



Advent

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The word Advent means “arrival” – the coming of someone or something important. For us, it’s the time we remember and look forward to God coming to earth in the person of Jesus, the promised Savior. Christmas celebrates His birth, but Advent is about the waiting – the slowing down, the preparing, the longing. It’s a season that invites us to pause in the middle of the noise and busyness and make room in our hearts for Jesus to come near. From December 1-25, we invite you to join us as a church family on this journey of hope, peace, joy, and love – focusing together on the miracle of God stepping into our world through the humble birth of Jesus in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago.

How to Use This Guide:

This guide includes daily readings and simple activities you can do on your own or together as a family – maybe before bedtime or right after dinner. Before you begin each day's reading, check the **ACTIVITY** section to see if there are any supplies you'll need to gather. When you're ready, read the Bible verses for that day. You might have a parent or an older child read the Bible passage aloud. After reading, walk through the **READ, ASK, and PRAY** sections together. Once you've talked, prayed, and reflected, use the **ACTIVITY** section to bring the lesson to life in a creative, hands-on way. The heart of this guide is simple – to draw you and your family closer to God as you journey through this Christmas season together. Feel free to adjust the readings and activities to fit your family's rhythm, age range, and Christmas traditions.

Sunday Readings:

If you have a traditional Advent wreath, you'll find verses and reflections for each Sunday at the back of this guide. Each week, light the appropriate candle, read the verses and reflection, and then turn to that day's devotional reading. **Note:** Because our church is observing Advent from December 1–25 this year, you may need to light the first candle on the Sunday before December 1 so that all four Sundays align.

Advent Blocks:

This devotional also pairs nicely with the Advent blocks we've used in past years, but they're completely optional. If you have the blocks, place the block with the number that matches each day's reading, lining them up with the symbols facing forward. The blocks serve as a daily reminder of what you're learning during Advent. On Day 24, turn the blocks around to reveal a special Christmas message! Don't have a set of Advent blocks? You can find them through the GoodKind Shop at <https://goodkind.shop>.

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Light Breaks the Darkness

DAY 1 - THE STORY OF ADAM & EVE

GENESIS 1:26-31; GENESIS 3:1-6; JOHN 1:1-12

Read

Before there was anything—no sky, no trees, no animals, no people—there was God. He was ready to begin the greatest story ever told. With a word, He turned nothing into something: light chased away darkness, oceans rolled, mountains rose, flowers opened, and creatures splashed, soared, and ran. Then God made the very best part—people—Adam and Eve. They were formed to reflect **His heart** and walk closely with Him. In Eden, everything was good, and the first words spoken over them were words of love.

Activity

Let There Be Light

Sit in a dark room for a few seconds, then turn on a single flashlight or candle. Perhaps even light the first Advent candle. Discuss how even a small light can change everything and how Jesus, the light of the world, changes us. Take it one step further and read the creation story from Genesis 1.

But a lying serpent whispered another way. Adam and Eve chose their way instead of God's, which the Bible calls sin. The world tilted; wrong and darkness entered, and the people who once ran to God now hid from Him. God sent them out of the garden, and it felt like He was far away. Yet even then, God's love didn't end. He promised that one day a Child would come to crush the serpent, push back darkness, and bring His people home.

Jesus is the light of the world. When God spoke light into darkness, He was already writing the lines of Jesus' story. From the very first pages, God's plan pointed toward Christmas: the Savior would be born to make the wrong things right and the dark things light.

Ask

1. The Bible tells us Adam named the animals. If you could give an animal a new name, what would you call it?
2. What do you imagine Eden felt like before sin entered the world?
3. Why is choosing our own way instead of God's way so damaging?
4. How does God's promise in Eden prepare us for the birth of Jesus?

Pray

God, you created a beautiful world and made us to walk closely with you. When we choose our own way, we feel the distance and the darkness that sin brings. Thank you that your love never quits and that you promised a Savior from the very beginning. Fill our family with hope as we turn to Jesus, the light who makes all things new. Amen.

A Boat, a Flood, and Fresh Hope

DAY 2 - THE STORY OF NOAH

GENESIS 6:5-8; 7:1-10; PSALM 91:14-16

Read

As the world filled with people, it also filled with meanness and hurt. But one man, Noah, still listened to God. God told him to build an ark because a flood was coming to wash away the violence and give the world a new beginning. Neighbors laughed; Noah obeyed. He gathered his family, the animals God sent, and waited—until the day the skies opened and waters rose from above and below.

