

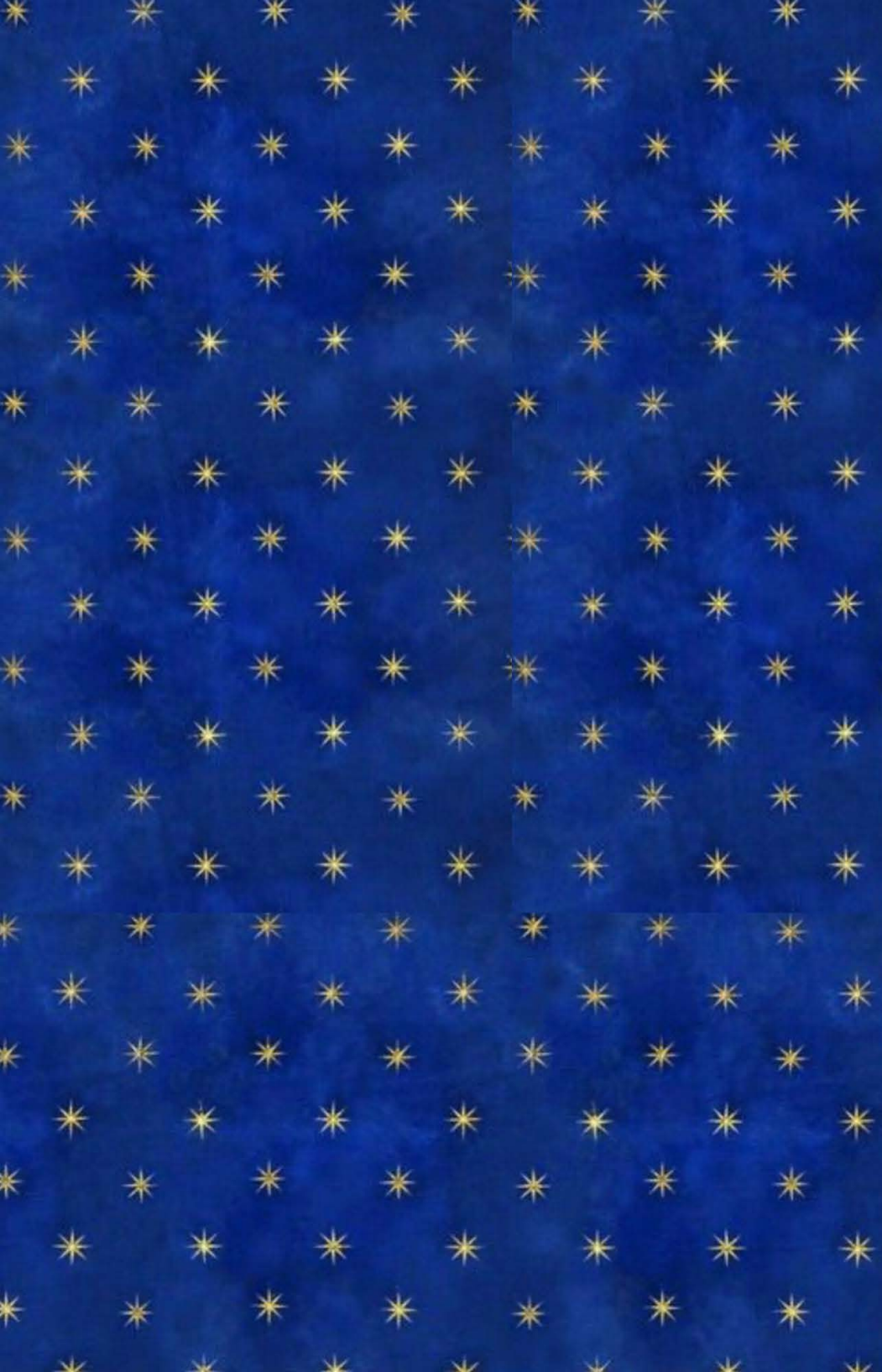


# THE CHRISTMAS CABINET

May The Christmas Cabinet become an important part of your family tradition, handed down from generation to generation!

Visit us at [TheChristmasCabinet.com](http://TheChristmasCabinet.com) to order replacement figures, listen to seasonal music, find historical facts about the period, discover additional resources, learn ways to use your Christmas Cabinet, and much more!









