




CHRISTMAS
FAMILY DEVOTIONAL



CHRISTMAS FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

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INTRODUCTION

Christmas! This season fills our families with wonder as we consider the gracious act of God in sending his Son to become a human like us, to stand in our place and to die for our sin that we might be reconciled to God. Yet sometimes, with the busyness of the December month (the work parties, family events and shopping!), we can lose focus of the true “reason for the season.”

Throughout Israel’s history, God instructed His people to gather three times a year to celebrate traditional ceremonies called the feasts (Deut. 16:16-17; Lev. 23; Ex. 23:14-16). People would stop their ordinary work to read Scripture (Deut. 31:10; Neh. 8:1-3), reflect on God’s faithfulness, and pledge themselves afresh to obeying God’s laws (Ex. 13:9). After Jesus returned to heaven, Christians continued to observe some of these feasts in their own way, understanding them in the new light of what Christ had done (Acts 2:1; 20:16; 1 Cor. 5:7; 11:23-24). As history unfolded, these Jewish feasts were replaced in the Christian community with celebrations centered on the life of Christ. The most significant holidays observed by nearly all Christians today are Christmas, celebrating Christ’s birth, and Easter, celebrating his death and resurrection.

This book has been created with the purpose of providing a range of different devotions and activities that you can consider incorporating into your life in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Our hope is that **Christ is kept at the center of your celebrations** and that you are inspired to **share Him with others**.

PREPARING FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

Before you decide on how you are wanting to spend your Christmas season, ponder the following questions:

1. How will I prepare my heart and the hearts of my family for the Christmas season?
2. What traditions do I value the most? Do they help me center myself (and my family) on Christ?
3. What events will I attend?
You don’t need to accept every invitation. Consider and choose the ones that you value the most.
4. What changes do I need to make this year either because of a need to rest or a change in my life situation?
5. What gifts will I give and how much will I spend on each?
It’s good to re-evaluate this each year based on your financial situation.





DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS

We have provided a weekly family devotional in the next section, but if you love to count-down the days to Christmas, you can use the scripture readings below (see the Activities section for countdown method ideas).

QUICK READINGS

For adults we recommend using the New International Version (NIV) or the New American Standard Bible (NASB). For children we recommend the International Children's Bible (access both for free at <https://www.biblegateway.com/>).



December	Verse Reference	December	Verse Reference
1	Luke 1:26	14	Luke 2:11
2	Luke 1:30	15	Luke 2:12
3	Luke 1:31	16	Luke 2:13-14
4	Luke 1:32	17	Luke 2:16-17
5	Luke 1:38	18	Luke 2:20
6	Luke 2:1	19	Matthew 2:1
7	Luke 2:3	20	Matthew 2:10
8	Luke 2:4-5	21	Matthew 2:11a
9	Luke 2:6	22	Matthew 2:11b
10	Luke 2:7	23	John 3:16
11	Luke 2:8	24	Isaiah 9:6
12	Luke 2:9	25	2 Corinthians 9:15
13	Luke 2:10		





DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS (CONT.)

IN-DEPTH READINGS

These are a selection of readings designed to reflect on the ideas of waiting for Christ¹².

December	Verse Reference	December	Verse Reference
1	Romans 13:11-14	14	Romans 15:4-13
2	1 Corinthians 1:3-9	15	Psalms 43:3-6
3	Mark 13:33-37	16	Psalms 27:1-4
4	John 1:1-5	17	Psalms 119:105-106
5	John 1:6-9	18	Luke 12:33-34
6	Jeremiah 33:14-16	19	John 12:35-36
7	Isaiah 6	20	Ephesians 5:6-14
8	Isaiah 60:1-3	21	2 Peter 2:5-9
9	2 Corinthians 4:3-6	22	Isaiah 11:1-10
10	1 John 1:4-7	23	Matthew 1:18-25
11	John 9:1-7	24	Matthew 4:14-16
12	Luke 3:1-6	25	Luke 1-2
13	Matthew 6:19-21		



