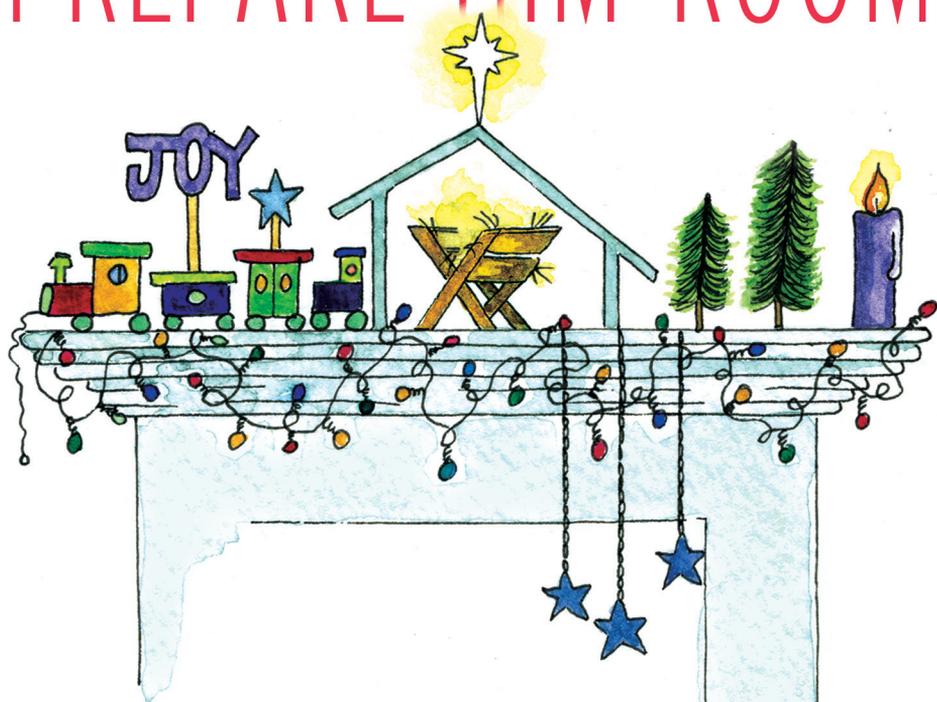


CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF JESUS

• • • FAMILY DEVOTIONAL • • •

PREPARE HIM ROOM



Marty Machowski

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SARAH BLAND-HALULKO

"If you want to be purposeful about making this December more Christ-centered for your children, then look carefully at this little book. Marty Machowski provides the ideas, the plans, and the details: all you have to do is follow his lead. He will help your family have a more gospel-filled Christmas season."

—**Donald S. Whitney**, Professor of Biblical Spirituality, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY; author of *Family Worship: In the Bible, in History, and in Your Home*

"*Prepare Him Room* is a tool to help families focus on Jesus during the Christmas season. Tying together the whole Christmas story from the prophecies concerning Jesus; to his birth, death, and resurrection; culminating in the return of Jesus, Marty Machowski challenges families to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas."

—**Sally Michael**, Cofounder of Children Desiring God; author

"*Prepare Him Room* is one of the best resources I've seen to counter the commercialism, materialism, and sentimentalism that our culture serves up each Christmas. Through Scripture, creative stories, crafts, songs, prayers, and activities, families will be able to reflect on Christ's birth and the gospel with wonder, gratefulness, and joy. It was a privilege to collaborate with Marty on this project, and I can't recommend it highly enough."

—**Bob Kauflin**, Director of Sovereign Grace Music

"*Prepare Him Room* is an endearing, well-conceived, and memory-making resource for the Advent season. Do you want a devotional guide that is certain to become a part of your family's Christmas traditions? Then this is it. More importantly, do you want a devotional guide that links the birth of Christ to Easter and the gospel story in a way that will deepen your family's biblical understanding and bid you prepare him room in your hearts and home this Christmas? Then look no further."

—**Debra Bell, PhD**, Author of the *Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling*

“I have twelve grandchildren who need the gospel, just like their Pop-Pop. That’s why I’m so grateful my friend Marty has written *Prepare Him Room*. Parents, these short, simple, and Christ-centered devotionals will help you make the most of the Christmas season as you work to transfer the gospel to the next generation right in your home. May every heart prepare him room, as every home proclaims him as Lord!”

—**C. J. Mahaney**, Senior Pastor, Sovereign Grace Church of Louisville

“Yet again, Marty Machowski gives us a solid, gospel-centered resource in his new book *Prepare Him Room*. I deeply appreciated the Advent devotionals that consistently pointed to Christ, and my children kept begging me to read the story of Christopher and the Bartimaeus house! In addition, new Advent songs by Bob Kauflin and activities for the children all make this a wonderful resource for every Advent season. Our family will treasure this for years to come.”