The Annunciation by Fra Angelico, San Marco Convent, Florence

If you look closely, you'll see that the trumpeting angels on The Christmas Cabinet doors are from a painting by the famous Renaissance artist, Fra Angelico (the Angelic Brother) who painted in Italy from about 1418 to 1455. Fra Angelico declared, "Anyone who creates works involving Christ should always to reside with Christ." His devotion to God rivaled his reputation as a painter and he even turned down an invitation from the Pope to be the Archbishop of Florence. It is said that he never started painting without praying first. In fact, Fra Angelico felt prayer was so important that he had printed at the bottom of the painting a reminder to the monks to be sure to pray every time they passed by it!

There are several other famous paintings in this booklet: An Angel Visiting Joseph by Rembrandt (Budapest); Adoration of the Magi by Gentile da Fabriano (Uffizi Gallery, Florence); Adoration of the Magi by Fra Angelico and Fillippo Lippi (National Gallery, Washington, D.C); The Nativity, Gerard David (Metropolitan Museum, New York); and a fresco from the chapel in the National Palace in Sintra, Portugal,

**WARNING:** *Choking hazard! The Christmas Cabinet contains small parts. It is not made for children under 5 years of age without adult supervision.*

Replacements parts and more are available at  
[www.TheChristmasCabinet.com](http://www.TheChristmasCabinet.com)  
The Christmas Cabinet is a Registered Trademark.

# How to use



The Christmas Cabinet is an Advent calendar that creates a nativity scene. Starting December 1, open each day's number drawer, one per day. Read the story on the bottom of the drawer or use this booklet. You may want to open the drawers with your family each night at dinner and discuss the questions from this book. You may even decide to look up the Bible verse included in each reading to learn more about the stories.

Use the figures from the drawers to complete your own nativity scene. When arranging the figures, consider placing the angels on top of the cabinet and hanging the star and heavenly host from a drawer knob. Be sure to put Bethlehem under the star! The underside of each figure is numbered so you can return the figures to their proper drawer for use next Christmas.

**Don't forget to visit the website**

**[TheChristmasCabinet.com](http://TheChristmasCabinet.com) for music, readings & lots of resources!**



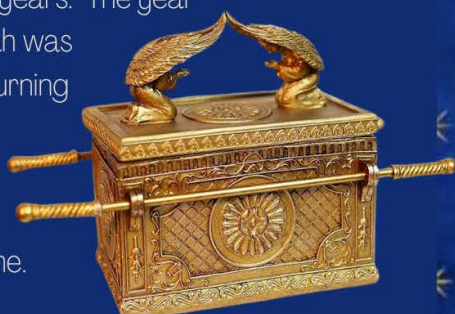
# December 1



Over two thousand years ago in the hills of Judea, there was a man named **Zechariah** who loved God faithfully and served as a priest in God's temple. Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth wanted a child, but they were too old. One day, when Zechariah was in the temple burning incense, the angel of the Lord came to him and told him he would be blessed with a son and that he should name the baby John. Zechariah was surprised and frightened. He didn't believe what the angel said. Immediately, Zechariah was unable to speak. When the baby was finally born, Zechariah gestured for a tablet so he could write the baby's name – John – just as the angel had instructed. At that moment, Zechariah was able to speak again. (**Luke 1:5-23, 57-80**)

**What about you?** Has God ever surprised you? Why do you think Zechariah did not believe the angel?

**Go Deeper:** Once a year, on the most solemn of all Israelite holidays, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the high priest of the Hebrews performed a special ritual to atone for the sins of all the people of Israel. He burned incense in a special part of God's temple called the Holy of Holies (the sacred area in the temple where God dwelt). The Ark of the Covenant was kept in the Holy of Holies before it disappeared during the reign of Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar. This is what the Ark of the Covenant may have looked like. It contained the 10 Commandment tablets God gave to Moses, the staff of the first High Priest Aaron (Moses' brother) and a golden bowl of manna, the food the Hebrews ate while they wandered in the desert for forty years. The year before Jesus' birth, the priest Zechariah was chosen to perform the daily ritual of burning frankincense. This represented the prayers of the Hebrew people, rising up to God. Such an opportunity would happen to a priest only once in a lifetime.





## December 2



**Mary** was a young Hebrew woman living in Nazareth. She loved the Lord with all of her heart. God chose her to be the mother of his one and only Son. One day, an angel appeared to Mary and told her that she was going to have a baby. Seven hundred years before, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah foretold that this special child would be born to a woman such as Mary. Mary was confused because she was engaged to a man named Joseph but they weren't married yet.

