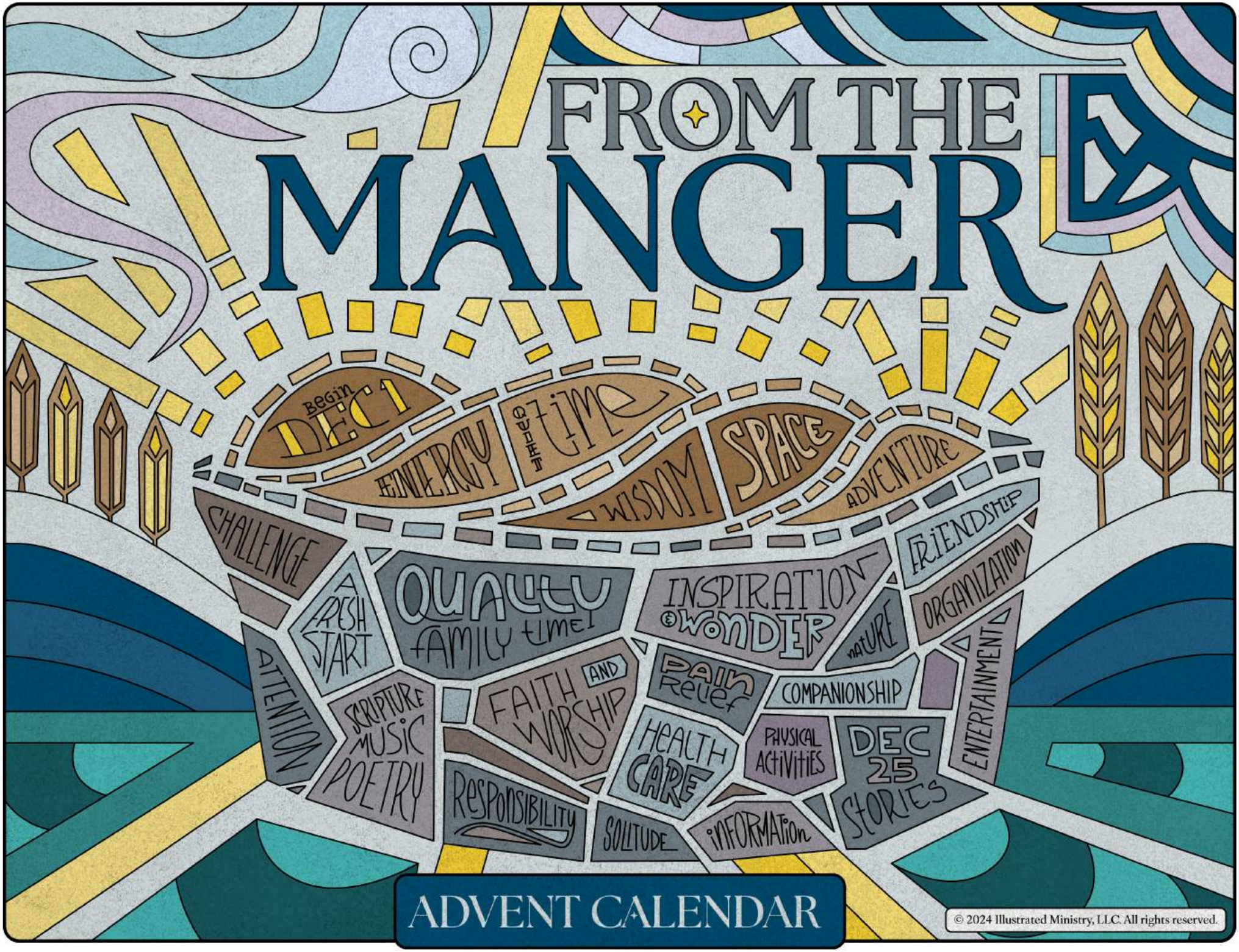
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DECEMBER 1

"God has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; God has filled the hungry with good things."

- Luke 1:52-53a

God created us to feel hunger when we need something to eat. People also feel other types of hunger. **To begin this Advent Calendar journey, take a look at these different kinds of hunger, and survey your family.** Place initials by each type of hunger, according to who's felt it lately. You can also highlight the type of hunger your family feels most.