1 Catholic Online. "Daily Scriptures for Advent" <https://www.catholic.org/advent/advent.php?id=18>

2 Christianity. Advent Bible Verses. <https://www.christianity.com/bible/advent-bible-verses-56>





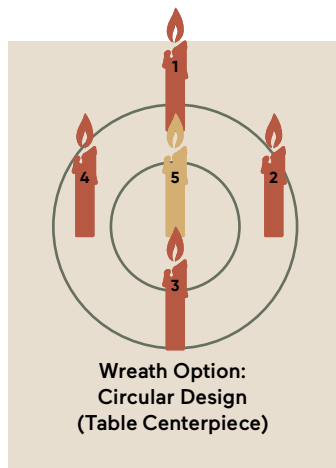
WEEKLY DEVOTIONALS & CANDLE LIGHTING

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING EXPLAINED:

The Latin word "adventus" was the translation of the Greek word "parousia," a word used in the Bible for Christ coming to earth (1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Pet. 1:16). The tradition of lighting candles and reading scripture in the four weeks leading up to Christmas arose after Christmas was routinely celebrated on December 25. Historically, advent had a twin focus: (1) First coming of Christ - Christians would remember Jesus' coming to earth and the work that he did and (2) Second coming of Christ - Christians would search their hearts, confess and repent of sin and pray for the quick return of Christ³. Each week a different theme is celebrated including hope, peace, joy and love⁴.

INITIAL CANDLE SETUP:

1. Purchase or gather 5 candles, matches/lighter and a table wreath (optional, see below)
2. Choose one of the following options for setting up your candles



OR



Traditionally, the first candle lighting occurs on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, next on the third Sunday before Christmas and so forth on each Sunday until all of the candles are lit on Christmas day. If Sunday isn't a good night, just choose a night of the week that works best for you. Also, if you have gotten a late start in the month of December, you can, (1) do more than one devotional and candle lighting in a week or, (2) skip to the week that you are currently in.

³ Reeves, R. "History of Advent". Gospel Coalition.

⁴ Note: there are different variations and orders in the four advent themes, but these are commonly used.





DEVOTIONAL ONE - HOPE

This is the first week of advent. This is a time that we remember to have **HOPE** because Jesus came to save us! But why did we need saving? Why did Jesus need to come? Why should we put our hope in Him? To answer those questions, we need to go back to the beginning of the bible.

In Genesis 1-2, God created the world and mankind. His greatest desire was to have a relationship with them! Everything was great, until suddenly - it wasn't. Read what happened in Genesis 3:

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." 11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." 14 So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, 'Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and break his rules, sin and brokenness entered their hearts. They deserved death and separation from God. It seemed **HOPELESS**. But, God made them a promise in Genesis 3:15 - one day the serpent will be crushed and his actions will be reversed. One day, He would send his son (the "offspring"), to live a perfect life and pay the price that our disobedience cost.

Hope means to trust that something good will happen. It can be so easy to put our hopes in temporary, earthly things like our possessions, people we love, our career or dreams. But all of these can change, fail or let us down. When we go through life, in good days and in bad, it is important that we are placing our hope in Jesus. Our greatest hope should always be in the person that mends our brokenness and promises us that when he returns - he will wipe away every tear and remove pain, fear and death. What a hope we have in Jesus!





This is the first week of advent. This is a time that we remember to have **HOPE** because Jesus came to save us! But why did Jesus need to come to save us? And why should we have hope in Him? To answer that question, we need to go back to the very beginning of the Bible.

[After God created the whole world] "Adam and Eve lived happily together in their beautiful new home. And everything was perfect - for a while. Until the day when everything went wrong.... God had given Adam and Eve only one rule: "Don't eat the fruit on that tree," God told them. "Because if you do, you'll think you know everything. You'll stop trusting me. And then death and sadness and tears will come."...

