

REJOICE
THE
WORLD
REJOICES

THE GOOD
NEWS OF
CHRISTMAS
DEVOTIONAL

ICE

BY
ELIZA HUIE
CYNDI LOGSDON
BROOK TAYLOR
ASHLEY AREY

FOREWORD BY
DAVID PLATT



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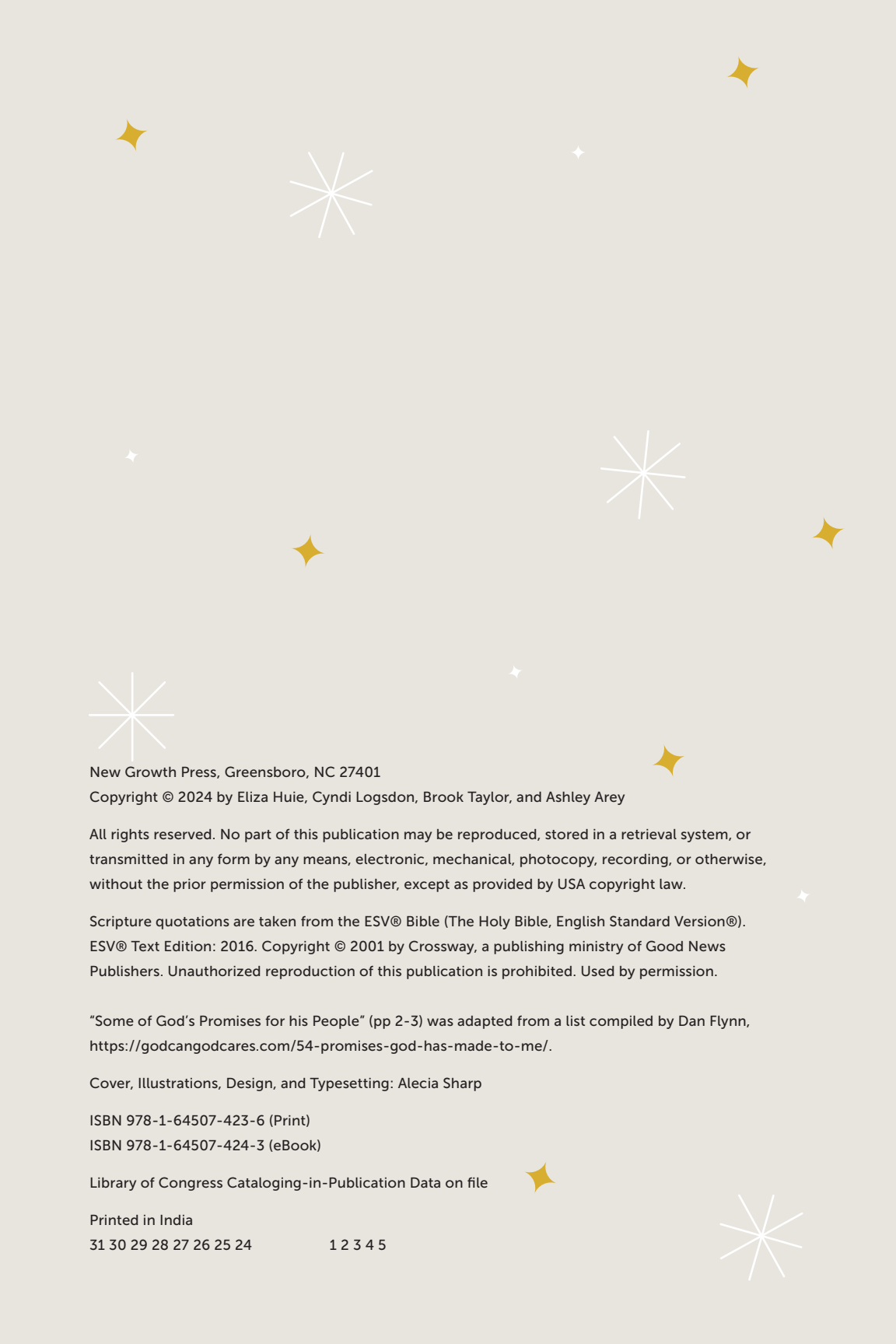
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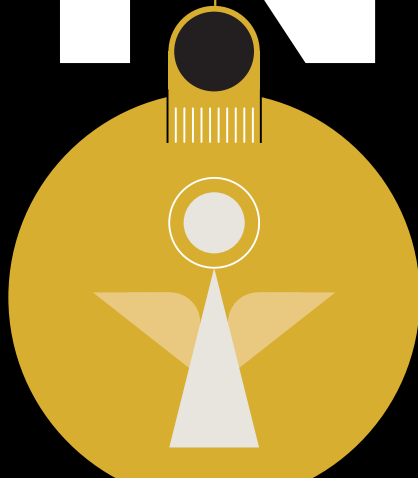
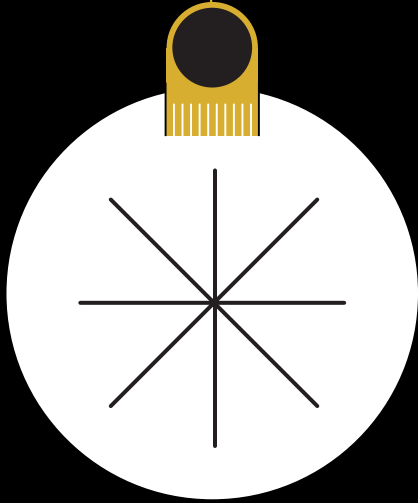


