



FAMILY READING PLAN

TRADITIONS FOR ADVENT



THE STICKNEYS



Merry Christmas from our family to yours! We are the Stickney family—Andre, Julie, Gabe (20), Hannah (17), and Leyton (14). We're proud to be Greshamites through and through: both of us graduated from Gresham High, and our kids either currently attend or have graduated from Barlow High.

We've called Rise home for nearly 10 years now. We have many memories of skating at Skate World and think it's so fun that our church home is a landmark of our childhood.

READ

- Luke 2
- John 3:16-17

OUR TRADITIONS

One of our favorite Christmas traditions is decorating our home with an abundance of nutcrackers and trees. We have over 100 nutcrackers that fill every nook and cranny, and we put up at least four artificial trees and sometimes a real one. Each of the kids even has their own tree in their room! An Advent tradition we have is to read Luke 2 together. When the kids were younger they would act it out at their grandparents house. Wishing you all a season full of joy, love, and memories to last a lifetime!

PRAY

Father, thank you for the gift of Your Son. We declare that He is the greatest gift of all. As we celebrate Him through the giving and receiving of gifts, help us to remember who He is and all He has done for us. May His gift of unconditional love, salvation, and eternal life sink deep into our hearts and transform us from the inside out. We pray that Your grace and forgiveness, so freely given, would move us to generosity and love for others. May we reflect the same kindness and compassion You've shown us. Happy birthday, Jesus! In Your most holy and precious name, we pray. Amen.

GENEROSITY

During our series in Joshua and the Build This House campaign, we've spent a lot of time reflecting on generosity. It's only fitting, then, that in this season, we focus on the most generous gift of all—Jesus.

John 3:16 tells us, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son..." God gave us His Son. Jesus is a gift of love, grace, forgiveness, and salvation. The verse continues, "that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." God gave the world His Son, and in turn, Jesus gives eternal life to all who believe in Him. These are free gifts; we can never earn or repay them. This Christmas, as we give and receive presents to celebrate the "birthday" of Jesus, let's take moments to pause, remember, and reflect on these greatest of gifts.

SHARE

1. What is the best gift you've ever given?
2. What is the most meaningful gift you've ever received?
3. Have you fully unwrapped the gift God has given you, or are there areas of your life that you still need to surrender to Him?
4. What does it mean that we can never earn or repay God for this incredible gift?

THE CUTSHALLS



We are Chris and Stacey Cutshall. We have 3 boys - Leeland, Rye and Harbor. We own Stomping Grounds Coffee House, and we helped plant Rise!

We hope everyone has a blessed season; being present and aware of the goodness we experience through Jesus! May this Christmas be one marked by the love of God's great gift and filled with moments of Hope, Love, Peace, and Joy.

OUR TRADITIONS

Our favorite Christmas traditions include spending the night at our parents' house on Christmas Eve, and waking up to open stockings, drink coffee, and eat french toast!

We love the Christmas season so much that it starts on November 1st in our house!

READ

- Isaiah 26:3
- Philippians 4:6-7
- Numbers 6:24-26

As a family, memorize Isaiah 26:3. Make a note for your fridge, bathroom mirror, say it before you drop off kids at school, before you pray before bed. This simple act of repetition will bring a unified purpose to your family, and it will imprint on your hearts, fighting with truth to combat any lies we face.

PEACE

Peace is not a place. Peace is a person. Peace is not a set of circumstances, perfectly crafted together. Peace is not an equation with boundaries and rules. Peace is not arriving and entering into some idealistic space; where financial blessings overflow, friendships work in perfect harmony, family is whole and united, work is successful, and opportunity awaits us. Peace is someone. Peace is Jesus.

