

"Young families today want to celebrate the Savior's birth in a creative, fun and meaningful way—a new way! Barbara Reaoch delivers the perfect package of fresh ideas in this excellent book. The colorful illustrations, interactive projects, family discussion points, and stories focus every member of the family on the extraordinary gifts that Jesus Christ brought with him when he came to earth. As you prepare for the Advent season, consider this unique book as your Christmas toolbox. I give it my double thumbs-up!"

JONI EARECKSON TADA, Joni and Friends International Disability Center

"Another outstanding family devotional by Barbara Reaoch. She has a knack for starting with something interesting to children and quickly turning it to Jesus and the Bible. The book is imaginatively interactive as well: not just something for kids to listen to. Best of all is how she conveys 25 core truths about Christ to show the children how Jesus is *Better Than Anything*."

DONALD S. WHITNEY, Professor of Biblical Spirituality and Associate Dean, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY; Author, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, *Praying the Bible*, and *Family Worship*

"Would you like to offer your family an escape from the rush and crush of Christmas? That's exactly what Barbara Reaoch's new family devotional will help you do! *A Better Than Anything Christmas* shows us how to lead our children to the One who is better than anything that a Christ-less Christmas tries to offer. With simple—but profound—ways to gather around relevant Scriptures, along with age-appropriate questions and activities, Barbara's book helps us discover together all the 'betters' that Jesus came to give. I can't wait to use this with the children in my life!"

JANI ORTLUND, Renewal Ministries

"Families will love reading this 25-day Advent devotional together! With daily Bible discussion, interactive questions, and lots of extra activities, this book will light up your children's eyes and bring joy to your heart. Drawing on decades of experience, Barbara Reaoch beautifully uses simple language to paint deep truth. Simply charming."

CHAMP THORNTON, Pastor; Author, *The Radical Book for Kids* and *Why Do We Say Good Night?*

"It's December again. Christmas is just around the corner. Gather your family around. Open up this book. And get ready to celebrate the amazing gift of Jesus and the blessings he brings to us, not only at Christmas but year round! There truly is nothing (and no one!) better."

NANCY DEMOSS WOLGEMUTH, Author; Founder and Teacher, *Revive Our Hearts*

"This is a fantastic devotion for families! Its clear explanations, relatable seasonal illustrations and differentiated questions mean I have no doubt that young and old will be thrilled when they see again and again—and AGAIN—why Jesus really is the very best. The truths certainly made my heart sing!"

TAMAR POLLARD, Author, *Epic Explorers* and *One Day Wonders*

"This little book turns our eyes towards the amazing gift of Jesus at Christmas in a beautifully simple way, yet with enough depth that even older children and adults can be drawn to deeper faith and worship. I'm already thinking about who I might give a copy to!"

ALI CAMPBELL-SMITH, Youth Worker, Eden Baptist Church, Cambridge, UK

"Barbara does an outstanding job of keeping the focus on the centrality of Jesus in 25 of his incomparable gifts, the main and best gift being himself. The personalized artwork your children will add could make this book a family heirloom, revisited by your children's children."

SAM CRABTREE, Pastor, Bethlehem Baptist Church; Author, *Practicing Affirmation: God-Centered Praise of Those Who Are Not God*

"I look forward to sharing this book with the family this Christmas, most especially for how it promotes theologically robust discussion and a deepening and enduring understanding of God's word. From toddlers to teens, this devotional offers all children far greater value than even the most beautifully wrapped packages beneath the tree."

TARYN HAYES, Author, *Seekers of the Lost Boy*; Podcast Co-host, *The Lydia Project: Conversations with Christian Women* (The Gospel Coalition Australia)

"An enjoyable, attainable, and theologically rich family devotional. No need to gather glue sticks and glitter or find a spare hour—just gather the family on the couch and follow the short, simple structure toward 25 days of engaging, Christ-centered family worship."

LINDSEY CARLSON, Author, *Growing in Godliness: A Teen Girl's Guide to Maturing in Christ*; pastor's wife; mom of five

"More than anything, I want my children to walk away from our Advent season with a bigger, better view of our Savior, and Barbara's devotions help them do just that. If you're new to celebrating Advent, *A Better Than Anything Christmas* equips you with everything you need to begin."

GLENNA MARSHALL, Author, *The Promise is His Presence* and *Everyday Faithfulness*

BARBARA REAOCH

A
BETTER THAN
ANYTHING
CHRISTMAS

EXPLORE HOW JESUS MAKES
CHRISTMAS BETTER


the good book
COMPANY

*To our grandchildren Milaina, Noah, Annalyse, Micah, Toph,
Judah and Hadassah that you may know "the praiseworthy
deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done."
Psalm 78 v 4-7*

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN



These devotions are ideal for all ages. They are about faith—trusting Jesus, not your own goodness. They are about repentance—living for Jesus, not yourself. They are for children who already believe and for those who do not yet believe in Jesus. We all need encouragement all the time to believe Jesus's truth.

