

"This book is truly a gift to families, for two reasons. The first is that *The God of Amazing Gifts* fixes our eyes, and those of our children, on our gift-giving Lord. In the middle of plays, parties, presents, relatives and all the rest of the Christmas chaos, we need our eyes and hearts set on Christ. Lizzie Laferton's deep and unfussy approach to the Bible leads us straight to Jesus and to his generous Father. The second reason to use these family devotions is that they are flexible enough to suit any family and simple enough to pick up and use without preparing beforehand. This will be a gift to your family."

JOHN HINDLEY, Pastor, Broadgrace Church, Norfolk, UK; Author, *Serving Without Sinking* and *You Can Really Grow*

"This helpful resource kick-started our (flagging) family devotions, and in the words of my son, 'helped me to worship Jesus more'. As a parent, you could not ask for more from a devotional!"

LINDA ALLCOCK, Author, *Head, Heart, Hands* and *Deeper Still*

"In a winsome and down-to-earth way, Lizzie Laferton's Advent devotional offers a compelling and beautiful picture of who Jesus is and why he is the greatest gift and Gift-Giver of all. These devotions will leave you in wonder and awe of our Savior."

JEFF AND SARAH WALTON, Authors, *Together Through the Storms*

"If you already know about the shepherds, the angels and the wise men, then this will bring fresh joy to your family this Christmas! My children are 7-14 years old, so this resource is just right for us and we'll be using it to shed new light on the old story."

ED DREW, Director, Faith in Kids; Author, *The Adventure of Christmas*

"Thought-provoking, awe-inspiring, Jesus-magnifying and God-glorifying. As a father of four and a pastor of many, this devotional will be a brilliant resource in our home and in our church."

PAUL DALE, Senior Pastor, The Bridge Church, Sydney

“What a wonderful and fresh Advent resource! As parents of kids whose ages range from fourteen down to six, we’re always on the lookout for devotionals that help us all to engage with God’s truth. Finding the right resource is not always easy, but *The God of Amazing Gifts* fits the bill perfectly. This book will surely be the gift that keeps on giving far beyond Christmas!”

DAVE AND SALLY GOBBETT, Highfields Church, Cardiff

“Do you want this to be the year your family digs a bit deeper? Here’s an amazing devotional to prepare all ages for a Christ-centered Christmas!”

BARBARA REAOCH, Author, *A Jesus Christmas* and *A Jesus Easter*

LIZZIE LAFERTON

THE GOD OF
AMAZING
GIFTS



Family Devotions for Advent

the goodbook
COMPANY

The God of Amazing Gifts
© Elizabeth Laferton 2022

Published by:
The Good Book Company



thegoodbook.com | thegoodbook.co.uk
thegoodbook.com.au | thegoodbook.co.nz | thegoodbook.co.in

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Design by André Parker

ISBN: 9781784987664 | Printed in Turkey

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Introduction

Welcome to *The God of Amazing Gifts!*

Isn't it wonderful watching someone open a present you know they're going to love?

You get to watch their anticipation, realization, delight and gratitude all play out before you. And they receive more than the gift itself: they get to see your love, care, generosity and thoughtfulness, all displayed in the present you've chosen. Both gift-givers and gift-getters know joy.

And it's no wonder! We're made in the image of the God who was the first Gift-Giver. We're made to be like the one who loves to give good gifts! And we're also made to receive his good gifts—to enjoy his love, care and generosity.

The Christmas season—with all its talk of giving and receiving presents—gives us a great opportunity to celebrate the generosity of our gift-giving God. This Advent resource uses the picture of gift-giving to help families talk together about the God of grace. It will point you via the Christmas narratives to the greatest gift he sent into the world: Jesus. And it will encourage you to consider how God's grace to us in Christ shapes us into people who welcome his many gifts and give generously of what he's given us.

How does it work?

These devotions are designed for families with children across a range of ages, from 7 to 14+. Each session can be read aloud as it is written (so it's all there for you already) and invites whole-family participation and discussion.

Many families won't manage to do a devotional every single day of December. With that in mind, these sessions are designed to work just as well spread out over the whole holiday period, or even into the new year. Use it every day, or every other day, or every few days—whatever suits you! But on Christmas Day, make sure you head to the final study (which is a special shorter one), no matter which session you've reached.

Each session includes:

- an opening prayer
- an opening question for everyone, which introduces a key concept
- a passage (often divided up for ease of reference) or selection of verses from a passage
- four questions on those verses for children (see below)
- an application question for everyone to answer (see below)
- a closing prayer

You'll also find short explanatory paragraphs, easy engagement activities to help children listen and understand, and definitions for tricky vocabulary.