As soon as the snake saw his chance, he slithered silently up to Eve. "Does God really love you?"the serpent whispered. "If he does, why won't he let you eat the nice, juicy, delicious fruit? Poor you, perhaps God doesn't want you to be happy."... Eve picked up the fruit and ate some and Adam ate some too... And terrible pain came into God's heart. His children hadn't just broken the one rule; they had broken God's heart. They had broken their wonderful relationship with him... You see sin had come into God's perfect world. And it would never leave. God's children would be always running away from him and hiding in the dark. Their hearts would break now, and never work properly again.

BUT! God loved his children too much to let the story end there. God whispered a promise to Adam and Eve: "It will not always be so! I will come to rescue you! And when I do, I'm going to do battle against the snake. I'll get rid of the sin and the dark and the sadness you let in here. I'm coming back for you! And He would come. One day, God himself would come." (Genesis 3 - The Jesus Storybook Bible)

Why did Jesus need to come to save us? Well, when people broke God's rules their hearts became broken. They began to say and do mean, horrible things to each other. And worse - their relationship with God was broken too. It seemed **HOPELESS**. But Jesus came to fix that. He came to earth and died so that our hearts could be mended. It's the best news ever!! And it's why we have **HOPE**. Hope means to trust that something good will happen. When we place our hope in Jesus, we trust our futures to God and hold onto his promises because God always does all he has promised to do.



TALK ABOUT IT

- Have you broken any of God's rules?
- Do you need Jesus to rescue you?
- What are things that you hope will happen in the future? (try and make a list together).
- How is hope in Jesus different than having hope in these things?
- How do we help other people understand that God can give them hope?





CANDLE LIGHTING

Light the first candle and read the following aloud:

When we light candles, we remember the power that light has over darkness and that Jesus is our light. Today we light the first Advent candle, which represents **HOPE**. We remember that God spoke promises to his people who hoped for God's son to rescue them.

Lamentations 3:21-24 tells us "But I have hope when I think of this: 22 The Lord's love never ends. His mercies never stop. 23 They are new every morning. Lord, your loyalty is great. 24 I say to myself, "The Lord is what I have left. So I have hope." (ICB)

God, as we begin this Christmas season, we place our hope in YOU. Thank you for sending Jesus, in whom we can have **HOPE**. When the world around us is chaotic and unreliable, we know that you never change and you will never leave us. Help us to keep our hearts focused on you and help us to trust you in all things.

Amen.





DEVOTIONAL TWO - PEACE

This is the second week of advent. This is a time that we remember we can have **PEACE** because Jesus came to save us and will come back again!

When sin entered the world, people were born lacking peace. They could no longer have a relationship with God - which was the essence of why they were created! The brokenness of their relationship with God overflowed into human relationships - hatred, envy, slander and conflict occurred between people. As a temporary measure, God had the people sacrifice animals for their sin and try to obey laws he gave Moses. But God always intended to fix this brokenness by Jesus' ultimate sacrifice which would bring true peace to people. Isaiah reminded the people of God's promise to send his son:

"6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**. 7 Of the greatness of his government and **peace** there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this." (NIV)

People today long for peace and can try to find it in many things outside of a relationship with God. But peace can never come to us without accepting that we are sinful, surrendering our life to God and receiving God's forgiveness by believing in what Jesus did on the cross. We gain peace by being right in our relationship with God and placing our trust in Him. As we go through life it can be easy to fall into old habits and attempt to find peace in the world around us. But the world is broken! Until all people surrender their lives to Jesus, the world (and it's broken people) will never bring us the peace we desire. Christmas reminds us that peace is found in our relationship with Jesus, the Prince of Peace. And, one day, he will return and the world will be made new and complete peace will come to all creation. What a day that will be!





This is the second week of advent. This is a time that we remember we can have **PEACE** because Jesus came to save us and will come back again!