**(Luke 1:26–38)**

**What about you?** How do you think Mary felt when she found out that she was going to have a baby? You might want to read "Mary's song" in Luke 1:46–56 to hear Mary's thoughts when the angel visited her. How would you have reacted?

## December 3

**Gabriel** was the angel that visited both Mary and Zechariah. Gabriel told each of them not to be afraid. He explained to Mary that God chose her to bring God's own son into the world, that the child would reign as a King over His people forever. Mary rejoiced that God had favored her, knowing that this Savior would bless her people, the Hebrews, forever; that He would create a kingdom which would have no end.

**(Luke 1: 30, 46–56)**



**What about you?** Have you ever been afraid when something happened that you did not expect? What did you do?



## December 4

Mary's betrothed husband, **Joseph**, was upset when he learned Mary was going to have a baby. He loved her very much but couldn't understand how she was pregnant. He was afraid she had not been faithful to him. Joseph decided to quietly send Mary away so she would not be disgraced. (**Matthew 1: 18–19**)

**What about you?** Has anyone ever thought that you had done something wrong when you had not? What did you do?



## December 5

An **angel of the Lord** spoke to Joseph in a dream, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary for your wife; for the child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son." Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord told him; he took Mary as his wife.

(**Matthew 1: 20–25**)

**What about you?** Have you ever been afraid to do something that other people might not understand?





# December 6

Remember Zechariah and his wife, **Elizabeth**? They both faithfully loved God. Even though everyone thought Elizabeth was too old, she was delighted to learn that she was going to have a baby! She declared, "The Lord has done this for me, He has shown His favor." A few months into Elizabeth's pregnancy, her younger cousin Mary came to visit. Mary had just learned she too would have a son. When Mary entered the room, Elizabeth's baby leapt with joy inside her. Elizabeth marveled that the mother of the Lord should visit her.

**(Luke 1:36–39)**

**What about you?** How do you think Elizabeth felt when she learned she would have a baby in her old age? Why do you think her baby leapt? Do you remember the baby's name?



## Go Deeper:

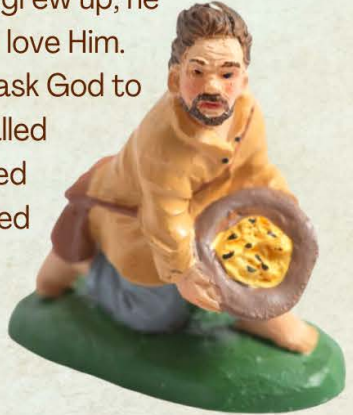
The Bible tells us that both Elizabeth and Zechariah were descendants of Moses' brother, Aaron. God called Aaron to help Moses, and Aaron became the very first high priest of the Jewish people. Aaron's family continued to serve as priests to God. The clothes of the priest were special and filled with meaning. They wore an "ephod" and a chest piece that contained 12 precious stones. Each stone represented one of the 12 tribes of Israel (each tribe was named after one of Jacob's descendants). On each shoulder of the ephod was a piece of onyx, carved with the names of the 12 tribes. The best tailors embroidered the ephod with gold thread as well as blue, purple and scarlet yarn. Bells made of gold and pomegranates made of wool hung from the bottom of the robe. As a priest moved around the Holy of Holies making an offering of incense to God, the bells would make a noise. Exodus 28 records God's very specific instructions on how to make the ephod, all of the priestly garments, and the Ark of the Covenant. The figure from day one, Zechariah, is dressed in the robes the High Priest wore.





# December 7

When Zechariah and Elizabeth's son John grew up, he told people how to know God and how to love Him. John reminded people that they need to ask God to forgive them for their sins. The people called him **John the Baptist** because he baptized them in the Jordan River. He also answered their questions about scripture and the coming Savior. The prophets Isaiah and Malachi both wrote about John long before John was born, saying that he would be a messenger preparing people to know the Savior, Jesus. (**Matthew 3**)



