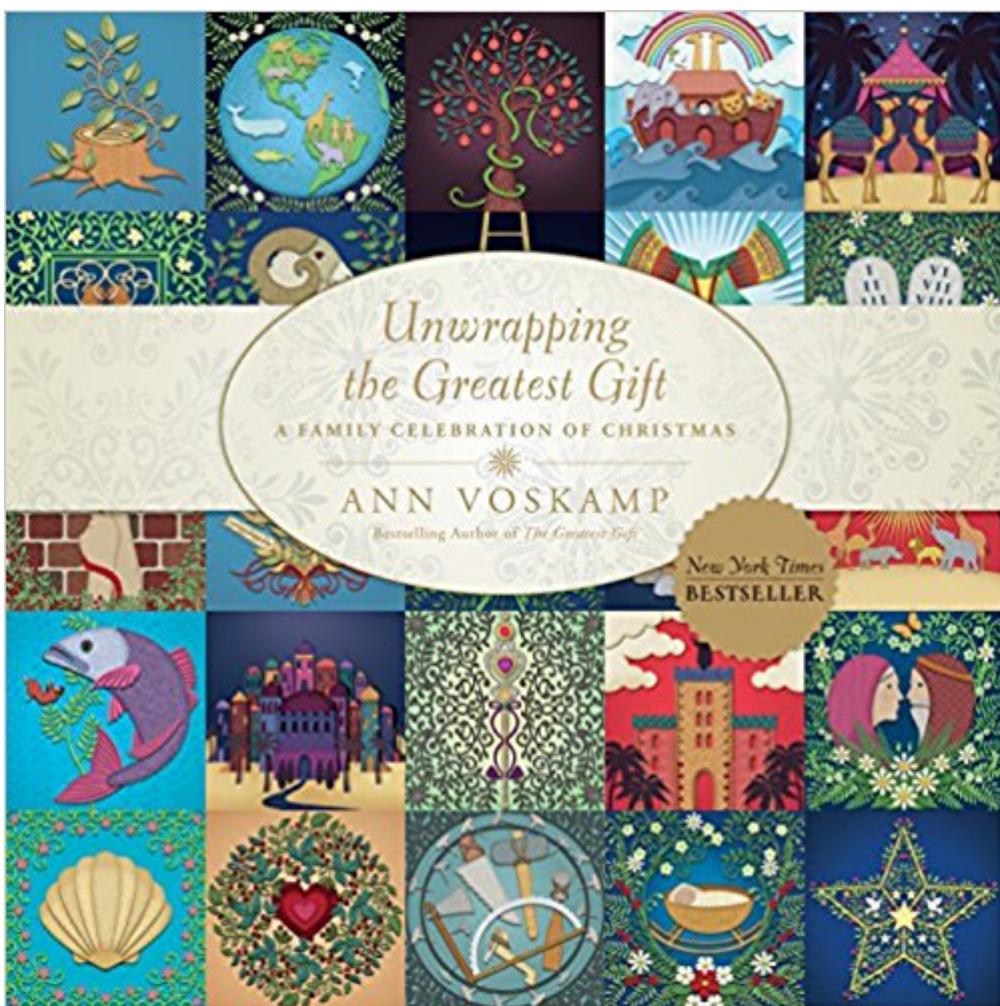


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# Unwrapping The Greatest Gift: A Family Celebration Of Christmas



## **Synopsis**

2016 ECPA Christian Book Award winner! Based on the overwhelming success of The Greatest Gift, Ann Voskamp has expanded her presentation of the timeless Advent tradition of the Jesse Tree so families can celebrate together. Each day, families can read the provided Scripture passage (in connection with the original book), engage with a specially written devotion to help children of all ages understand the Advent theme for the day, and participate in suggested activities to apply the theme. This special edition is beautifully illustrated. It can serve as a precious guide to help recapture the sacredness of the Advent season and to help the entire family understand and celebrate the epic pageantry of humankind from Adam to the Messiah.

## **Book Information**

Hardcover: 160 pages

Publisher: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. (November 1, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1414397542

ISBN-13: 978-1414397542

Product Dimensions: 10.2 x 0.8 x 10.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 412 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #47,698 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #7 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Living > Holidays > Christmas #147 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Living > Family #181 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Living > Devotionals

## **Customer Reviews**

Unwrap the greatest Gift with your family this Advent season! Person by person, story by story, retrace the lineage of Jesus. Fall in love with Him all over again as you experience God's plan of salvation for us—from the Garden of Eden to the manger and beyond. With vivid, full-color illustrations, downloadable ornaments, and moving scenes from the Bible, this book is a gift your whole family can unwrap each day leading up to Christmas. Each devotion includes the following: Scripture readings to go along with each story Questions and activities to engage the entire family Beautiful illustrations to further enhance each reading Celebrate the best love story of all time with your family!