Prepare your own heart before you lead your family or others in *A Better Than Anything Christmas*. Ask your heavenly Father to guide you. Ask for insight about what questions to ask and how to promote discussion. Pray for God to give you a daily desire to make Jesus the focus of this Christmas.

THE DAILY PATTERN

Each day has four parts: Explore, Explain, Engage, and Enter in. These are followed by a wonderful true statement about Jesus and some family journaling space.

EXPLORE

Reading the Bible passage together is the key activity. Why was Jesus born? God gives us his answer to this question in the Gospel accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

EXPLAIN

We usually think of Christmas as a time to make our own wish list and give gifts to others. The Bible tells us that Christmas is about the gifts Jesus came to give us! *A Better Than Anything Christmas* explores 25 gifts that Jesus's life gives us. All of Jesus's gifts are better than the best gifts we could ever ask for.

ENGAGE

There are two Engage questions for older children. The first helps children discover how each truth intersects with their lives. The second question stimulates deeper discussion.

Each Engage question also has a simpler version after it. This is ideal for younger children or those with less Bible knowledge. The older and younger questions are marked as shown below:



For older children



For younger children

Be prepared to get the conversation going. Ask God for willingness to talk about times when you are tempted to sin. Pray that you will respond to your kids with understanding and not in a judgmental tone. As your family responds honestly to God's word and Spirit, they will begin to treasure the truth of Jesus.

ENTER IN

This short prayer is a springboard for your response to whatever God shows you about himself, Jesus, and yourself. The journal notes and pictures you make will continue to remind you of how God has used his Spirit and his word to work eternal miracles in your family.

JESUS IS...

These "Jesus is..." statements will help your family to remember that Christmas is about Jesus. Some have been decorated for you, though your child may want to add extra stars and patterns. Others have letter outlines for your child to color in.

FAMILY JOURNALING SPACE

This is a place to respond to what God has shown you. You might want to write down what you have learned, draw a picture, list things to thank God for, draw how your face looks when you think about Jesus, or use this space for any other way you want to respond to God. There is some extra journaling space at the back of the book for any days when you have an idea that needs more room.

ANSWERS

If you would find it helpful, you can download an answer sheet to all of the Explore and Engage questions from www.thegoodbook.com/betterthan-answers.pdf

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Be brief. Be real. Be consistent.

SOME USEFUL BIBLE WORDS



AMEN: This Hebrew word means “I agree.” It is a way of joining in with someone’s prayer.

ANGEL: Angels are messengers from God.

BIBLE / SCRIPTURE / GOD’S BOOK: Although the Bible was written by about 40 people, God made sure that they wrote exactly what he wanted them to write. God speaks to us through the Bible, and what he says in the Bible is always true.

CHRISTMAS: We don’t know exactly when Jesus was born, but December 25th was chosen as a day to celebrate Christmas—the birth of Jesus Christ.

FULFILLED: When one of God’s promises is fulfilled, it means that he has done exactly what he promised to do. When Jesus was born at the very first Christmas, he fulfilled many of God’s promises.

GOSPEL: The Greek word “gospel” means “good news.” The gospel of Jesus is the good news that Jesus came to save us from the problem of sin.

IMMANUEL: This name for Jesus means “God with us.”

KINGDOM OF GOD: This isn’t a physical place. It is God’s people living under his rule as their King.

MERCY: Mercy is when God doesn’t treat us in the way we deserve. Instead God shows us grace, which is his huge kindness to people who don’t deserve it.

MESSIAH / CHRIST: “Messiah” is a Hebrew word. The same word in Greek is “Christ.” They both mean “the anointed one.” When someone became king, they were anointed with oil. The names Messiah and Christ tell us that Jesus is God’s chosen King.

REDEEM: To buy back or pay the price. Jesus came to redeem people by paying the price to rescue them from their sin.

RESURRECTION: Jesus died on the first Good Friday. But he didn’t stay dead! On the first Easter Sunday God raised Jesus back to life.

RIGHTEOUS / RIGHTEOUSNESS: To be righteous means to be “right with God.”

SIN / SINFUL: When we sin, we do what **we** want instead of what **God** wants. Jesus came to rescue us from the problem of sin.

SON OF MAN: A title Jesus often used for himself.

SPIRIT / HOLY SPIRIT: There is only one God, but he is three persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. The Spirit points us to the truth about Jesus, and helps us to live the way God's word (the Bible) tells us to.

THE CROSS: Jesus's enemies killed him by nailing him to a cross and leaving him there to die. But it was God who had already planned that Jesus would die. As Jesus died on the cross, he took all the punishment for our sin, so that everyone who trusts in Jesus can be forgiven.

❄️ ❄️ DECEMBER 1ST ❄️ ❄️

ALL GOD'S PROMISES



EXPLORE

Read Luke 1 v 26-33

What words are used to tell us about Mary? (verses 26-30)

What promises from God did the angel give Mary? (verses 31-33)

EXPLAIN

At Christmas, we want all our dreams to come true. We hope everyone keeps their promises. But even our best friends can't always keep their promises. It hurts when a promise is broken. God is not like that. Nothing will stop God from keeping his promises. *Jesus came to give us something better than a best friend's promise.*

Mary had questions. How could she be a mother? Why would God choose a poor girl to be the mother of God's Son? The angel told Mary, "No word from God will ever fail" (Luke 1 v 37). Whatever God promises will happen. We do not have to see it before we believe God.