**What about you?** What is a "Savior?" What would a Savior save people from?



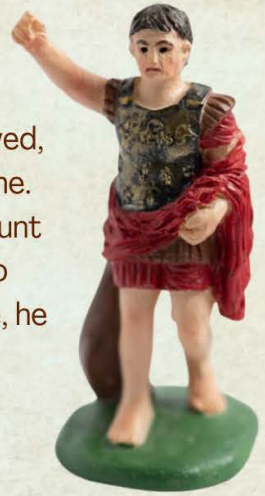
**Go Deeper:** John and Jesus were cousins. John was six months older than Jesus. He was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. John had some odd eating habits; he dined on locusts and honey! He did not drink wine or alcohol. The Bible tells us that John the Baptist wore a leather belt, and that his clothes were made from camel's hair (like the Old Testament prophet Elijah.) In fact, many people thought he was Elijah, returning to earth. Jesus told His disciples that John had accomplished what Elijah would, to "turn the hearts" of fathers and their children to each other. John lived in the wilderness, preaching. People flocked from all over to hear him. He was a brave man who was not afraid to tell important people that they were behaving against God's will. He went to prison and was killed because he told hard truths.



# December 8

Nazareth, the town where Mary and Joseph lived, was controlled by the far away Empire of Rome. The Emperor **Caesar Augustus** wanted to count all of the people who lived under Roman rule so that he could make them pay taxes. Therefore, he issued a decree requiring everyone who lived in the Roman world to go to the town of their ancestors to register for a census.

(Luke 2:1–3)



***What about you?** How do you think the Jews felt about making a long journey to pay taxes to a foreign emperor?*

## Go Deeper:



The Caesar Augustus figure is modeled from the "Augusta Prima Porta" statue that is in the Vatican Museum in Rome, Italy. Archeologists found the original statue in Prima Porta at the edge of Rome. Augustus' wife, Livia Drusilla, lived there in a villa following her husband's death. The statue is believed to have been sculpted around the time Jesus lived. Caesar Augustus' great uncle was Julius Caesar, who adopted him as his son and heir. When Julius Caesar was murdered, Augustus vied with Cleopatra and Mark Antony to become the Emperor of Rome.





## Go Deeper:

Because Augustus issued his decree requiring people to register in their ancestor's hometown, it meant that Joseph, and a very pregnant Mary, had to travel south over 80 miles from their home in Nazareth, (which was in the province of Galilee) to Bethlehem (which was in the province of Judea.) We don't know what route they took, but it probably took them eight to ten days of hard walking to make it.

## December 9

**Bethlehem** was a little town in Judea, a few miles south of Jerusalem. Joseph's family was from Bethlehem, so Joseph and Mary went there to obey Caesar's decree to be counted. A little more than 1000



years earlier, Joseph's ancestor, King David, was born in Bethlehem. The prophet Micah said Bethlehem would be blessed because the Savior of the World would be born there. Bethlehem means "house of bread," which is amazing because Jesus calls himself the "bread of life!" (**Luke 2:4–5, Micah 5:2**)

***What about you?** What do you think bread of life means?*

## Go Deeper:

Jesus tells us that He is "the bread of life." He says that "Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35) Jesus says these words just after He multiplied loaves of bread and fish to feed a huge crowd of people. He meant that if you follow Him, you will be fed with something even better than bread made of wheat or grain. You may want to read John chapter six to understand more.







**Go Deeper:** In the Bible, Micah prophesized "But you, Bethlehem, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times." Micah was talking about Jesus who would come to rule over our hearts. Jesus is from ancient times: He and God are one and were here in the beginning.

## December 10

Mary gave birth to her son in Bethlehem. She wrapped him in soft cloth and laid him in a **manger**, because there was no room in the inn for their family. God chose not to have the King of Kings born in a fancy castle. Instead, he was born in a lowly place. His bed was a trough where animals drink water.

*(Luke 2:6-7)*



**What about you?** Were you surprised that God's son was not born in a palace? Why do you think God wanted Him to be born in a humble place?



**Go Deeper:** Most likely, the manger Jesus slept in was not made of wood as we often see in manger scenes because wood was scarce in Israel. Instead, it was probably carved out of stone which was plentiful. It is interesting that Jesus started His earthly life in a borrowed stone manger, wrapped in cloth. Similarly, He ended His earthly life buried in a borrowed stone tomb. After His death, His friend, Joseph of Arimathea, took Jesus's body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in Joseph's new tomb that had been hewn out of rock. (*Luke 23: 50-53*)



## December 11

The baby born to Mary was **Jesus**, the Son of God, the promised Savior of the World.