Dedicated to the
McLean Bible Church
family, this book stands
as an acknowledgment
of the profound impact
their love has had
on its authors.

By this everyone will
know that you are my
disciples, if you love one
another. John 13:35

CONTENT

TABLE OF



DAY 1 1
DAY 2 4
DAY 3 7
DAY 4 9
DAY 5 10

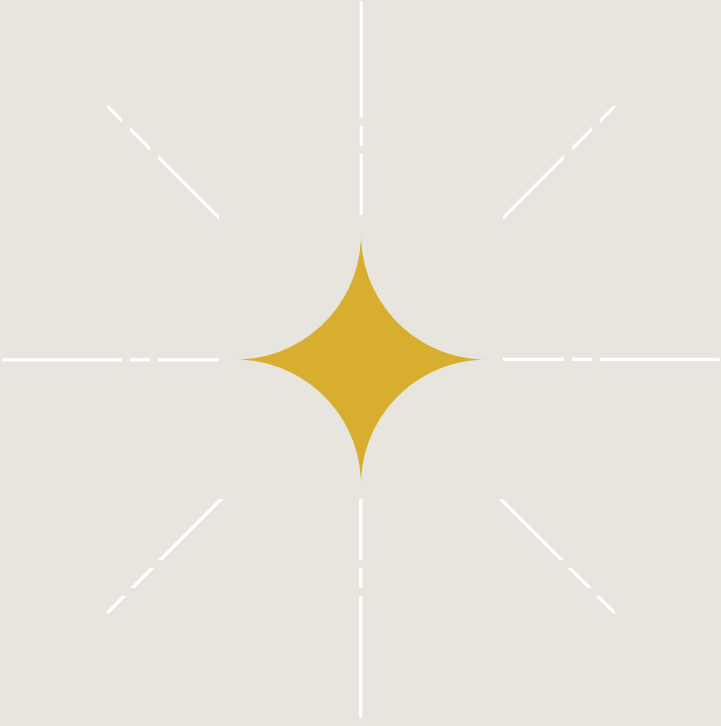
DAY 6 15
DAY 7 16
DAY 8 19
DAY 9 22
DAY 10 25

DAY 11 26
DAY 12 30
DAY 13 32
DAY 14 36
DAY 15 39

DAY 16 40
DAY 17 44
DAY 18 47
DAY 19 48
DAY 20 52

DAY 21 55
DAY 22 56
DAY 23 59
DAY 24 60
DAY 25 65





I am so excited about the book you are holding in your hands. This Christmas devotional is a guided journey through the first two chapters of the gospel of Luke intended to help you and your family know and love Jesus more.

You will find 24 days of thoughtful devotional readings designed to help you slow down and focus your heart and mind on him. The 25th day is a review of the Christmas story in Scripture.