—**Deepak Reju**, Pastor of Biblical Counseling and Families, Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC; president, Biblical Counseling Coalition; author of *The Pastor and Counseling* and *On Guard: Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse at Church*

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CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF JESUS
FAMILY DEVOTIONAL



Marty Machowski



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INTRODUCTION

Many of the popular Christmas traditions, like stockings hung above the fireplace and blinking lights on fir trees, have little to do with Christ's birth. This book will give you a variety of ways to preserve the real meaning of Christmas by keeping God's Word central in your home.

The word *advent* means "arrival." Advent traditions celebrate the first advent (the birth) of Jesus Christ. These same celebrations view the Christmas story in light of God's larger plan of salvation, looking forward to his second advent (his return) as King. While the virgin birth of Jesus is amazing, what Jesus did in dying on the cross for our sins is the most incredible part of his story. We would have little reason to celebrate apart from the saving work of Jesus on the cross and the anticipation of his return.

Prepare Him Room will take you on an Advent journey, exploring some of the most significant prophecies of the Bible—prophecies that foretold Christ's coming hundreds of years before it happened. Then, it will lead you through the fulfillment of those same prophecies tracing the redemptive plan of God all the way to Christ's second advent. In addition to an Advent Bible study, we've provided activities for your family to enjoy along with a heartwarming Christmas story, "Bartimaeus," to read during the Christmas season.

It is my hope that this book will help your family keep Christ central in your Christmas celebrations and that the gospel truth of Advent will be used by God to transform lives in your family.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book comprises thirteen family Advent devotionals—three for each of the four weeks of Advent and one more for Christmas—as well as an original Christmas short story called “Bartimaeus: A Christmas Story” for your family to enjoy. Each week, the first devotional explores a significant Old Testament prophecy that foretells the coming of our Savior. The second highlights an announcement of the birth of the Savior or his mission, and the third explores a way the earlier prophecy and announcement have been fulfilled in the life of Christ. The Bartimaeus story unfolds a chapter at a time at the end of each week.

To plan your Advent celebration, after Thanksgiving look at the calendar and take note of the four Sundays before Christmas. These are the days that signal the start of the four weeks of Advent. There are three family Bible devotionals for each of these four weeks. You might want to pick potential days on which to do the devotionals each week. Plan on doing the last study on Christmas Day. Each day features the lyrics of a traditional Christmas carol, in addition to several new songs, that follow the theme of that week’s devotions. The companion CD, *Prepare Him Room: Celebrating the Birth of Jesus in Song*, includes the new songs, as well as updated arrangements and new verses to some of the older carols for you to enjoy and sing with your family throughout the Christmas season. Also available for your church is a four-lesson Sunday school curriculum called *Prepare Him Room: Celebrating the Birth of Jesus in the Classroom*. The curriculum covers

the same Bible passages on Sunday that you are exploring with your family during the week.

Instructions are included on how to make and incorporate an Advent wreath into your family times. The Advent wreath consists of a simple circle of evergreens. It represents our hope of eternal life in Christ. The four outer candles mark the four Sundays of Advent. These four candles represent the light of God reaching the world through the birth of his son Jesus. In the center of the wreath is placed a fifth, larger, candle that represents the Savior, marking his place at the center of God's plan.

Prior to Advent, purchase an Advent wreath or the supplies to make your own with the instructions we've provided. Then, beginning on the first Sunday in Advent, start your first week's devotional by lighting an Advent candle. After you read the listed Scripture, you will find a short commentary along with discussion questions. End the devotional for the day by praying and singing a Christmas hymn. Follow the same pattern for each devotion. Finally, on Christmas Day, read the Christmas story from Luke's gospel, light the center candle of your Advent wreath, and sing "Joy to the World."

Also, procure a manger scene, preferably one that can be handled by your children. This is helpful in visualizing the details of Christ's birth and adds to the anticipation and impact of the Advent celebration. If your church is using the *Prepare Him Room* Sunday school curriculum, your younger grade school children will be making their own stable and manger with all the traditional figures as a craft within the classroom lessons.

Before you begin...