For forty days and nights, waves pounded the ark, but God held it safe in His hands. At last, the rain stopped. Noah sent a dove that returned with a fresh leaf—life was growing again! When the ark rested on a mountain, Noah stepped onto dry ground and worshiped. God set a rainbow in the clouds—His sign of mercy and a promise that judgment wouldn't be the final word. Even better, God's plan pointed further: one day He would send a **Savior** to rescue not just one family but the whole world.

Even when people choose their own way, God doesn't walk away. He whispered the promise of a Deliverer who would crush evil once and for all. Every story in the Bible after the flood points toward that. The flood was a reset; Christmas is the rescue.

Ask

1. What would be the first animal you'd put on the ark? What animal might you leave off the ark?
2. What do you think was hardest about trusting God while waiting in the ark?
3. How does Noah's rescue help you understand why Jesus came?
4. What is one way you see God working in your life?

Activity

Will It Float?

Gather small household items (a coin, a sponge, a paper clip, an apple, etc.). Before placing each one in a large bowl of water, have everyone guess if it will float or sink. As you test each, talk about how faith means trusting God even when we don't know what will happen next.

Alternative idea: Fill a large jar or cup with paper strips. On each paper, write a promise of God. Each day of Advent read one of the promises.

Pray

Faithful God, when the world felt flooded with wrong, you held Noah fast. Teach us to trust you when we have to wait and when we can't see what you're doing. Thank you for your promises that never fail and for Jesus, who rescues us forever. Fill our hearts with peace and courage as we follow you. Amen.

A Promise Under the Stars

DAY 3 - THE STORY OF ABRAHAM

GENESIS 15:1-6; 17:1-8; 21:1-3; PSALM 89:1-8

Read

God told an elderly couple, Abraham and Sarah, something that sounded impossible: "Your family will be as countless as the stars." They laughed—who wouldn't? But God wasn't joking. Time passed. Doubts came. Yet God kept repeating the promise and pointing Abraham to the night sky. At last, laughter filled their tent for a new reason: baby Isaac was born! His name means "laughter," a reminder that God can turn disbelief into delight.

But **God's promise** was even bigger than a large family. From Abraham's line would come a Child—a King who would bring God close to all people. This is how God chose to fix what sin had broken: not with another flood, but through a family, a promise, and, at just the right time, a baby in Bethlehem. Abraham didn't fully understand how, but he trusted the One who made the promise.

Abraham stepped into the unknown because he believed God's word more than what he could see. His faith opened the door for God's great rescue plan to unfold. Faith isn't seeing the whole map; it's trusting the guide. And every star still whispers that God keeps His word, and Christmas proves it. **Jesus** would come generations later as the promised Son through Abraham's family. Like Abraham, we are invited to trust that God still leads us toward His promises through Christ.

Ask

1. What is your family's favorite Christmas activity or memory?
2. What makes it hard to trust God when His timing is slow?
3. Where do you see God turning your family's doubts into joy?
4. How does Jesus complete God's "crazy" promise to bless the world?

Activity

Star Walk

On a clear night, go for a walk and count stars until you lose track. Each time you lose count, thank God: "Your promises are bigger than we can count."

Alternative idea: Call a grandparent or mentor for a favorite Christmas faith memory, then hang a paper ornament with their name on your tree.

Pray

Promise-keeping God, thank you for showing Abraham and Sarah that nothing is too hard for you. Help us grow patient and joyful as we trust you when your timing is different from ours. Thank you for sending Jesus, the greatest promise kept, to bless every family on earth. Help us live like people who truly believe your word. Amen.

Found in the Wilderness

DAY 4 - THE STORY OF HAGAR

GENESIS 16:7-13; 21:14-20; PHILIPPIANS 1:3-6

Read

Hagar’s story is full of ache. She was mistreated, blamed, and finally ran into a desert with no water and no help. But God found her there. He heard her cries, gave her hope, and she named Him, “The God who sees me.” Later, when she and her son were desperate again, God opened her eyes to a well. The desert didn’t disappear, but God’s care did not fail.

Hagar reminds us that **God’s love** is not just for the heroes with famous names. He sees the overlooked, the lonely, and the wronged. When Hagar felt alone and forgotten, God met her in the wilderness and called her by name. He showed her that even when no one else sees, He always does. He meets people where they are and sustains them when life feels like a wilderness.

Centuries later, Jesus would come as the visible face of that same loving God—the One who sees every tear and meets us in our wandering. Her story points toward Christmas, too: **Jesus** came for the forgotten, the pushed aside, and the ones who think no one notices. God’s heart has always moved toward the hurting through Him. We discover that being seen by God means being loved without end.

