

O come
let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord



You hold in your hands a worship guide for Christmas Day. This family worship guide is based on the Service of Lessons and Carols, which was first drawn up by E.W. Benson, later Bishop of Canterbury, for use in the Cathedral at Truro. It was adapted from ancient sources as a Christmas Eve service and was first celebrated on Christmas Eve in 1880. It has been and continues to be used with some variation all over the world.

This version has been modified to encourage family worship—though it can certainly be used in a group of any size. It contains several elements of worship: Scripture readings, songs, and prayers. The purpose of this guide is to carve out a time on Christmas Day so that the family may worship Christ the King. For instance, you may use it as the family is gathered around the breakfast table; before or after presents are opened; when you gather together with other family members; or even before retiring to bed for the evening. Make sure to print enough copies so that everyone can participate.

This guide tells the story of the Incarnation. Simply begin with the first responsive reading and work your way through it to the end, reading the Scriptures and singing the songs. We wholeheartedly encourage the fathers and/or husbands to lead their families in this act of worship. Our prayer is that as you read, sing, and pray your way through Christmas the glory of God will shine forth in your heart; that you will grow in your appreciation for the greatest of all miracles—the Incarnation; and that you will worship Christ the Lord!

To God alone be glory.

“Herein is power;
when Deity and humanity were infinitely apart
He united them in indissoluble unity,
the uncreated and the created,

Herein is wisdom;
when I was undone, with no will to return to Him,
and no intellect to devise recovery,
He came, God-incarnate, to save me to the uttermost,

as a man to die my death,
to shed satisfying blood on my behalf,
to work out a perfect righteousness me.

O God, take me in spirit to the watchful shepherds,
and enlarge my mind;
let me hear good tidings of great joy,
and hearing, believe, rejoice, praise,
adore...

Place me with ox, ass, camel, goat,
to look with them upon my Redeemer's face,
and in Him account myself delivered from sin.”ⁱ

--a Puritan prayer

RESPONSIVE READING
from Isaiah 9:2-7

Father/husband: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

Family: **You have multiplied the nation; You have increased its joy; they rejoice before You as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil.**

Father/husband: For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

Family: **For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

Father/husband: Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will do this.

CAROL

"O Come All Ye Faithful"

Words: John Francis Wade, c.1710-1786

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold him born the King of angels!

*O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!*

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God, glory in the highest;

*O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning:
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n;
Word of the Father, late in flesh appearing!

*O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*

SCRIPTURE *The fall of man and proclamation of the Gospel (Genesis 3:6-15)*

RESPONSIVE
READING

“Come Thou Long expected Jesus”

Words: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

Father/husband:

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us; Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of ev'ry nation, joy of ev'ry longing heart.

Family:

Come, to earth to taste our sadness, He whose glories knew no
end; By His life He brings us gladness, our Redeemer, Shepherd
Friend. Leaving riches without number, born within a cattle stall;
This the everlasting wonder, Christ was born the Lord of all.

Everyone:

Born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,
Born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts a lone;
By Thine all sufficient merit, raise us to Thy glorious throne.

SCRIPTURE *The Promise to Abraham* (Genesis 12:1-3)
Isaiah Foretells of the Coming Savior (Isaiah 7:13-14)

CAROL

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

Words: Latin hymn; tr. St. 1,2, John Mason Neale;
st. 3,4, Henry Sloane Coffin

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!*

O come, thou Dayspring come and cheer
our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!*

O come, Desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife, and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!*

SCRIPTURE *Micah Foretells of the Coming Savior* (Micah 5:2-5)

CAROL **“O Little Town of Bethlehem”**

Words: Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893

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.

For Christ is born of Mary; and gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.

O holy child of Bethlehem! descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!

SCRIPTURE *The Angel Gabriel greets Mary* (Lk.1:26-33)
Luke Announces the Savior's Birth (Luke 2:1-7)

CAROL

“What Child is This?”

Words: William C. Dix, 1837-1898

What child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary’s lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?

*This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,
the Babe, the son of Mary.*

Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.

*Nails, spear, shall pierce him through;
The cross be borne for me, for you:
Hail, hail, the Word made flesh,
the Babe, the son of Mary.*

So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh;
Come, peasant, king, to own him;
The King of Kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone him.

*Raise, raise the song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby:
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the Babe, the son of Mary.*

RESPONSIVE READING

Father/husband:

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them,

Family:

“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Father/husband: And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

Family: **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"**

SCRIPTURE *The Shepherds worship Christ* (Luke 2:8-20)

CAROL **"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"**

Words: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788,
alt. George Whitefield, 1714-1770

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"

Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King."*

Christ, by highest heav'n adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring off the Virgin's womb,

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th'incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel.

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King."*

Hail the heav'n born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!

Light and life to all He brings,
Ris'n with healing in His wings.

Mild He lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King."*

SCRIPTURE *The Great Mystery of the Incarnation*
(Jn.1:1-14; Phil.2:6-11)

PRAYER: **The Mystery of the Incarnation**
(adapted from *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 8.2)

O Lord,

We praise You, the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being the eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father. When the fullness of time was come, You took upon Yourself human nature, with our essential properties and common weaknesses, yet You knew no sin. You were conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the virgin Mary. The two natures—God and man—were perfect, whole, and distinct. They were inseparably joined together in one person, without fusion or combination. You are very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator, only Savior, and only Redeemer—Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen! Amen!

CAROL **"Joy to the World! The Lord is Come"**
Words: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

Joy to the World! The Lord is come:
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,

*And heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.*

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns:
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains

*Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.*

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow

*Far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as the curse is found!*

He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness

*And wonders of His love, and wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders of His love.*

ⁱ *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*, ed. Arthur Bennett (Carlisle, PA: Banner or Truth, 2005), 16.

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