When Adam and Eve broke God's rules, the world changed. Every person was born sinful, and their hearts were broken. There was conflict and hatred in the world and people didn't have peace. Now remember the promise God made to Adam and Eve? That's right - one day, God himself was going to come to rescue the world and heal people's hearts. But it didn't happen right away and so some people thought that God might have forgotten about his promise - But God never forgets! We can always trust in what he says. God sent his special messenger Isaiah to remind everyone of his promise. He told the people that:

"A child will be born to us. God will give a son to us. He will be responsible for leading the people. His name will be Wonderful Counselor, Powerful God, Father Who Lives Forever, **Prince of Peace**. Power and peace will be in his kingdom. It will continue to grow. He will rule as king on David's throne and over David's kingdom. He will make it strong, by ruling with goodness and fair judgment. He will rule it forever and ever. The Lord of heaven's armies will do this because of his strong love for his people." (Isaiah 9:6-7 ICB).

When God gave this special message to Isaiah, he wanted them to know that when Jesus came, he would bring peace to people's hearts. Then, because they had peace in their hearts - they could start to bring peace to the broken world around them. What wonderful news!



TALK ABOUT IT

- What things can we do in our life to find peace without Jesus?
- How has Jesus brought peace to your life?
- How do we help other people understand that God can give them peace?





CANDLE LIGHTING

Light the first two candles and read the following aloud:

Today we light the second advent candle which represents **PEACE**. We remember that we were sinners whom Christ saved, allowing us to have peace with God.

Luke tells us that when Christ was born "13 Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel. All the angels were praising God, saying:14 "Give glory to God in heaven, and on earth let there be **peace** to the people who please God." (Luke 2:13-14 ICB).

God, we ask for your peace to fill our hearts today. We need your peace in us, in our homes, in our church and in our world today. Help us to understand how you bring peace so that we can be peacemakers in the world around us.

Amen.





DEVOTIONAL THREE - JOY

This is the second week of advent. This is a time that we remember to have **JOY** because Jesus came to save us and will come back again!

Joy is hard to describe because it is often confused with happiness. But they are very different. Happiness is an emotion that we get when something happens in our circumstances that we like or enjoy. Perhaps we get a job we wanted or take a fun vacation. Joy however, is not based on our circumstances, but is a way of thinking - a perspective or attitude that we have towards life. It is the ability to find satisfaction, acceptance and purpose in life because we trust in God. God promises that when we live our lives surrendered to Him, we can have joy, but happiness is not promised. That is why Jesus said that "for the joy set before him, he endured the cross"(Hebrews 12:2 NKV) and there was nothing happy about the cross!! But Jesus found joy in giving his life for yours and mine.

When Jesus was born, God declared to his people that this was news that would bring great joy. Here is what the angels told that shepherds on that day:

"8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause **great joy** for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:8-12 NIV)

Jesus' coming can bring us joy because he heals our hearts and we become children of God when we entrust our lives to him. We get to look forward to eternity spent with God with no pain, sorrow or grief. This perspective allows us to see our lives on earth as temporary and helps us endure hardship and sacrifice in this life. So, in the midst of happy days or bad, we should remember to choose to have joy, because Jesus saved us and he provides all that we need to have satisfaction.





This is the second week of advent. This is a time that we remember to have **JOY** because Jesus came to save us and will come back again!

When Jesus was born the angels told people that he would bring them joy. This is what they said:

“8 That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep. 9 An angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them, and suddenly they became very frightened. 10 The angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, because I am bringing you some good news. It will be a joy to all the people. 11 Today your Savior was born in David’s town. He is Christ, the Lord. 12 This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a feeding box.” (Luke 2:8-12 ICB)

The joy that Jesus brings us when we trust in him brings us all the satisfaction, acceptance and purpose that we need. But Jesus doesn’t make our lives happy all the time. You see, happiness and joy are different in the bible and it’s important to not get them confused. Happiness is that feeling you get when you get a new toy or get to do something you really, really wanted to do. But joy isn’t a feeling, it is a way of thinking. We have joy when we decide to look at the world through God’s eyes. This means that you can be having a bad day, but you choose to be thankful that Jesus saved you.