Ask

- 1. Talk about a time you were really scared?
- 2. Why is it important that Hagar called God “The God who sees me”?
- 3. Who near you might need to know that God notices and cares?
- 4. How does Jesus show God’s heart for people who feel invisible?

Activity

What’s Different

Play a game by having one person leave the room while the others make a small change—move a fork, picture, or pillow. When they return, see if they can spot what’s different. Talk about how we often miss small things, but God never does—He always sees and cares for us. **Alternative idea:** With a dry-erase marker or sticky note, write “God sees me” around the edge of a mirror you look at regularly. Look in the mirror and say aloud, “God sees me and loves me.”

Pray

God who sees, thank you for noticing every tear and hearing every prayer. When we feel unseen or misunderstood, remind us that your eyes and your heart are on us. Make our home a place where the lonely are welcomed and cared for. Thank you for sending Jesus to prove we are never forgotten. Amen.

God Can Use a Messy Family

DAY 5 - THE STORY OF JACOB, RACHEL, & LEAH

GENESIS 25:23-26; 29:16-20, 25-28; MATTHEW 1:1-2; 1 JOHN 4:9-10

Read

Abraham had a son named Isaac, and Isaac had a son named Jacob. Jacob's name means trickster—and it fit him well. He lied, cheated, and stole, yet God still chose him. Through Jacob's family, God would one day send a Child who would bring His presence back to earth. That's just how God works—He doesn't always choose the people we'd expect.

Activity

Family Tree

Draw or list a family tree (include close friends too). Beside each name, write one trait, characteristic, or gift that makes that person special. Discuss how God loves you and makes each of you unique. Take it one step further and talk about how we can use those gifts for God's glory.

While running from his brother, Jacob met a beautiful girl named Rachel and fell in love. He promised her father seven years of work to marry her, but on the wedding day, the trickster got tricked—he was given Leah, Rachel's sister, instead! Jacob was furious, but God had a different plan.

Leah felt unloved and unseen, but **God saw her**. He gave her children and filled her heart with hope. More than that, through Leah—not Rachel—God would send the Savior, the One who would bring His people home.

Even when life feels unfair, God is still writing a story of grace. He chooses the overlooked, heals the hurting, and brings His promises to life in ways we never expect. Generations later, Jesus—the promised Savior—was born through Leah's family line. God's love sees every heart, restores every story, and welcomes every person into His family.

Ask

1. Name a time when you got a surprise or surprised someone.
2. What surprises you about who God chose to use in this story?
3. When have you felt overlooked, and how did God meet you there?
4. How can your family reflect God's heart for people who feel left out?

Pray

Lord, thank you for seeing what others miss and loving those who feel forgotten. Teach us to value people the way you do, not by appearances or popularity. Use our lives to shine your extraordinary love. Thank you for bringing Jesus through Jacob's family so we'd know there's room for everyone. Amen.

Dreams Don't Die

DAY 6 - THE STORY OF JOSEPH

GENESIS 37:1-3, 23-26; 45:4-8; 50:19-20; TITUS 3:4-7

Read

Joseph was Jacob's favorite son—the one with the coat of many colors and the remarkable dreams. His brothers didn't like him and burned with jealousy. They beat him up, tore off his robe, and sold him as a slave. In Egypt, Joseph served faithfully, was falsely accused, and landed in prison. Forgotten by people, but **not** forgotten by God. The Lord was with Joseph—in a pit, in prison, and in the palace.

When Pharaoh had terrifying dreams, God gave Joseph wisdom: seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh made Joseph second-in-command to store food for the hard years. When the famine arrived, Joseph's brothers traveled to Egypt for grain and bowed before the very brother they had betrayed—just as Joseph's dreams had foretold. Instead of revenge, Joseph offered forgiveness: "You meant it for evil, but **God** meant it for good—to save many lives."

Joseph's story shows a God who weaves pain into purpose and turns wrong into rescue. It points to a greater Savior—**Jesus**—who was rejected by His own, suffered unjustly, and then forgave us to save the world. When life feels unfair or lonely, Joseph reminds us that God is **still at work**, and His presence changes everything.

Ask

1. Joseph had a coat of many colors. What's your favorite piece of clothing?
2. Where do you see God's hand in Joseph's "bad" moments?
3. Why is forgiveness powerful—for the other person and for you?
4. How does Joseph's story point ahead to Jesus?