We are all chasing after peace ultimately. We may think it's success, reputation, relationships, but at the core of all these endeavors, we really want peace. Peace that we have enough, peace that we are enough, peace that we feel fulfilled and arrived. But this ARRIVAL we crave simply comes in the form of a baby. Jesus was born, walked a perfect life, died for our freedom and forgiveness, he rose again and made a way. He offers PEACE. He offers relationship that can't be broken, he offers blessings beyond temporary tangibles, he offers identity, calling, purpose, and most importantly His presence. So how does peace invade my life, my walk, my state of being? The Prince of Peace calls us to fixate on Him. To steady our gaze on Him. To trust and surrender to the One who is worthy and able to more than we can ask or imagine. Peace is Jesus, and when we fix our attention on Him, we catch glimmers of his Peace over and over and over again. Set your minds on Jesus: commune with Him, read his Word for you, walk in His ways, dwell, abide, and rest in Shalom. Peace is available; would we not miss it this Christmas season.

SHARE

1. Where is an area of your life that you expect peace but aren't feeling fulfilled in?
2. How can you shift your attention to seek Jesus instead of that thing, person, status, or achievement?

THE OVERBYS



Merry Christmas, We are Steve and Sue Overby, and we have been at Rise for about 8 years. We just love watching how God is raising faithful followers of Jesus here in Gresham. This October, we celebrated 50 years of following Jesus. That was when my high school boyfriend, Steve gave his heart and life to Jesus. This absolutely changed the direction of our collective lives. I was a freshman at Cal State Long Beach, he was a Junior at Loyola Marymount of Los Angeles. We decided soon after to get married and join CRU, a ministry dedicated to making disciples of all nations. Every Christmas we are freshly reminded of the love of God as He sent His son to be the Savior of the World. We have 4 grown kids, and 13 grandchildren and by God's good grace, everyone is currently growing in faith and following Jesus in their sphere of influence as parents, teachers, pastors, and missionaries.

May this Christmas be one marked by the love of God's great gift and filled with moments of Hope, Love, Peace, and Joy.

OUR TRADITIONS

One of our favorite Christmas Traditions was a family advent time on the 4 Sundays before Christmas. We had an old Advent booklet from my childhood, and each Sunday we gathered around the foil-wrapped wreath, lit a candle, read some scriptures, and sang a Christmas song, highlighting the thought for the coming week.

On Christmas morning, we lit all the candles, sang a few songs, and read the whole nativity story before starting into the mounds of presents.

READ

- Luke 1:46-55
- Romans 15:13

PRAY

Thank you Jesus that our Joy comes from You.

Help us draw near to You and experience the Joy of knowing You as our personal Lord and Savior. We invite you into our places of pain, into our fears, into our desires. Help us to allow you to heal and reorder our fears, our desires, and even our pain into thoughts of love, peace, and hope so that we can experience your Joy.

May our hearts be filled with the same Joy as the first Christmas, as we look forward to this Christmas of 2024.

JOY

What is Joy? One definition is that it is a lasting emotion that comes from trusting God. We also know that Joy is one of the fruit that comes from living in the power of the Holy Spirit. Joy is the settled feeling that all is well because God is near, and He has good plans for me despite what I may see and feel.

Joy is part of the message of the angel to Zacharias when he announced the birth of John and again when Mary went to visit Elizabeth. Joy was the message of the angel in Luke 2:10, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people."

Jesus is the light of the world and he comes to bring hope, peace, and love, and in those gifts, we get to experience Joy. Because God has drawn near. And because we have hope, peace, love, we can experience Joy.

SHARE

1. What are some scriptures about Joy that you can think of or find?
2. How have you experienced Joy in your life this year?
3. Are there any areas that I could grow in that would allow me to experience more Joy next year?

THE GREYS



Hi! We are Dave and Sherry Grey.

We have been married 41 years and have 3 kids and 7 grandsons. 11 years ago, we helped plant Rise along with our daughter, Stacey, and son-in-law, Chris. Being a part of a local body of Jesus followers is very important to us!!

May this season bring you peace, rest, and His JOY!

OUR TRADITIONS

Our tradition is church on Christmas Eve and then everyone spends the night at our house so we can leave out the cookies and milk for Santa. We enjoy a breakfast of French toast and bacon in the morning followed by a day of loud crazy lots of boy fun!!!!