TALK ABOUT IT

How is joy different from happiness?
How can you find joy in times of sadness, disappointment and difficulty?
How do we bring joy to others?





CANDLE LIGHTING

Light the first three candles and read the following aloud:

When we light candles, we remember the power that light has over darkness and that Christ is our light. Today we light the third advent candle, which represents **JOY**. We remember that no matter our circumstances, we can have joy because Jesus has saved us.

The psalmist wrote "Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, my soul. 2 I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. 3 Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save. 4 When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. 5 Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God. 6 He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them – he remains faithful forever. 7 He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, 8 the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. 9 The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked. 10 The Lord reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord." (Psalm 146: 1-10 ICB)

God, today we find our **JOY** in you! We are so thankful that Jesus died for us. We choose to have joy, even if life is hard. We know that you don't change and your promises are always true. Help us to be filled with joy and to show the world around us that joy.

Amen.





DEVOTIONAL FOUR - LOVE

This is the fourth week of advent. This is a time that we remember that Jesus came to save us because he **LOVES** us and will come back again!

It can be challenging to comprehend the magnitude of God's love for us. We are sinners who struggle to trust and follow God. But, despite this, God sent his best in the person of Jesus. God himself, humbled himself, and came as a vulnerable baby to die to pay the price for our sin. It's overwhelming the extent of his love to do such a thing! So, whenever you question whether God really loves you, remember what John wrote:

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17, NIV)

When we experience God's abundant love in a relationship with him, he heals and transforms our hearts. Then, because we have experienced true love, we are able to show others the love of God through sacrificial acts of kindness. Christmas is a great time to remind ourselves of this concept and to reflect on how we can live it out.





This is the fourth week of advent. This is a time that we remember that Jesus came to save us because he **LOVES** us and will come back again!

Sometimes when we do bad things, we feel really really sad and unhappy. We can even believe lies - like God won't forgive the bad things we have done. But this isn't true!! God knows every bad thing we have ever done (even the ones we haven't told anyone about). And, He still loves us anyway! He still sent Jesus to rescue you and he wants to be your friend. Listen to what he told his friend, John:

"16 For God **loved** the world so much that he gave his only Son. God gave his Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life. 17 God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world guilty, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17 ICB)

Jesus was the gift that God gave us to show how much he loves us. God's love is amazing! It never stops, doesn't change, is perfect and lasts forever. He is our rescuer and died so that our sin would be forgiven and our hearts could be healed.

Jesus is the best Christmas gift ever!



TALK ABOUT IT

- How did God show his love for us?
- How do you show God that you love Him?
- What are ways that you can show God's love to others?





CANDLE LIGHTING

Light the first four candles and then read the following:

When we light candles, we remember the power that light has over darkness and that Jesus is our light. Today we light the fourth advent candle, which represents LOVE. The fourth candle reminds us that Jesus came to show us what love is.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 tells us "4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. 5 Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not become angry easily. Love does not remember wrongs done against it. 6 Love takes no pleasure in evil, but rejoices over the truth. 7 Love patiently accepts all things. It always trusts, always hopes, and always continues strong. 8 Love never ends..." (ICB)

God, we are so grateful for your great, never-ending, perfect love! Help us to know your love in such a real way. Help us to show your love to our families, friends and those who do not know you.

Amen.





ADULTS

SCRIPTURE READING - LIGHT

Read Luke Chapter 1 and 2 in your favorite bible version (NIV and ESV are good ones).



KIDS AND FAMILIES

It's Christmas! Jesus' birthday! Let's read the story of when Jesus came to earth.