Lately, have you been hungry for...

- Physical activities
- Friendship
- Quality family time
- Information
- Wisdom
- Entertainment
- Faith and worship
- Quiet time
- Solitude
- Adventure
- A fresh start
- Attention
- Scripture, music, and poetry
- Stories
- Space
- Organization
- Responsibility
- Healthcare (physical or mental)
- Companionship
- Nature
- Inspiration and wonder
- Challenge
- Pain relief
- Energy

Throughout the rest of the Advent season, you will explore different types of hunger together. There are several ways you and your family can interact with the Advent Calendar. You can choose your own path by selecting a word from the calendar, coloring it in, and using the corresponding card. Alternatively, you might randomly pick a card and then color or mark the related word on the calendar. For a more playful approach, you could hide cards around the house for a daily surprise. Another option is for each family member to choose their own word and card, then come together to share their thoughts. However you decide to engage, this Advent journey will help your family address hunger in a meaningful way.



A FRESH START

Are you hungry for a fresh start?

Is there an area of your life that feels discouraging? One you want to declare a do-over and shape a better future? Maybe you are tired of people saying, "you always..." or "you never..."

It is very difficult to change a behavior if you feel discouraged, but today is a new day! Tell each other what fresh start you need, and cheer each other on. Here are some sample scripts:

- Sometimes, I lie when you ask me if I did my homework. Today is a fresh start, and I will do better. Please cheer me on!
- I am discouraged when you tell me I never make my bed. Today is a fresh start, and I will do better. Please cheer me on!
- I apologize I have not been helping with meal planning lately. I know that it takes more than one person. Today is a fresh start, and I will do better. Please cheer me on!
- I keep leaving the car a mess. That affects the whole family. Today is a fresh start, and I will do better. Please cheer me on!



SCRIPTURE, POETRY, MUSIC

Are you hungry for poetry?

Do you love reading scripture or learning lyrics? Do your favorite quotes inspire you to live well?

Words fill a space in our hearts. Carefully chosen words help us think differently, laugh, cry, and reflect on the world around us. Even silly words like "shoop-de-be-do" and "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" can bring us joy.

Think about the many different ways that words inspire you and choose your favorite to share:

- Inspiring quotes
- Clever lyrics
- Rhyming poetry/books
- Sacred scripture
- Complex rap
- Wise sayings
- Second language or Birth language idioms
- Historic speeches, sermons, lectures, or talks
- Influential essays



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QUALITY FAMILY TIME

Are you hungry for more quality time with your family?

One of the best ways to increase your quality time is to remember together. Your past quality time can create new quality time! How?

Go into your stash of photos and choose a favorite moment from a past vacation or experience together. Share what you loved about that memory and why it was a good time together as a family. If you have older children in your family, they can choose photos from their own devices. Otherwise, search together on one device or screen (or a physical photo album!).

After each person describes a memory and shows their picture, name something you have planned for the future that will create more memories. If you do not have any plans, make some together!



NATURE

Are you hungry for more nature in your life?

Do you need to "touch grass"? No matter where you live, natural life can be seen and explored. Depending upon your schedule and the weather outside, here are three levels of nature you can take on today:

Option 1: Look out your window together. Examine the sky, weather, and space between buildings. Listen to the birds. Open your window and take a deep breath. Smell the scents of the space outside your window. Spend a few minutes experiencing nature from your home.

Option 2: Enjoy the local nature around you. Go to a park. Walk around the block. Work in your garden. Play in the snow, water, or sand, depending on where you live! Walk your dog. Spend fifteen minutes in nature.

Option 3: Dive in! Go hiking, stargazing, paddleboarding, tree-climbing, mountain climbing, bird watching, canoeing, or scenic driving. Build a snow fort, a sandcastle, or a garden. Spend several hours in nature.



ATTENTION

Are you hungry for attention?

Everyone needs attention, and attention is a good thing! Babies and children depend upon attention for survival. Adults need attention for emotional well-being. In this activity, each family member will have a moment to share a cool trick, something that interests them, something they created, or a feeling they have been having. Think of this as "Family Show-and-Tell." Give everyone enough time to think of something to share. If you cannot think of something to share, try filling in these sentences to share with your family:

This week, I am proud that I...