LOVE

Love is a word we use frequently in our culture. We say, "I love tacos! I love dogs!" In the social media world you can heart (love) many things. Love is truly all around, especially at Christmastime. But Biblical love is much more than liking something very much. The Biblical use of the word love has many meanings:

- Storge = familial love
- Eros = physical or romantic love
- Philos = deep friendship
- Agape = selfless, unconditional love

Biblical love is more than a feeling, it's a commandment to "Love God and love your neighbor." The Bible teaches us that love is from God and that God is love. We are only capable of love, because He loved us first. Love is not just a feeling, but action. God loved us so much that He sent (action) His son. We are called to be love to our hurting world. This Christmas, choose to express Biblical love like Jesus. Show love to others

PRAY

Father, thank you that you are love. Thank you for loving us first and sending Jesus as the ultimate demonstration of that love. Convict us of the things that we love more than Him. Help us to love like Jesus this season in our thoughts, our words, and our actions. Continue to deepen our understanding of the unconditional love you offer and inspire us to respond with more and more worship and adoration.

SHARE

1. What do you love about Christmas?
2. What are some ways you can show the people around you that you love them?
3. Is showing love to others easy or challenging for you? Is there someone specific you want to work on showing more love to?

THE FRIENDS



Hi! We're the Friend Family. Jared, Kristen, Jacob (17, senior), Samuel (14, freshman), John Paul (11, 6th grade), and Matthew (10, 4th grade). Our family began in 2005 with a small wedding in the Willamette Valley. Since then we've grown to having a four boys (something Kristen always wanted), lots of basketball and activities, and always a loud, full home. These are the good ol' days, and we're grateful each day for the gift of our family.

Our family has been taken on quite the journey as God has continually shown us His path for our lives, and continued to refine us for His mission. We never thought we'd be living and serving in Gresham, but God's plan have been clear, and here we are—so grateful for the opportunity to spread the Gospel in this region and this time in history. The joy of leading and serving in the church the way we do means that we are all, all in. Our kids are as much a part of the life of the church and spreading the Gospel as we adults are. We are each expectant for a move of God in this city, and ready to be part of whatever He wants to do.

OUR TRADITIONS

We LOVE Christmas. The smells, the sights, the sounds—all of it. If you're in our home during this season you'll hear Christmas music on 24/7, probably something like Vince Guaraldi. You'll see each room have a touch of Christmas spirit, and you'll partake in plenty of Egg Nog and Cocoa. But the thing we will make time for and plan without fail is all getting in the car with a hot drink and going to find our favorite Christmas lights. Both Jared and Kristen had this tradition as kids, and Jared even proposed marriage to Kristen while out Christmas light looking. We love sitting in front of a home or display and admiring the hard work, beautiful colors, and the glorious wonder of the season.

READ

- Isaiah 6
- Isaiah 40

PRAY

Lord Jesus, reveal yourself to us in this season. Show us your glory, your might, and be present with us. Help us to recognize you and to hear the Holy Spirit speak to us. Lead us into places that need your hope, your light, and your love.

Lord, we praise you for coming to this earth, living, dying, and raising again so we can have salvation. Help us to be people that carry that Good News into this week, and reflect you wherever we go. We adore you, Lord. In Jesus name, amen.

HOPE

Isaiah paints the picture of a people lost in deep darkness, their lives shrouded by sin and lacking the understanding of God's goodness. Yet, in the midst of this despair, Isaiah receives a vision—a light breaking through the darkness, a promise of a coming King. This King is described as the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. In this vision, we find the profound hope of comfort and renewal.

What's astonishing is how this hope unfolds. The Mighty God entered the world not with grandeur, but with humility—as a tiny baby. Hope came wrapped in swaddling cloths, born to two humble servants of the Most High God. Through this child, God fulfilled His promises, demonstrating His unwavering faithfulness.

No matter the season you find yourself in, remember this truth: God has given you a promise. When you place your hope in Him—Jesus—He will sustain and strengthen you in your weakness. This hope is not just a fleeting wish; it is the assurance of God's power, love, and presence in your life.

SHARE

1. What area of your life needs the Hope of Jesus?
2. How can you share Hope with someone in your life this week?