***What about you?** Do you think people were surprised that a baby could be the Savior of the World?*

## December 12

In the same region of Bethlehem, **shepherds** were in the fields watching over their flocks by night. Shepherds care for their sheep by feeding them, leading them to water, protecting them from wild animals, and carrying them when they are injured. Jesus cares for all of our needs, protects us, and holds us close to His heart. As the Bible says Jesus is our good Shepherd, and we are His lambs. (*Luke 2:8, John 10:11*)

***What about you?** How does Jesus take care of you?*



## December 13

Suddenly, **an angel of the Lord** appeared before the shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shown around them. They were frightened! The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a savior, who is Christ the Lord." (**Luke 2:9–12**)



**What about you?** *Would you be frightened if you saw an angel?*

**Go Deeper:** What are angels? What does the Bible tell us about them? Psalm 91 explains that if you believe in God, He will order His angels to protect you wherever you go. When King David wrote Psalm 103, he said that angels were mighty ones who carry out God's plans, who listen for each of His commandments, who serve Him and do His will. Visit [TheChristmasCabinet.com](http://TheChristmasCabinet.com) and look under the "resources" tab to find out more about angels!

## December 14

Then a very large number of angels, **a heavenly host**, appeared with the angel of the Lord and they praised God saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." (**Luke 2:14**)



**What about you?** *Do you think God is pleased with you? What pleases God?*



**Go Deeper:** How do we please God? Several years after Jesus died, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to his Roman friends. He told them that because God is so loving and kind to us, we should offer our ordinary lives to him every day. We should set apart all we have and do and give it to God as an offering. Doing so would please Him. Read Romans 12:1 to find out more about what Paul told his friends.

## December 15

When the angels were gone, the shepherds said, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." So they left in a hurry, their **sheep** scurrying behind them and found their way to Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus as He lay in the manger. The shepherds glorified and praised God for all they had heard and seen. (**Luke 2:15–18**)



**What about you?** Would you have gone to search for the baby? Why?

## December 16

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the days when Herod was king. After His birth, several Wise Men, or **Magi** made their way to Him, following a bright new star in the sky. These Magi were learned men who studied the stars. The Wise Men came from far away in the East to Jerusalem, asking Herod, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the East and have come to worship Him." (**Matthew 2:1-2**)



**What about you?** How do you think the Wise Men found out about this exciting birth?





## December 17

When **King Herod** heard there might be a new king, he and all of Jerusalem were disturbed, for they understood that a very important event was taking place. Gathering all the Jewish chief priests and scribes, Herod asked them where the Messiah was to be born. They replied, "in Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet." (**Matthew 2:3-6**)

**What about you?** Why do you think King Herod wanted to know where Jesus was born?

## Go Deeper:

King Herod's image is taken from a coin minted during his son's reign. Historians believe Herod the Great was born about 74 BC and died just a few years after Jesus was born. He was a smart diplomat who pleased the leadership in Rome. The Roman senate appointed Herod King of Judea and he built enormous public buildings, fortresses, aqueducts and amphitheaters. He also rebuilt the temple where Jesus prayed. However, he was a brutal dictator who killed his father-in-law, several of his wives and even killed three of his own sons! He was so cruel, Caesar Augustus said, "It is better to be Herod's pig than his son," meaning that as a Jew he did not eat pork so he wasn't likely to kill a pig.

## December 18

Herod found out from the **Magi** the exact time the special star appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem: "Go and search carefully for the child; and when you find him, report to me, so that I too may worship him." Herod didn't really want to worship Jesus. He was afraid Jesus would take his place as king, so he wanted to kill him. (**Matthew 2:7-8**)

**What about you?** Has someone ever asked you to do something that you didn't want to do? Did it make you feel uncomfortable?







## December 19

After speaking with King Herod, the Magi went their way to find Jesus. The **star**, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it hovered over the place where Jesus was. That star was the brightest star they had ever seen. It fulfilled the Bible prophecies about when the Lord of Lords would be born. (**Matthew 2:9**)

**What about you?** *What do you think of when you see a sky full of stars?*



**Go Deeper:** How did the Wise Men know where to go? The Bible tells us that "A star will come out of Jacob" (Numbers 24:17)- meaning one of Jacob's descendants will rise and lead us all. Jesus was a descendent of Jacob! The Wise Men may have read the Old Testament prophecies and been drawn to follow the bright star in the sky. Isaiah 60:1 says, "Rise up and shine, for your light has come. The shining greatness of the Lord has risen upon you." Isaiah continues, "and the Gentiles shall come to the light, and kings to the brightness of the light." (Isaiah 60:3)



# December 20



When the wise men found Jesus held in Mary's arms, they fell to the ground and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented him with gifts.