Did you notice that I...

Please don't forget that I need...

One cool fact I know is...



QUIET TIME

Are you hungry for quiet time?

Do you wish you had more silence around you at home? We get used to everyday noises—traffic, alarms, television, news, babies crying, dogs barking, music playing, people talking, and many more. Who appreciates silence in your family? Do they get enough time in silence? Who appreciates noise? Do they get enough noisy time?

Try to vary the noise level in your home. If you usually have lots of noise, set a timer for silence. How does it feel? Is it difficult for some family members? Are there some sounds you cannot turn off or avoid?

If you are typically a quiet family, try putting on some music for a few minutes. How does that feel? Who enjoys the sound? Who does not?



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INSPIRATION AND WONDER

Are you hungry for inspiration and wonder?

Do you like to experience AWE regularly? Awe is an important part of the human experience. When we are inspired and filled with wonder, we generate new ideas. Our anxiety decreases. We feel a renewed sense of purpose. Awe can come from both tiny and huge things. Here are three options for experiencing awe:

Option 1: Look closely. Use a magnifying glass, a microscope, or your own eyes to examine tiny things around your home: salt, sand, an insect, or your fingerprints. What do you notice?

Option 2: Learn about a life. People live inspiring lives. They do brave things that show us how amazing people can be. Look up a life that you haven't learned about before. Here are some examples: Ella Baker, Tenzing Norgay, Yuri Kochiyama, and Wilma Mankiller.

Option 3: Live large! Visit something huge—a building, an ocean, a mountain, a desert, or a plain. Even a large crowd of people can inspire awe! What inspires you about the view?



CHALLENGE

Are you hungry for a challenge to level up your skills?

Maybe you're bored with things you must do, and it's time to introduce some difficulty. Choose an area to challenge your family to go into turbo drive. Here are a few ideas:

- Has it been a while since you tried to cook something new and challenging? Find a recipe to give you new culinary skills, and try it together!
- Add a new skill/level to your physical exercise. Do you walk together? Try going farther or faster as a team!
- Is your library card getting dusty? How long has it been since you tried something harder to read? Take a reading challenge and read something new or unexpected.
- What family activity have you been waiting to do because only some in your family are old enough? Is it time to give it a whirl?
- How's your sleep schedule? Challenge your family to get up early enough for a stress-free morning and fall into bed early at night.
- Is it time to level up your household chores? Who in your family is ready for new skills like mopping or recycling? Who in your family needs a break?



PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

Are you hungry for physical activity?

Moving our bodies helps us be healthy—mentally and physically. But often, we are told to sit down and be still. This causes people, especially children, to fidget. Fidgeting is a great clue you are hungry to move!

We all have different abilities, and we can all enjoy action. Some people do not walk but can ride horses, swim, or dance. Some people participate in movement using wheelchairs, canes, or other mobility aids. Babies can join the fun by riding in strollers or being carried.

What is one physical activity everyone in your family can enjoy? Try adding music, beautiful scenery, play, or conversation to help everyone participate with joy.



WISDOM

Are you hungry for wisdom?

You may not recognize it yet, but everyone gets hungry for wisdom sometimes. As we learn and grow into new life stages, we realize how much there is to learn about living in this big world. Below are three sources of wisdom. Choose one or all of them, and seek out some wisdom:

- Older people have wisdom. Ask your trusted older adults to share their favorite bits of wisdom with you. Grown-ups, ask people who are even older than YOU!
- Look up ancient wisdom from your culture and other cultures. What kinds of wisdom have been passed down over the centuries? Choose one bit of wisdom to post for your whole family to see.
- Read James 1:5 together from the Bible. Ask God to give you wisdom as you learn and grow.



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FRIENDSHIP

Are you hungry for friendship?

Sometimes, it is easy to make friends. Sometimes, it is harder to make friends. Some people in your family likely have more friends than others, depending upon their stage in life.

One of the most important ways to nurture friendships is simply spending time with other people. How can your family support one another in nurturing your friendships?

Of course, playdates, birthday parties, game nights, and youth group activities are all fun ways to build friendships, but quiet moments can also be helpful. Consider long car rides, community service, waiting in lines, running errands, studying, yard work, cooking, and crafting. Make some space in your day to connect with friends, even if you are going to run errands!