It's my hope that this book will remind you that God was faithful to fulfill his promise to provide a Savior, and God will be faithful to fulfill all his promises to you and me today. The birth of Jesus is God's promise fulfilled and a reminder that God's promises are guaranteed!

Every page of this book was written with you in mind. You were not only thought of, but you were also prayed for as it was put together. The goal of this book is to help you approach Christmas with ever-deepening enjoyment and an ever-increasing exaltation of Jesus.

I pray this devotional will be a blessing to you.

FOR HIS GLORY,

David Platt

READ

LUKE 1:1 – 4

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.





THE OLD TESTAMENT BEGINS by telling us that God created mankind in his own likeness. Sadly, the first man and woman failed to obey their Creator. Sinful people formed sinful families, and then sinful families gathered to form sinful nations. One nation in particular enjoyed a special relationship with God, but they also couldn't escape sin. The Israelites, God's chosen people, lived in a repetitive cycle of aiming for obedience yet running after sin. They could not—and, often, would not—live righteous lives.

How would this problem of sin be fixed? From the very beginning, God promised a Deliverer who would save his people from their sin. The Israelites longed for this promised Messiah, thus the Old Testament is full of expectation. When would the Messiah come to restore Israel's relationship with their God? Over hundreds of years, God sent prophets, priests, and kings to lead his people and encourage them as they waited for the Promised One.

At the end of the historical events of the Old Testament, the people of Israel experienced 400 years of silence. Think about that! After centuries of more or less unbroken communication, God's people heard nothing from him for 400 years. No new Scripture, no new prophets—only deafening silence.

But then something changed. Actually, everything changed. After 400 years of silence—and probably 400 years of growing uncertainty—God kept his promise. The Messiah was born. And so, Luke wrote his gospel so that we would have certainty about these things that we have been taught.

Today, many of us feel seasons of uncertainty. We often come into the Christmas season tired, anxious, afraid, and unsure. Can you relate? If so, let this story bring you rest. The Holy Spirit inspired Luke to write this orderly account so that we can be certain about the most important event in the history of world: the Son of God has come to save sinners like us.

The Christmas story shows that God keeps his promises. Believing in the promised Messiah is what leads to true and lasting peace, comfort, and joy.

SOME OF GOD'S

PROMISES FOR HIS PEOPLE



God is with me wherever I go
(Joshua 1:9).

God will keep me in perfect peace
if my mind is "stayed" on him
(Isaiah 26:3).

God cares for the birds, and he
promises to care for me too
(Matthew 6:26).

The Lord is with me always, to the
end of time (Matthew 28:20).

If I abide in the Lord and his words
abide in me, whatever I ask will be
given to me (John 15:7).

I am justified by his free grace
(Romans 3:24).

I have peace with God because
I've been justified by faith in Jesus
(Romans 5:1).

I have access to God's grace
(Romans 5:2).

There is no condemnation for
me because I am in Christ Jesus
(Romans 8:1).

The Holy Spirit will help me to pray
(Romans 8:26–27).

All things work together for my
good (Romans 8:28).

Nothing will separate me from the
love of Christ (Romans 8:35).

I shall bear the likeness (and
resurrection body) of Jesus, the
"man of heaven" (1 Corinthians
15:49).

My labor in the Lord is not in vain
(1 Corinthians 15:58).

I am being transformed into God's
likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18).

God comforts me when I'm sad
(2 Corinthians 7:6).

God blesses me so I can do good
works (2 Corinthians 9:8).

God's grace is sufficient for me
(2 Corinthians 12:9).

The Holy Spirit in me guarantees
my inheritance in Christ (Ephesians
1:11–14).

God has created good works for
me to walk in today (Ephesians
2:10).

I have been brought into the
body of Christ by his own blood
(Ephesians 2:13).

In Christ I can approach God
with freedom and confidence
(Ephesians 3:11–12).

God will supply all my needs
(Philippians 4:19).

The Father has qualified me to
share in the inheritance of his
people (Colossians 1:12).

Christ lives in me (Colossians 1:27).

Because God is faithful, he
will make me holy—like he is
(1 Thessalonians 5:23–24).