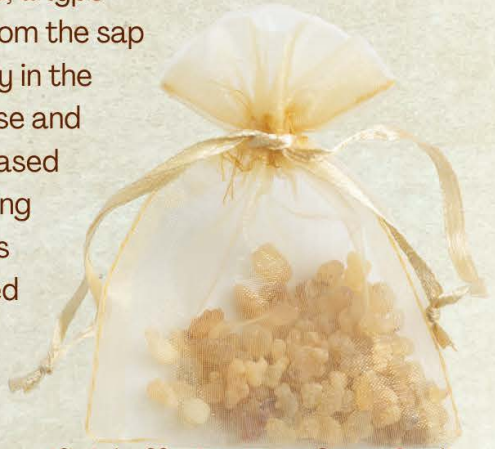
One brought **gold**. Gold is a gift fit for a king. And Jesus is the King of Kings! (**Matthew 2:11**)

**What about you?** Do you like to receive Christmas gifts? What is one of your favorite Christmas gifts?



# December 21

The second gift was **frankincense**, a type of very expensive incense made from the sap of a tree. During worship every day in the temple a priest burned frankincense and a blend of other spices, which released a pleasing smell that was an offering to God to atone for our sins. It was frankincense that Zechariah burned in the temple. It is a symbol of holiness and righteousness, fitting for Jesus who is holy and righteous--and He is the ultimate sacrificial offering to us from God! David wrote in a Psalm that he hoped God would accept his prayers as if they were incense. In the book of Revelation, John describes the smoke of incense mixing with the prayers of God's people rising up to Him. **What about you?** Scrape your fingernail on the frankincense. How does it smell? Can you imagine how the temple smelled filled with incense?





# December 22

The third gift was **myrrh**. This type of incense, made from the sap of a thorny bush, was used in the temple for anointing priests, prophets, and kings, and was also used to preserve bodies for burial, and to stop pain. The Wise Men may have understood that Jesus' life would be difficult, and that he was given a very important job by God. Jesus did go through a lot of pain and suffering, including his own death on the cross. (**Matthew 2:11**)



**What about you?** Have you ever been in a lot of pain? Did you wish you could make the pain go away?



**Go Deeper:** Who were the Wise Men? How do we know what they brought? The book of Isaiah, written about 700 years before Jesus was born, tells us "The wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you. Great caravans of camels will come, from Midian and

Ephah. They will come from Sheba, bringing gold and incense. People will tell the good news of what the Lord has done!" (Isaiah 60:5–6) From this, we know that the Wise Men came from an area that is now known as Saudi Arabia (Midian and Ephah) and either Yemen, or possibly Ethiopia (Sheba). Isaiah tells us "They shall bring gold and incense." Matthew confirms that they brought gold and incense, telling us what type of incense (frankincense and myrrh.) The Bible doesn't tell us how many Wise Men came, or how soon after Jesus' birth they arrived, but we do know that they brought three gifts and that Mary, Joseph and Jesus were living in a house when they came.

# December 23

The **Wise Men** traveled from far away in the east because they knew from charting the stars that a great king was about to be born who would change the entire world! In a dream, God warned the Wise Men not to return to King Herod or tell him how to find Jesus. Instead, the Magi left for their own country by another route.

**(Matthew 2:10)**

**What about you?** *Would you have had the courage to disobey the powerful King Herod?*



# December 24

God sent Jesus as the best **gift** that anyone would ever receive! "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son that each and every one of us who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (**John 3:16**) Jesus gave up his own life because he loves us so much! That means we never have to fear anything! Not even death! Thank you, God for your very special Christmas gift of Jesus. Let us always treasure Him.



**What about you?** *How is Jesus a gift? Would you like to receive Jesus as a gift?*





## December 25

**Merry Christmas!** You may have noticed that there is neither a drawer nor a figure for December 25. That's because no drawer can contain today's figure, but our hearts can. Jesus was born so we could know him personally; so He could live in us, love us, and never leave us!

***What about you?*** *Would you like to have Jesus come and live in your heart? If you would, you could say this prayer...*

*God, I love you and your son, Jesus. Please forgive me for the mistakes I have made and the things I have done that I shouldn't have. Thank you, Jesus, for dying for me because you love me so much that you wanted to save me from the pain and suffering caused by those mistakes. Please give me a new, pure heart. Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever. Thank you, Lord. Amen.*