RESPONSIBILITY

Are you hungry for more responsibility?

What have you wanted to try or do that means more responsibility? Everyone grows into responsibility—even grown-ups. And new responsibilities often come with a few mistakes or even failures. Take a family moment and assess responsibilities. Who is ready for more independence? Who is ready for more decision-making? What new responsibilities can you give little ones, children, teenagers, and adults?

If a person is not ready for a new responsibility, what might they do now to grow into it? For example, if you are not ready for a later bedtime, more screen privileges, or more grown-up books to read, how might you take steps toward that goal?

Be creative and think about steps each person can take to achieve their next level of responsibility.



HEALTHCARE (PHYSICAL/MENTAL)

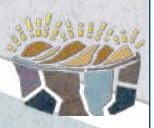
Are you hungry for healthcare?

This is a frustrating hunger! Everyone should have the healthcare they need, but sadly, that is not always the case. Whether people need counseling, braces, long-term treatments, or an annual physical, everyone should have access to the care they need.

It is important to consider what everyone needs, even if care is challenging to find. Start with the basics:

- Are we brushing our teeth?
- Are we sleeping well?
- Are we eating well?
- Are we feeling hopeful about life?
- Are we safe with each other and the people we encounter?
- Do we have access to medical and dental care?
- Do we have access to mental health care?
- Do we have the prescriptions we need?

As you think about family health, consider what the next steps might be in your health journey. If you reach a problem you can't solve, consider reaching out to your faith community, school community, or local social worker for ideas and assistance.



ORGANIZATION

Are you hungry for organization?

Organization helps us find things we need, use our spaces effectively, track information, avoid spending money we don't need to spend, and plan ahead for the future. But being organized can be overwhelming!

Today, choose one small piece of chaos to organize. As an Advent practice, keep the project small enough to accomplish with joy and energy. Choose something that benefits the whole family so everyone can enjoy the results and work together to make it happen. Here are some ideas:

- Go through your digital files and delete photos you do not need. This can be a fun romp through memories. To make it a small project, choose a reasonable goal, like deleting 50 images.
- Look over all the food in your fridge/pantry and toss out anything expired or unusable.
- Clean out a storage space everyone uses, like a coat closet or shoe bench.



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INFORMATION

Are you hungry for information?

Are you curious about one special thing? Maybe you are curious about a thousand special things! Sometimes, each person in a family has a different curiosity. Sometimes, everyone is curious about similar things. Whether you all agree on an interest or not, choose curiosity!

Take some time to learn more information about one another's interests. You can do this by participating in an activity called "Did you know?"

Try to find and/or share information that is new to your family. Ask, "Did you know...?"

- Did you know the first steam locomotive was built in 1804?
- Did you know the first woman in space was Valentina Tereshkova?
- Did you know coffee originated in Ethiopia?

Keep going until each family member learns something new about their special interest. This may take time...



FAITH AND WORSHIP

Are you hungry for faith and worship?

You may not even know what this kind of hunger feels like, but you have probably felt it! Hunger for faith can create thoughts like:

"My life feels small."
"Why am I here?"
"I am discouraged and lonely."

OR

"I am so thankful. I want to say thank you."
"I can't wait to see my faith family and friends."

When we spend time thinking about purpose, gratitude, and God's big world, we satisfy our hunger for faith and worship. For many people, church is a great source to satisfy this hunger. Others nurture their need for faith and worship in nature, through a music studio, reading a book, or around a dinner table. Find out where each person in your family feels the greatest sense of gratitude and purpose.

With our youngest family members, discuss where we feel the most safe and loved. With our oldest family members, talk about liminal spaces of transcendence.



COMPANIONSHIP

Are you hungry for companionship?

Companionship is going through life with a partner(s). Companions can be friends, family, spouses, roommates, or even pets. Companions are a constant presence through the ups and downs of life. You may argue and bicker with them more because they are closer than other friends. You aren't embarrassed to show companions the uglier sides of life or your challenges. Sometimes, companions love romantically and choose to stay together for life. Some companions come in and out of life. Small children's companions are their caregivers. As we grow, we begin to depend upon our peers for companionship. And when we are very old, our companions are often our spouses and children. To identify who your companions are, ask yourself questions like these:

- If I woke up in the middle of the night with a nightmare, who would I tell?
- If I had to spend a night at the hospital, who would come with me?
- If I had an accident and needed a fresh pair of pants, who would I ask for help with the least embarrassment?