Ann Voskamp is wife of one good farmer, the home-educating mama to a half-dozen exuberant kids, and author of New York Times bestsellers, *The Greatest Gift* and *One Thousand Gifts: A Dare to Live Fully Right Where You Are*. Named by Christianity Today as one of 50 women most shaping culture and the church today, and a partner with Compassion International as a global advocate for needy children, Ann's a regular loser of library books, usually has a sink full of soaking pots, sees empty laundry baskets rarer than a blue moon, and believes that the sky and fresh mercy over the farm is large and all is grace. Her blog, one of the Top 10 Christian blogs on the web, has become a daily well for the weary and soul-thirsty.

This is hard for me to do. Giving Ann Voskamp a two-star review seems like a bit of a betrayal since I admire her heart for Jesus, and I also admire many of those who recommended this book. She has contributed and encouraged many; however, this book didn't meet expectations. When I received this book, I was thrilled. I mean, it's beautiful. But, that's about it. If you simply enjoy a pretty display on your bookshelf or coffee table, go ahead and get it. It's night three in the advent, and my husband and I both agreed we were done with this book. Here's why--1) Foremost, she is interposing her own interpretation of Scripture. In many cases, it appears to be erroneous. For instance, we read about the flood tonight. There was no mention of God's anger. It was all about love. I know, I know--I haven't read the entire book, but after browsing it, I just see more the same--lots of commentary and summation of Scripture. And, here's the alarming part--she mixes her words with words from Scripture, and then just puts a reference at the end. So, one (particularly kids) does not know which is which.2) Verbose to the max. Everyone--including my literature-loving self--was distracted within a minute of this reading. The sentence structure is overly complex, as if she's trying too hard to be poetic. It was not very engaging. If you're looking for something that solely seeks the truths of Scripture while engaging little ones, you will find more satisfaction in this humble, yet superbly done book:

[http://www..com/Advent-Jesse-Tree-Devotions-Christmas-ebook/dp/B009K6DLU6/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1417744712&sr=8-1&keywords=the+advent+jesse+tree+dean+lambert](http://www..com/Advent-Jesse-Tree-Devotions-Christmas-ebook/dp/B009K6DLU6/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1417744712&sr=8-1&keywords=the+advent+jesse+tree+dean+lambert)

I am sooo disappointed, I really wanted to love this book. I thought it would even make a nice gift. My first problem with the book is minor, though it is written to the whole family, most times it seems like it is written for young children, other times the reading seemed geared for adults, as on page 146: "Tonight we're just raggedy manger stragglers who feel the heaviness of our old raggedy clothes from fighting the long battle with evil and badness. With our raggedy rags, we've tried to polish this

dark world into something good enough to win our way to freedom. With our raggedy rags, we've tried to patch together our own ropes to somehow climb to freedom. With our raggedy rags, we've tried to disguise ourselves as someone else, as someone better, as someone bigger, thinking we could sneak our way to freedom and back to God." Since most of the book seems written in language appropriate for my young child, the instances of speaking to an adult or older child seem a bit jarring. Not a deal breaker, it just seems strange when coupled with the children's book illustrations and sentences like this one, "The whole blue marble of the world spins happy right now with the gladness of His love." My biggest problem with the book is the interpretation of Scripture that is on page 145, the reading meant for Christmas Eve, it says that the battle resulting in Satan being hurled to earth (Rev 12:7-12) took place on the night of Jesus' birth. I have never heard that interpretation and I was even unable to find that interpretation during a Google search and cursory search of commentaries. Why, oh why, would Ann put a belief in her book that is not widely held? How did this get past the publisher? And even if it were a widely held belief, why mention Satan on Christmas Eve? It ruins it for me, so very disappointed. "But remember how there is always more happening than we could see. God's letter to us, the Bible, tells us that high, high up in the heavens, above the manger, behind the velvet curtain of silent stars, an all-out war flashed angry. Armies of evil exploded in a raging battle against God, the Father-King of the universe. In heaven, when Jesus was born, it wasn't a silent night; it was a cosmic war spinning across space. All of earth held its desperate, wild breath. Jesus came for you, warring against the darkness to win you back to Him. the evil enemy of God, Satan, who tried to hold us all captive after our sinful fall in the Garden of Eden, fell like lightning from heaven - fell out of the sky in a heap." I'm disappointed, and unsure at this point if I will even use the book. Maybe I'll just mark over page 145.

This was our 3rd Christmas reading this book with our children! Every year they look forward to our time together and it has led to many great faith discussions. We started when they were 4 & 6 years old and although it seemed over their heads at first, reading about God's great love for them each night got through- and now it's a treasured tradition each year. The historical pieces have appealed to them more as they've gotten older and now they experience it from that new perspective. As a parent, I've treasured the time reading with my children more than I can say. I've gotten a lot out of Ann's other works as well. Our kids practice giving thanks (which builds gratitude and joy) when things aren't going their way- and it banishes the "not fair" and the "mine" monsters from our home. As a Children's Pastor, I can't recommend enough the importance of intentionally creating space for your kids -throughout the year- to ask questions, work through their doubts (a doubt is an

opportunity to grow in faith!) and to help them begin to grasp the depths of God's love for them.

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