MAKE YOUR OWN ADVENT WREATH

Making your own Advent wreath is an easy family project. If you have the companion CD, *Prepare Him Room: Celebrating the Birth of Jesus in Song*, this is a good time to turn it on and start familiarizing yourself with the songs you'll be singing throughout the devotional.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- * 96" (8 feet) evergreen roping—real or artificial
- * 16" diameter green foam ring
- * three 10" purple taper candles (you can substitute white candles here)
- * one 10" pink taper candle (you can substitute a red candle)
- * one 2" x 6" white pillar candle with holder or white jar candle

- * aluminum foil, heavy duty
- * knife or apple corer
- * hot glue gun

INSTRUCTIONS: Lay the foam ring on a protected work surface. With the sharp knife or apple corer, cut out four holes in the ring equal distances apart to accept the four taper candles. Be careful to cut the holes slightly smaller than the candle diameter. Hot glue the candles into the holes making sure they are perfectly vertical. Wrap the evergreen roping along the foam ring gluing it to the ring as you go. The 8-foot length should be plenty to cover the outer and inner circumferences of the foam ring. The goal is to cover the ring completely. Set your wreath on a table and place the pillar candle in the center. Remember to protect the surface of the table underneath the wreath from dripping wax.

God's Promise: The Hope of a Child

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- * recording of Handel's *Messiah* (YouTube has several options)
- * crayons, markers, paints, etc.
- * white paper

WARM-UP

Listen to Handel's Oratorio, Messiah

- Play a recording of the chorus, “For Unto Us a Child Is Born” from Handel's *Messiah*. Ask your children to listen carefully to see if they can pick out some of the names of Jesus.
- At the end of this session play a recording of the “Hallelujah” chorus from *Messiah*.

READ THE PROPHECY

Light the first Advent candle and then read the Scripture below.

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. 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. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

PICTURE IT

Isaiah spoke his prophecy to the people of Israel in a time when they were disobeying God. Isaiah brought terrible warnings telling them that God would take away their food and water and bring enemies against them. But in chapter nine, Isaiah gave God's people a promise of hope: In spite of their great sin, God would take their sadness away.

In verse six of chapter nine, Isaiah described this promised hope as the coming of a very special child. The child would be both man and God and would rule forever and ever in peace over God's people. Isaiah's wonderful prophecy declared that the child would be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Almost three centuries ago, George Frideric Handel wrote a long musical composition to celebrate God's prophecy through Isaiah to his people. This famous Christmas promise—that God would send his Son, Jesus—are the words to songs Handel wrote in his musical Oratorio we now call *Handel's Messiah*, which is still performed each Christmas season all across the world.

Each of the names—Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace—point to Jesus. Jesus is a prince with a wisdom that surpasses that of Solomon, and he brings a peace greater than that enjoyed during the reign of King David. Though it is obvious to us that this description points to Jesus, even Isaiah would have found it a mystery (Colossians 1:26). How could a child be both man and God? Who would this child of promise be and when would he be born?

Isaiah never saw the fulfillment of his words. Seven centuries would pass before Jesus was born. Now we get to look back and read God's fantastic promise with the full knowledge of the story of Christmas. With the coming of Christ and the revelation of the gospel, the

mystery of the child hidden from Isaiah has been opened up for all to see. How it should fill us with wonder and cause us to sing, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! And He shall reign forever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" (Handel, "Hallelujah," from *Messiah*).

TALK ABOUT IT

Ask your family the following questions:

What names did Isaiah use to describe the child who would be born? (*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*)

Can you think of a way one of these names point to Jesus? (*Jesus was a wonderful counselor to all he met. He was able to heal the sick and rose from the dead with great power. Jesus compared himself to the Father [John 10:38] and promised us peace [John 14:27].*)

PRAY TOGETHER

Review the names Isaiah gave to Jesus and praise God for each one: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

SING TOGETHER

(Sing the first song along with the CD or skip to the second song.)

He Who Is Mighty

Words and Music by Rebecca Elliott and Kate DeGraide.

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VERSE 1

Oh, the mercy our God has shown
To those who sit in death's shadow
The sun on high pierced the night
Born was the Cornerstone
Unto us a Son is given, unto us a Child is born

VERSE 2

Oh, the freedom our Savior won
The yoke of sin has been broken
We once were slaves, bound in chains
Now, no condemnation
Unto us a Son is given, unto us a
Child is born

CHORUS

He Who is mighty has done a great thing
Taken on flesh, conquered death's sting
Shattered the darkness and lifted our shame
Holy is His name

BRIDGE

Now my soul magnifies the Lord
I rejoice in the God Who saves
I will trust His unfailing love
And sing His praises all my days

It Came upon the Midnight Clear

Words: Edmund H. Sears (1849). Music: CAROL, Richard S. Willis (1850).

VERSE 1

It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to men,
From heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.

VERSE 2

Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains,
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.

VERSE 3

And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing!

VERSE 4

For lo!, the days are hastening on,
By prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever-circling years
Comes round the age of gold
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Color the Names

Have everyone pick one of the names in Isaiah's prophecy (Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace), draw it on their paper, and then color it or decorate the paper around it with a Christmas theme. Display the finished drawings.