"Everything was ready. The moment God had been waiting for was here at last! God was coming to help his people, just as he promised in the beginning. But how would he come? What would he be like? What would he do? Mountains would have bowed down. Seas would have roared. Trees would have clapped their hands. But the earth held its breath. As silent as snow falling, he came in. And when no one was looking, in the darkness, he came.

There was a young girl who was engaged to a man named Joseph....One morning, this girl was minding her own business when, suddenly, a great warrior of light appeared - right there, in her bedroom. He was Gabriel and he was an angel, a special messenger from heaven. When she saw the tall shining man standing there, Mary was frightened. "You don't need to be scared," Gabriel said. "God is very happy with you!" Mary looked around to see if perhaps he was talking to someone else. "Mary," Gabriel said, and he laughed with such gladness that Mary's eyes filled with sudden tears. "Mary, you're going to have a baby. A little boy. You will call him Jesus. He is God's own Son. He's the One! He's the Rescuer!"

The God who flung planets into space and kept them whirling around and around, the God who made the universe with just a word, the one who could do anything at all - was making himself small. And coming down... as a baby. Wait. God was sending a baby to rescue the world?

"But it's too wonderful!" Mary said and felt her heart beating hard. "How can it be true?" "Is anything too wonderful for God?" Gabriel asked. So Mary trusted God more than what her eyes could see. And she believed. "I am God's servant," she said. "Whatever God says, I will do."





CHRISTMAS DAY (CONT.)

Sure enough, it was just as the angel had said. Nine months later, Mary was almost ready to have her baby. Now, Mary and Joseph had to take a trip to Bethlehem, the town King David was from. But when they reached the little town, they found every room was full. Every bed was taken. "Go away!" the innkeepers told them. "There isn't any place for you." Where would they stay? Soon Mary's baby would come. They couldn't find anywhere except an old, tumbledown stable. So they stayed where the cows and the donkeys and the horses stayed.

And there, in the stable, amongst the chickens and the donkeys and the cows, in the quiet of the night, God gave the world his wonderful gift. The baby that would change the world was born. His baby Son. Mary and Joseph wrapped him up to keep him warm. They made a soft bed of straw and used the animals' feeding trough as his cradle. And they gazed in wonder at God's Great Gift, wrapped in swaddling cloths, and lying in a manger. Mary and Joseph named him Jesus, "Emmanuel" - which means "God has come to live with us." Because, of course, he had." (The Jesus Storybook Bible)



CANDLE LIGHTING

Light all five candles and read the following aloud:

When we light candles, we remember the power that light has over darkness and that Jesus is our light. Today we light the fifth advent candle, which represents JESUS, our LIGHT.

John 8:12 tells us that "[Jesus] said, "I am the light of the world. The person who follows me will never live in darkness. He will have the light that gives life." (NIV)

God, today we celebrate that you came as a baby to rescue the world! You bring light and healing to our broken hearts when we give our lives to you. Thank you for coming and bringing your light! Help us to be lights in the world, help us to show your hope, peace, joy and love to those who don't know you.

Amen.





CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWNS

Each of the following are traditional ideas in which you can countdown the days December 1-25 with scripture readings/devotions and treats.



ADVENT CALENDAR

This can be either a wall calendar or set of drawers numbered with 25 days. Each day you open a calendar flap or drawer to reveal a treat (we highly recommend chocolate!). While eating the treat, read a daily devotional or scripture reading (see page 4).

Instructions: Purchase or make an advent calendar and fill with your treat of choice (see our resources page for recommendations). Write the verses out on pieces of paper and place them under the calendar flaps or in each drawer.

NUMBERED PAPER CHAIN

This do-it-yourself option is great for kids. Each day, tear off the link that corresponds to that date and read a daily devotional or scripture reading (see page 4).