Discuss ways to create companionship and pray for companions, known and yet to be found.



SOLITUDE

Are you hungry for solitude?

Would you like some time alone with your thoughts, hobbies, and dreams? Jesus showed us solitude is important for everyone. Solitude helps us know ourselves better, assess and meet our needs, and recover from time with people.

Who has the most solitude in your family? Who needs more solitude? What are your favorite activities to do when you are alone? Some activities meet our needs more than others in solitude. Sometimes, we think we are getting quality alone time, but after spending that time in video games or social media, we don't feel restored or ready for more people time. Not all "alone" activities meet our hunger for solitude. What kind of solitude activities fill you up best? Which types of activities leave you feeling depleted?

- Meditation
- Reading
- Gaming
- Texting
- YouTube
- TikTok
- Facebook
- Listening to music
- Podcasts
- Walking
- Exercising
- Playing with pets
- Pretend play
- Naps
- Coloring or artwork
- Making music
- Showers or baths
- Writing or journaling
- Cooking
- Studying
- Working



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ENTERTAINMENT

Are you hungry for entertainment?

Are you hungry for entertainment? For thousands of years, people have enjoyed entertainment as part of human flourishing. Amazingly, entertainment has not changed much over time! Human beings of the past loved storytelling, music, sports, visual art, dance, comedy, drama... everything that entertains us today!

But, we don't always choose entertainment that will satisfy our hunger for joy. We can get lost in short-form social media entertainment instead of making time for deeper, more meaningful experiences. We are attracted to entertainment that makes us feel good quickly instead of sources requiring greater attention and patience.

Consider engaging in entertainment today that lasts more than 10 minutes. Here are some ideas:

- Play a full game (board or ball)
- Observe a full game
- Watch a movie
- Go to a play or musical
- Read a whole chapter or more
- Spend at least 30 minutes on a craft or art
- Listen to an entire album
- Color a whole picture
- Dance for at least 20 minutes



PAIN RELIEF

Are you hungry for pain relief?

Did you know many people experience pain as a part of their daily life? If you do not have daily pain like headaches, back pain, joint pain, or abdominal pain, you may not even notice your relief is satisfied. But for people with chronic pain, relief is a daily hunger.

There are many ways to feel pain relief. Here are some healthy ways people find relief from pain:

- Ice or cold packs
- Heating pads
- Movement
- Massage
- Rest
- Darkness
- Medicine
- Ointment
- Meditation
- Acupuncture
- Physical therapy
- Distraction
- Counseling

What do you do when you are in pain? What helps you the most? How can you support the people in your life who feel pain throughout each day or week? Are there any pains you haven't shared with your caregivers?



ENERGY

Are you hungry for energy?

Do you often feel fatigued and wish you had an energy boost to do more things you enjoy? People feel fatigued for many different reasons—a heavy load of responsibilities, mental illness, physical pain/illness, grief, or long working hours. And some people are not sure why they feel fatigued.

We all want to have the energy we need to do the things we love. How do you protect and grow your energy? That depends on your situation! The advice varies greatly according to your needs:

- Rest
- Eat protein
- Develop more alone time
- Work more
- Schedule more activities
- Exercise
- Eat carbohydrates
- Spend more time with people
- Work less
- Schedule fewer activities

Is this list confusing? People get energy in many different ways. Talk together about what gives you the energy to do the things you love. Also, discuss ways you might be seeking energy in unhelpful ways. Choose an energizing strategy you can do together as a family today!



ADVENTURE

Are you hungry for adventure?

Do you feel most alive while taking risks? You may say "yes" or "no," but the truth is, everyone can enjoy risk-taking when it is appropriate for their comfort level. And comfort level varies greatly!

Risk-taking becomes unhealthy or stressful when it is dangerous to your well-being or too far outside your emotional comfort zone. No one should ever take risks that make them feel bad or too scared.