God is just; he will repay with
trouble those who trouble me
(2 Thessalonians 1:6).

God has given me a spirit of
power, love, and self-discipline
(2 Timothy 1:7).

I have a crown of righteousness
awaiting me, because I long for his
appearing (2 Timothy 4:8).

God won't lie to me, because God
cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

Jesus will help me when I'm
tempted (Hebrews 2:18).

God will never leave me or forsake
me (Hebrews 13:5).

God uses hard times to make
me more mature in him (James
1:2–4).

If I ask for wisdom from God, he
will give it to me (James 1:5).

If I resist the devil, he will run from
me (James 4:7).

If I draw near to God, he will draw
near to me (James 4:8).

My prayers are powerful (James
5:16).

He cares for me (1 Peter 5:7).

In my sufferings, God will
strengthen, confirm, and establish
me (1 Peter 5:10).

A new heaven and earth await me
(2 Peter 3:13).

He forgives and cleanses me as
I confess my sins to him (1 John
1:9).

When Jesus reappears, I'll be made
like him (1 John 3:2).

God has given me eternal life in
his Son (1 John 5:11).



02



HAVE YOU EVER READ the word righteous and wondered what it meant? It's definitely one of those "Christianese" words. It's used throughout the Bible, and the word often shows up in praise songs. But we rarely use it in everyday conversation.

In the Bible, only a handful of people are described as righteous. Notice that righteous doesn't mean sinless or perfect. The person who is righteous is the one who trusts God and walks with him faithfully. So, when Luke describes Zechariah and Elizabeth as righteous, he's saying they trusted and obeyed God. They were living examples of how God designed us all to live in relationship with him.

The last sentence in today's passage, however, carries within it a hard truth for all of us: even righteous people who walk blamelessly before God have struggles. Why would God allow hardship for some of the few people who actually trust and obey him? Did Zechariah and Elizabeth ask this same question? Take a moment and imagine what it would be like to long for and pray for a child but be unable to have one. Perhaps this couple saw other people around them get pregnant multiple times and grow their families, while they themselves pleaded with the Lord and got no response as they continued to get older and older.

The amazing thing is that despite the sadness and grief Zechariah and Elizabeth may have felt, they continued to trust and obey God. For them, God was not reduced to a gift giver; God's presence was the gift itself. His commandments were for their joy, and every good gift he chose to give were a reflection of his goodness. Zechariah and Elizabeth trusted God's promises and purposes.

As we continue to read this story, we see that God did, in fact, give Elizabeth a child—one who would prepare the way for Jesus. God's timing and plan are always better than ours. When we are struggling and don't understand what God is doing, we can trust his power, his character, and his track record. God makes the impossible possible for his glory and our joy.

READ

LUKE 1:5 – 7



In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

READ

LUKE 1:8–15

Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.”





HOW LONG had Elizabeth and Zechariah begged God for a child? How many times had they pleaded with God to do for them what they couldn't do for themselves? Luke doesn't include those details, but we can assume it was a long time based on the fact that they were, "advanced in years" (Luke 1:7), which is a polite way of saying they were old.

Perhaps you've prayed about something for years—a prodigal child, a longing for a spouse, health problems, a desire to have children, a job change, financial difficulties, mental health issues—and it seems that heaven is silent. You've yet to see the fulfillment of your prayers in the way you'd hoped. If this is you, let the angel's words to Zechariah be a balm to your weary soul: "Your prayer has been heard" (Luke 1:13).

We're all familiar with Paul's words in Romans 8:28: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." If we truly believe those words, not just as a warm and fuzzy memory verse but as bedrock reality, then we know that when God does not give us what we long for, we know it's for our lasting good and his ultimate glory.

God hears his children and wants us to persist in prayer just like Elizabeth and Zechariah. So, keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking, because God knows what you need and when you need it. What's more, he is doing something in your own heart through persistence and patience. He is conforming you into the image of Jesus.

As John Piper beautifully reminds us, "God is often masterminding a thousand details behind the tapestry of our lives, and we only get to see three of them. Sometimes we see them immediately. Sometimes we don't for years. Sometimes we don't see them until we're with Him in eternity. And yet the truth remains: He is still in the business of answering our prayers."