Instructions: To make, cut out 25 rectangles and number them 1-25. Staple the ends together to create a circle and then repeat with the next rectangle, interlinking them together to create a chain. Hang from a prominent place (i.e. on the christmas tree, fireplace mantle, or in your child's room) and retrieve daily to do a reading. You can write the verse references directly on the paper links and look them up together each day.

CHRISTINGLE

This is a fun and simple candle lighting. Each day, light the candle, read the scripture (see page 4) and burn the candle until it reaches the horizontal line that corresponds to the day's date.

Instructions: place a long candle in the center of an orange and using a permanent marker, write the numbers 1 to 25 down the candle alongside horizontal lines (or buy one - amazon has them!). For kids, you can stick toothpicks with candy into the orange and after the kids light the candle and read the bible verse, they can munch on the candy.

Suggestion: If you have multiple kids, you may want to make one for each of them. Alternatively, make it a lesson on turn taking; whichever you have the most energy for.





TREE OF LIFE PLAY

Originally, Christmas trees were paraded through towns decorated to represent the tree of life. You can re-enact the Garden of Eden scene with your Christmas tree to teach your kids about Adam and Eve and why Jesus needed to come to rescue us!

There are three necessary characters: Eve, the Serpent, and God. Someone could play both God and the serpent, but in order to avoid confusing the children, perhaps make a paper mask to use for the Serpent to distinguish his role from God's. (You don't want them to get God and Satan mixed up!) If you incorporate the children as the actors, you will just need to prompt them with what to say as the drama unfolds.

We'll let you figure out the actual script. But here's the big idea:

- The Serpent approaches Eve with an ornament, which represents fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He entices her to eat it.
- Eve resists, points to the fruit on the Tree of Life (ornaments on the Christmas tree) and explains that God allowed them to eat of any tree, but not the fruit that the Serpent is presenting.
- The Serpent ends up convincing Eve that this fruit will help her be like God without having to obey him. And she takes it from the Serpent. If there is someone to play Adam, Eve should share it with him. (Instead of taking it from the Christmas tree, take it from the Serpent, since we want the Christmas tree to stand for the Tree of Life.)
- God appears on the scene and pronounces judgment, saying, "Because of your sin, all people will lose access to the Tree of Life. But one day, I will send my Son, Jesus, to crush the Serpent and bring back the Tree of Life to everyone who believes in him."
- At this point, it may be fun to light up the previously darkened Christmas tree in order to emphasize what God will restore.





ORNAMENT MAKING

Make your own! There are a lot of good ideas of bible-based ornaments that you can find online to try.

NATIVITY

A nativity set is a great piece of decor to describe the Christmas story to kids. Make it yourself out of paper/cardboard, or purchase one to reuse each year. You can reenact the story using the different pieces and as your kids get older – have them tell the story themselves (see the resources page for recommendations).

GIFT PURCHASE FOR SOMEONE IN NEED

At Mannahouse, we provide Live.Love gift tags in the lobbies of our campuses where you can select a tag, shop for the recommended items and return them to the church where they will be distributed.

PRAY FOR CHRISTMAS CARD SENDERS

When you receive a christmas card in the mail, pray for the family/person who sent it together at dinner time.

INVITE PEOPLE TO CHURCH

Mannahouse provides cards that you can use to pass out to your co-workers, family and friends to invite them to one of our Christmas eve services. Grab a few on a Sunday and pass them out to people who don't know Jesus or attend a church.





ADVENT CALENDERS

You can easily make advent calendars (i.e. <https://sofestive.com/2014/11/24/diy-nativity-advent-countdown/>), but if you want to buy one, here are a few options:

UNDER \$10

- Follow the star calendar
https://www.amazon.com/Following-Advent-Calendar-Nativity-Story/dp/B072K-3JCFW/ref=sr_1_16?dchild=1&keywords=nativity+calendar&qid=1589489892&sr=8-16
- Nativity Scene
https://www.amazon.com/Advent-Calendar-Nativity-Special-Chocolate/dp/B000ZE-Z0H4/ref=sr_1_27?dchild=1&keywords=nativity+calendar&qid=1589489966&sr=8-27
- Nativity Scene with chocolates
https://www.amazon.com/Alleluia-Chocolate-Calendar-Countdown-Christmas/dp/B074V87G6D/ref=sr_1_23?dchild=1&keywords=advent+calendar+chocolate&qid=1589490353&sr=8-23