So, what are some fun family risks you could take? What are some safe ways to have an adventure and the feeling of doing something exciting? Trust your grown-ups to choose the appropriate level of risk for a fun activity. Use all your safety knowledge to ensure everyone is healthy and safe. And use your helmet! Here are some ideas:

- Hiking
- Diving
- Public speaking
- Roller skating
- Bike riding
- Reading aloud
- Talking to new people
- Big slides
- Polar plunge
- Camping
- Climbing
- Nature exploration
- Canoeing/kayaking
- Beachcombing
- Happy and gentle surprises



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SPACE

Are you hungry for physical space?

Do you need more room around you to feel safe and comfortable? You may live in a place with a high population density and lack personal space or in population density where you have more space to live and be active. No matter where you live, you need space to be yourself. And everyone needs some level of privacy. As long as you are living safely and having safe thoughts, your journal, communication with close friends, caregivers, therapists, and health professionals, and prayers to God should be private.

Here are some ways to get personal space wherever you live:

- A place to keep your things
- A place to write/record private thoughts
- A space behind a closed door for private body business
- A quiet time/space to do work requiring thinking
- A designated, quiet place to sleep that accommodates your body's needs

Everyone deserves privacy at some level—even babies. As you grow, learn, and mature, you will receive more opportunities for privacy. Use your space and privacy to care for your needs and feel confident/ready when it is time to be with others.

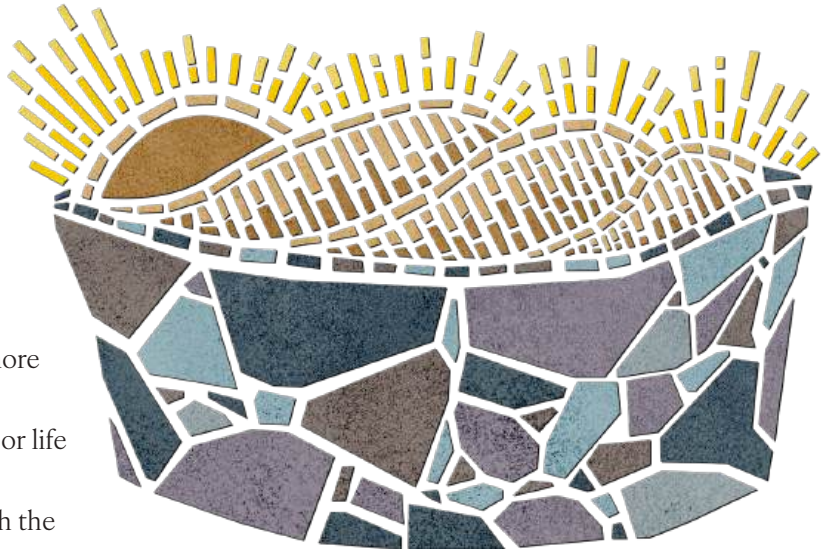


DECEMBER 25 • STORIES

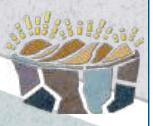
Are you hungry for stories?

The story of Jesus is often called "The Greatest Story Ever Told" because the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are so important and transformational. Many stories are powerful enough to change our way of thinking and our lives. From parables to biographies, from novels to historical accounts, stories help us to see how our lives fit in with the rest of the human experience.

Read the stories of Christmas together. The stories in Matthew and Luke highlight the diverse experiences of those who encountered Jesus—from the angels to Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the magi, and even the baby Jesus himself.

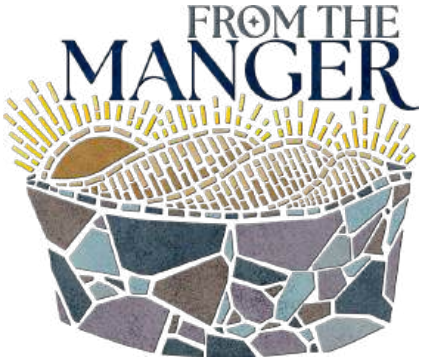


- Which characters or people do you relate to this year?
- Which parts of the "greatest story" inspire you this year?
- Which parts confuse you?
- Which parts would you like to know more about?
- Going deeper, which stories in culture or life also inspire you these days?
- Do they have anything in common with the stories of Jesus' birth?



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