CHRISTMAS CATEGORIES

Choose a letter, then think of words that fit the categories below that begin with your letter. Want to make it harder? Set a timer, and race to beat it!

- 1 A Christmas song

- 2 Something you eat around Christmas

- 3 A Christmas tradition

- 4 A person, place, or thing in the Bible's account of Jesus's birth

- 5 A Christmas movie

- 6 Something green

- 7 Something red

- 8 A common Christmas present

- 9 A Christmas activity

- 10 A Christmas decoration

READ

LUKE 1:16–17

And he will turn many
of the children of Israel
to the Lord their God,
and he will go before
him in the spirit and
power of Elijah, to turn
the hearts of the fathers
to the children, and
the disobedient to the
wisdom of the just, to
make ready for the Lord
a people prepared.



IF YOU FEEL STRONGLY about something, it doesn't mean you always will. You might have had a strong belief that animals belong outdoors until a pet enters your family and you find yourself willingly sharing your home and maybe even your bed with a furry friend. More significantly, maybe you had strong feelings about not wanting children but now you find yourself desiring a family. We can be passionate about something only to find ourselves feeling differently about it later. We change our minds. That's a natural part of being human.

But what about changing our heart? Is that so natural? No, that work is supernatural. It's a work of the Lord. Thankfully, it's a work he is committed to.

As you read the passage today, consider the different ways the Lord has changed your heart. Recall how you once pursued things you thought would bring meaning to your life, but how now you know those things are futile. Consider how reading God's Word or spending the weekend worshiping and serving in the church at one time was an inconvenience, but now it's a blessing to your soul. Maybe you used to be diligent to keep areas of your life hidden, but now you're vulnerable and welcome godly accountability. If these things are true of you, the Lord has changed your heart.

As God's child, you should be eager to share with others how God changed your life when he turned your heart to him. Who might you share that with today? Take some time to pray for one person you can share this with.

If you are reading this and you know your heart is not turned toward the Lord, then today can be the day that changes. God has a plan for you. Pray and ask him to turn your heart to him.

05



“HE LOOKED ON ME.” Consider what that phrase meant for Elizabeth and everyone after her who experiences the same. God looked on her. The Most High God set his gaze on Elizabeth to take away her disgrace.

In many cultures, infertility brings intense shame and suffering. To be labeled infertile in Elizabeth’s culture would mean she likely experienced economic deprivation, social isolation, and loss of community status. Just imagine: an intense, personal pain turns into a hurtful, social stigma with devastating consequences.

We all know the feeling of shame. And we all know the temptation to hide in response. We don’t want to be seen or known because if we are, we’d surely be rejected. Shame creeps in when you’re called names at school or when you don’t make the team, when you’ve failed at an important task or when you’re cheated on by a spouse. We feel shame when someone takes advantage of us and we’re powerless to do anything about it, when someone convinces you that you’re unlovable or a nobody. Those feelings in this broken world can be crushing. What in your life leads you to feel shame? What facts about your life do you fear would cause others to reject you?

What if there were someone who knew every detail about you and would never ever reject you? That’s the kind of acceptance God had for Elizabeth when he looked on her, and that’s the kind of acceptance God has for us in Christ Jesus. Only in the gospel can we be fully known and fully loved. Restored, not rejected.

Notice how Elizabeth responds to the Lord’s acceptance in the last sentence of today’s passage (verse 25). God has transformed her shame-ridden identity into one marked by great honor. What an exchange! That same exchange is true for all of us who trust in Christ. On the cross, he took the full weight of our sin and shame (Isaiah 53:4–6). And when we come to Jesus by faith, he looks on us and takes away our reproach. He sees the real us and washes away our sin so we can have a relationship with him and be with him for all eternity.

READ

LUKE 1:18-25



And Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, “Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”

EYE SPY

Can you find all of the Christmas symbols? Grab a pen and check them off as you go!



1 Star of Bethlehem



1 Baby Jesus in a manger



1 Jesus's family



3 Wise Men



3 Angels



5 Shepherds



5 Palm trees



10 Stars



10 Candles



10 Doves



10 Christmas trees



10 Ornaments



10 Wreaths



10 Gifts



