



Feast + Fast + FERIA

Jesse Tree Tips

Here are some of our family's tips on incorporating the Jesse Tree devotion for all ages from our experience over the last decade plus. I pray they are a help in avoiding a few of the common struggles shared by those who've tried this devotion in the past but ran into some snags.

Many of the questions I received over the years about implementing the Jesse Tree asked how to keep various ages groups, specifically older kiddos, engaged in the process. So, that will be my focus this time around.

Now this first suggestion may ruffle some feathers, but stay with me... Hopefully it's a relief instead.

If you're just starting out, you don't need a contemporary book of contrived Jesse Tree reflections for your family to benefit from this devotion, especially when you only have littles. Save your money & pull out your Bible. Now hear me out. I'm sure there are some lovely offerings out there on the subject, but often times, with the many I've seen over recent years, they can miss the point in attempt to be relevant or ecumenical.

If we look at the heart of the Jesse Tree, it is meant to help prepare our souls for the Nativity of Christ as we take a closer look at Salvation History and the Genealogy of the Messiah. And when we use the inerrant Word of God, we're hearing it straight from the horse's mouth, not something watered down to appeal to a particular publisher's customer demographic. Unfortunately this is a hard truth in our modern time of commercialized Catholicism. But enough about that...

Next, to remove any possible stress associated with the devotion it's helped me to remember that the Jesse Tree should be either an introduction to or review of the events and historical figures included - not the only time they are mentioned each year. It is such a weight off of me as a mom when every single detail of the Bible Character's life doesn't have to be taught in one day during Advent.

For the most part as kids get older, I don't think family struggles with the Jesse Tree stem from the content of the devotion itself, but rather the mode of presentation.

In our home we do a lot of reading aloud with me as narrator, but I've found with some things just standing there and reading to them is not always the best way to keep our brood of various ages engaged.

Unless you have a rascal of boys like me, for only wee ones, coloring the day's ornament while you read is usually a hit that also allows them to still listen attentively. They also get a unique joy from just getting to add an ornament to our Jesse Tree.

And during those super hectic seasons, like with a new baby, one of the easiest ways to still include the Jesse Tree is for littles to pick Old Testament stories out of one of their simple children's Bibles to read each day. If you have older children they can read them aloud for everyone.

As children get up into elementary age, and especially start reading, we've learned that our boys appreciate having a more active role in the devotion.

One year the boys started competing to tell about the day's symbol and event in narration form. And even older children can exercise their creative muscles for the family with their beautiful storytelling of the day's event.

As we gained readers they would take turns reading the assigned Scripture passage from my Bible. Though, I also like to have them printed for our family use on busier days. And, of course, the older kids can read from there as well.

Additionally, we started having Sword Drills where the boys race to look up the day's Bible passage.

In both competitions, the winner chooses who puts on the day's ornament on our little Jesse Tree. Here we take time to remind them that they may choose themselves or a younger child as an opportunity for sacrifice and therefore can also soften Christ's crib with straw.

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

- Isaiah 11:1-2

Ad majorem Dei gloriam,