A choice of questions

There are three easy-to-follow options to help children of different ages to look at and discuss the Bible passage. The questions will look like this:

If you were in a desert, what would you be thirsty for?

Is that what David is longing for most?



If you were in a desert, what would you be thirsty for?

What does David show us about his attitude to God by saying he thirsts for God?

With younger or less confident children: ask the questions on the left. These are easier and give more help to find and articulate the answer.

With older or more confident children: ask the questions on the right. These require them to think a bit more for themselves.

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With a range of ages: ask the questions indicated by a star. You can take turns and choose an appropriate question each time to make sure everyone is included.

Similarly, each session includes a choice of three application questions. Choose the option you think will be most helpful for your family.



The first question, with a speech bubble symbol, always encourages discussion without assuming a personal relationship with God.



The second question, with a people symbol, always encourages a shared family response to the passage.



The third question, with a heart symbol, assumes a relationship with God and encourages personal reflection and response to the passage.

Further resources

A PDF of all the verses for each day is available at thegoodbook.com/amazing-gifts-verses for you to download or print to use with your family.

Finally, at the back of this book you will find suggestions for extra activities or conversations. On days when you have more time, these give you an opportunity to keep discussing and applying the ideas from that devotion in daily life.

Finally...

As you unwrap together God's gift of Scripture, I hope you enjoy hearing from and talking about our gift-giving Father. And that this Advent season, there will be much joy and excitement in your household at the God of amazing gifts!

PART ONE

GOD
THE GIFT-
GIVER





Best Gift Ever

Psalm 63

Let's pray as we begin

God of amazing gifts, please fill us with love for you this Advent as we think about your goodness and generosity. Amen.

A question for all of us

Get ready to say the first thing that comes to mind!



What is the best Christmas present you can imagine receiving?

Now picture yourself hiding in a cave in a dry and lifeless desert, on the run from someone who wants to kill you.

What would be at the top of your gift list then?

As we open the Bible today, we'll find ourselves hearing from someone who knew exactly what that is like: King David.

As we read the first verse of Psalm 63 together, listen out for what *David* thought is the best possible gift.

A psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah.

¹ You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water. (Psalm 63 v 1)

Helpful definitions

parched: very thirsty or dry.

If you have younger or less confident children only, ask the questions on the left.
If you have older or more confident children only, ask the questions on the right.
If you have a range of ages, use the questions marked with stars.

If you were in a desert,
what would you be thirsty for?
Is that what David is longing for
most?



If you were in a desert,
what would you be thirsty for?
What does David show us
about his attitude to God by
saying he thirsts for God?

David was probably also hungry. But he goes on to write...

⁵ I will be satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you. (v 5)



What kind of food does David
compare God to?
Can you put "richest of foods"
in your own words?

What kind of food does
David compare God to?
What do you think David
means when he says he'll be
"satisfied" by God?

Let's think about *why* David can say this about God. He also wrote:

² *I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.*

³ *Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you. (v 2-3)*

Helpful definitions

sanctuary (v 2): the temple.

glory (v 2): here it means God's awesomeness.

glorify (v 3): praise God for who he is.

In verses 2-3, what three things had the writer seen or experienced of God?

(They begin with *p*, *g* and *l*.)



David has seen God's power and character.

What does this lead him to say about God's love (v 3)?



How might David finish this sentence?

I know that knowing the perfect, powerful, loving God is better than _____.

Because David knows and loves God, what does he want to do (v 3)?

Even when life was dangerous and difficult, David's heart and mind were full of God. His mouth was full of praise. That's because David knew he already had the most amazing gift of all: God himself. Knowing God is the best gift ever.

One last question

Choose the question you think will be most helpful for your family.



This question encourages discussion without assuming a personal relationship with God.

What different ways can you think of to find out more about the God David describes?



This question encourages a shared family response to the passage.

Think of all the things you know about what God is like.

Let's share some ideas and use that list to praise him.



This question assumes a relationship with God and encourages personal reflection and response.

David was most excited about God himself, because he had seen God's power and glory and love.

When do you feel most excited about God? When do you feel least excited? What do you think makes the difference?

Let's pray as we finish

Each session includes a short prayer that responds to God using some of the ideas from the session. You could use it as it is, add to it, or pray together in your own words.

Perfect, powerful, loving Father, there is no gift better than knowing and being loved by you. Thank you that in Jesus we see your power, perfection, glory and love. This Advent, please give us hearts that long for you and lips that praise you. Amen.