



Connecting the Christmas Lights

If you have children, they'll likely hear the Christmas story at least a dozen times this month.

They'll hear it in Sunday school, at Christmas plays, and church musicals. If you're like our family, who still plays fifteen-year old Veggie Tale videos, they'll hear it from Bob the Tomato.

But there's a dimension to the Christmas story that kids (and adults) must see to make the story sparkle.

The more ignorant we become about the Bible, the more the Christmas narrative is downgraded to a stand-alone, feel-good story. And that's it.

God shows up as a cute baby and the credits roll.

We need to view the prequel to connect the lights.

Using the four Gospels, there are four unique ways to help your family connect the dots from the ancient past to the nativity scene.

You can sit down with your kids, open your Bible, and talk about the lead-up to the Christmas Story - in one sitting, or four short talks. I've selected some passages and insights, below.

But here's the key...

Before you share these with your kids, dig in and let some Christmas lights glow in you own heart.

Matthew

Right out of the gate, Matthew heaves a rambling genealogy at the reader. From Abraham to Joseph, forty generations are mentioned.

Matthew has a clear objective. He's connecting the dots. He wants the reader to know that this outrageous story of the virgin birth traces it's roots to Abraham - a man who once offered his own son as a sacrifice to God.

Quite fitting wouldn't you say?

Luke

(I'm going out of order but stick with me)

Luke partners with Matthew in a special way. While Matthew charted the genealogy of Joseph (to Abraham), Luke traces a different path. He presents the genealogical account of Jesus' mother, Mary.

Both the seeds of Mary and Joseph trace their ancestry to King David. Joseph's line goes through David's son Solomon, and Mary through David's son Nathan.

Pretty cool.

Mark

This writer wastes no print on the manger, wise men, or shepherds. It's as if he knew there would be multiple accounts in the future Gospel series.

Instead Mark begins with quotes from respected prophets like Isaiah and Malachi. These prophets announce the coming arrival of another prophet - John the Baptist, a cousin to Jesus.

Why is John important?

John was born to lead the way for the Messiah. By establishing the link to this prophet John, a natural connection was made to introduce Jesus.

The arrival of Jesus was both stealthy, and widely announced - for those paying attention. And it's the same today - for those who have childlike eyes to see.

John

Like Mark, John totally skips the Christmas story. He too must have received the memo. "Hey John, Clear links are being established by others. So just let it rip." And that he does.

John launches his testimony with these shocking, famous words:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." (John 1:1)

Now for another shocking idea: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...." (verse 14)

Jesus always existed. He is the Living Word of God. And He is God.

And this is the main theme John presents all throughout his Gospel account.

Bottom Line

The Christmas story is not one that comes out of left field. Our savior's intervention was planned for thousands of years.

The story unfolds throughout the entire Old Testament. And if you want to go further, Luke traces the lineage from Abraham back to Noah, and to Adam. (If you want to check his work, reference the genealogy of Moses at Genesis 5 & 11).

The Gospel writers were awestruck by the connections to Biblical history and worked hard to establish them for New Testament readers.

So this Christmas season, as you read the Christmas story as a family - take time read *around* the story. Connect the dots to Isaiah. And to other prophets. And to Genesis.

And for fun, trace it all the way to Genesis 3:15 - the first mention of this seed that would one day save the world.

By itself, the Christmas story is touching and magical. Connecting the dots in the fullness of Biblical history will help cement faith and understanding to even deeper levels.

Tips for Holiday Bible Reading

- The Christmas story (birth of Jesus) - Luke 2:1-21; Matthew 1:18-25
- Genealogy of Jesus – Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38
- Browse the first few chapters of Matthew, Mark & Luke (Most Bibles have references to these O.T. prophecies.)
- Read John 1:1-18 – put it all together

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