God kept his promise to Mary. Mary's baby Jesus is the Word from God that never fails. Jesus makes all God's promises real to us. Through Jesus's life, death on the cross, and resurrection to newness of life, we know that God alone has all power to keep all his promises. The Bible tells us that "no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (2 Corinthians 1 v 20). **Christmas says that Jesus came so that all of God's good promises come true.**

ENGAGE



Why is God's promise of Jesus a "better than ever" promise?



How do we know that God always keeps his promises?



What do God's promises mean for your life?



Where do we find God's promises?

ENTER IN

Father God, you are always true to your word. Thank you for sending Jesus. We know that you alone have all power to keep all your promises. Help us to know you and love you more this Christmas and always. Amen.

JESUS IS GOD'S BEST EVER PROMISE



FAMILY
JOURNALING
SPACE

IDEAS: Draw the angel telling Mary about Jesus;
or write your own prayer; or something else...





DECEMBER 2ND



THE PURPOSE OF LIFE



EXPLORE

Read Luke 1 v 34-38

How did the angel answer Mary's question? (verses 35-37)

What was Mary's answer to the angel? (verse 38)

EXPLAIN

Do we use Christmas ornaments to wear as clothes? No! We use ornaments to decorate a Christmas tree. Are sweet treats made to clean the floor? No! Sweet treats were made to eat. Do you know that *you* have a purpose too? Our lives will always be less than best until we know that God made us for himself. *Jesus came to give us something better than living for ourselves.*

Suddenly, Mary understood her purpose: "I am the Lord's servant ... May your word to me be fulfilled," she said. We find true happiness in showing how great and good God is in whatever he calls us to do. This is called "glorifying God." Living for God gives him glory and us joy!

Through Mary's life, God planned to show his greatness and goodness. Jesus came to show us God exactly. When we see Jesus, we see God. Jesus said to his Father, "I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do" (John 17 v 4). You were made for this purpose—to know, love, and glorify God as your Father. **Christmas says that Jesus came to give us our purpose.**

ENGAGE



What would you tell a friend who thinks "living for ourselves" is the purpose of life?



What was God's purpose for Mary?



We know God, love him, and glorify him as we read God's word, pray, and live for him. How will you plan, this month, to know, love, and glorify God?



For what purpose did God make you?

ENTER IN

Dear Jesus, your life gives our lives purpose. You made us to know you, love you, and glorify you. Help us to want to live for you and know true happiness. Show us what to stop doing so that we can start reading God's word and praying every day. Amen.



➡ LIVING FOR JESUS ➡

★ IS OUR PURPOSE ★



FAMILY
JOURNALING
SPACE

IDEAS: Draw Mary as the Lord's servant; or list some things that give God glory and us joy; or something else...



❄️ ❄️ DECEMBER 3RD ❄️ ❄️

GOD'S AMAZING MERCY



EXPLORE

Read the start of Mary's song in Luke 1 v 46-52

What did Mary know about herself? (verse 48)

What did Mary know about God? (verses 50-52)

EXPLAIN

Who is on your Christmas list? Have you ever decided not to give a good gift to someone who hurt your feelings? We often want to give the best gifts to people who are nice to us. God is not like that. God is merciful. He does not give us what our sins deserve. *Jesus came to give us something better than the best gifts we give.*

No one has perfect thoughts, feelings or actions. No one obeys God completely. On our own we can't escape sin's punishment, which is death. Mary knew she had not earned God's love. With wonder-filled fear in God, Mary sang, "His mercy extends to those who fear him."

God, in mercy, sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sin. Proud people think they are good enough. They think they don't need the gift of Jesus's forgiveness. But God forgives all who in wonder-filled fear turn from sin and trust in Jesus. Jesus said, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9 v 13). **Christmas says that Jesus came to give us God's mercy.**

ENGAGE



Do you think God forgives us because we do something good to make up for the bad things we have done? Why/why not?



What does it mean that God is merciful?



Why is God's mercy such an amazing gift?



Who did God send to take the punishment for our sin?

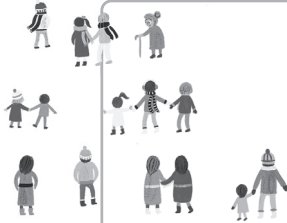
ENTER IN

Father God, you are so merciful. You sent Jesus for us, knowing we could never do enough good to deserve forgiveness. Thank you, Jesus, for taking the punishment we deserve. We need a wonder-filled fear of you. Give us faith to turn away from sin and to trust in Jesus. Amen.

JESUS GIVES US GOD'S MERCY



FAMILY
JOURNALING
SPACE



IDEAS: Draw Mary singing; or write your own song of thanks to God;
or something else...