UNDER \$40

- Kids felt nativity advent calendar
https://www.amazon.com/Tidings-Fabric-Calendar-Countdown-Christmas/dp/B00K-1JRJOA/ref=sr_1_5?dchild=1&keywords=nativity+calendar&qid=1589489626&sr=8-5
- Wooden drawers Calendar
https://www.amazon.com/MorTime-Construction-Decoration-Measures%EF%B-C%8C11-6-deep%EF%BC%8Csmall/dp/B07XTQD86Y/ref=sr_1_51?dchild=1&keywords=advent+calendar&qid=1589490128&sr=8-51

ADVENT CALENDAR BIBLE VERSE PRINTABLES:

<https://happyhomefair.com/bible-verse-advent-countdown-kids-free-printable/>

ADVENT CANDLES AND WREATHS

Note: the most affordable advent wreaths have places for four candles. So, you can purchase a self standing candle in the center for the Christ candle.

TRADITIONAL WREATHS

https://www.amazon.com/Vermont-Christmas-Company-VC903-Purple/dp/B001AYE7UE/ref=sr_1_4?dchild=1&keywords=advent+wreath&qid=1602262910&sr=8-4

https://www.amazon.com/Christmas-Artificial-Advent-Wreath-Celebration/dp/B01CFMG-ZSQ/ref=sr_1_28?dchild=1&keywords=advent+wreath&qid=1602263092&sr=8-28

METAL WREATHS

https://www.amazon.com/Staircase-Design-Advent-Wreath-Candleholder/dp/B01N8SWP1G/ref=sr_1_22?dchild=1&keywords=advent+wreath&qid=1602262764&sr=8-22

https://www.amazon.com/Peace-Metal-Christmas-Advent-Wreath/dp/B01ITPZXW2/ref=sr_1_8?dchild=1&keywords=advent+wreath&qid=1602263033&sr=8-8



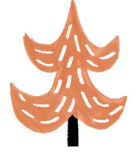


CANDLES

- White tapered candles (7/8 width - check your wreaths requirements)
https://www.amazon.com/CandleNScent-Taper-Candles-Tapered-Candle-sticks/dp/B07YDYWS3N/ref=sr_1_3?dchild=1&keywords=white+7%2F8+candle&qid=1602264307&sr=8-3
- Traditional purple/pink candles (the pink candle is the joy candle)
https://www.amazon.com/Christmas-Advent-Unscented-Seasonal-Celebration/dp/B0812BG1Q1/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=candle+7%2F8+inch+thick+6&qid=1602263663&sr=8-1
- Self standing Christ Candle/Non-wreath method
https://www.amazon.com/BOLSIUS-Pillar-Candle-White-Single/dp/B004U3OGI0/ref=sr_1_3?dchild=1&keywords=pillar+candles&qid=1602264072&s=home-garden&sr=1-3



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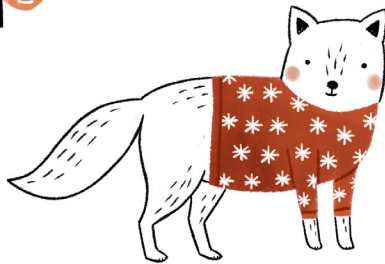
NOEL



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PEACE

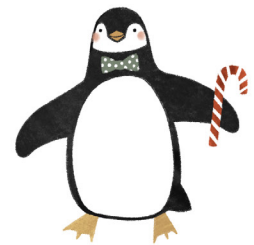


JOY



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Books: Essential print books from our authors.



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