Activity

Gratitude Jar

Make a "gratitude" jar. Cut out small slips of paper, and all week, write things God is using for good—even hard things—and drop them in the jar. Read them together next weekend.

Alternative idea: Write your biggest dream or goal on a piece of paper. Then list three things you can do now to prepare for what God might want to do through you.

Pray

Father, thank you for being with Joseph in every season. Teach us to trust you when our plans break and our hearts ache. Grow in us the courage to forgive as we've been forgiven by Jesus. Use our family's stories—good and hard—to bless others and bring you glory. Amen.

Let My People Go

DAY 7 - THE STORY OF MOSES

EXODUS 3:1-12; 11:1-3; 12:21-28; JOHN 1:29

Read

Generations after Joseph, God's people were enslaved in Egypt. They cried out, and **God answered**—appearing to Moses in a bush that burned but didn't burn up. "I have seen, I have heard, I have come down," God said. "Go to Pharaoh and say, 'Let My people go.'" Ten plagues followed as God showed Egypt—and Israel—that He alone is Lord.

The last plague came with instructions: each family was to kill a spotless lamb and paint its blood on their doorposts. That night, the Lord passed over the homes marked by the Lamb and freed His people. With Pharaoh finally broken, Israel walked out—free at last—on a journey toward God's promised home. In the wilderness, they often forgot, but God did not. He led by cloud and fire, fed them daily, and kept His promise.

Passover points straight to **Jesus**, our spotless Lamb. God's people marked their doors with the Lamb's blood and found freedom from death. Jesus became the final Passover Lamb whose blood sets us free forever. Exodus teaches families that salvation is God's work from first to last—and freedom means learning to follow the One who rescued us.

Ask

1. The ten plagues included locusts and frogs. Which animal or insect would you least want to be plagued by?
2. Why did God ask for a lamb's blood on the doorposts?
3. What does it mean that Jesus is our Passover Lamb?
4. How can our family remember God's rescue when life gets tough?

Activity

Mannah from Heaven

Bake bread or cookies together (or have some already there to share). Talk about how God fed His people after they fled from Egypt (Exodus 16). Pray together, thanking God for setting us free through Jesus.

Alternative idea: On sticky notes write ways God has led or freed you (from fear, worry, or sin). Place them along a hallway as a reminder that God is still leading your family step by step.

Pray

Rescuing God, thank you for hearing the cries of your people. Thank you for Jesus, the Lamb who sets us free from sin and fear. Help us remember your faithfulness when we feel stuck or scared. Lead our family step by step, and teach us to follow you with grateful hearts. Amen.

Marching Toward a Miracle

DAY 8 - THE STORY OF JOSHUA

JOSHUA 1:9; JOSHUA 6:1-5, 15-20; ROMANS 8:31-34

Read

After forty years in the desert, the Israelites stood before Jericho's walls, piled high like mountains. God told Joshua, "Be strong and courageous... I am with you." The

battle plan sounded strange: march once around the city for six days; on the seventh day, march seven times, then blow the trumpets and shout. No battering rams. No ladders. **Just trust.**

Activity

Where is Jesus?

Inspired because the Israelites found a new home, rearrange your nativity scene. Take baby Jesus and hide him away from the nativity. Each day, hide Jesus in a new

location, moving him closer to the manger until Christmas morning when Jesus "arrives." If you're younger, show your parents where baby Jesus is hidden. **Alternative idea:** Create a family playlist of worship songs about courage and faith. Play it while doing chores or dinner prep as a reminder that God fights for us.

The people obeyed. On the seventh day, the trumpets blasted, the people yelled, and the walls crumbled like dust. God gave the victory. The walls of Jericho fell—not by might, but by trust in God's power. Jericho teaches us that faith isn't pretending the walls aren't big; it's believing God is bigger.

Many years later, Jesus would bring down the greatest wall—the barrier of sin—so we could enter God's forever home. He leads us into a new kind of promised land—a life where His presence is home. The greatest **victory** is the one He wins inside our hearts.

Ask

1. Tell a story about a time you yelled your loudest.
2. Why do you think God chose such an unusual plan for Jericho?
3. What "walls" do you or your family face (fear, anger, doubt)?
4. How does Jesus tear down the wall between us and God?

Pray

Mighty God, you are stronger than every wall we see and every fear we feel. Teach us to listen for your voice and obey even when your plan is different from ours. Thank you that Jesus breaks down the wall of sin and brings us close to you. Give our family the courage to trust you together. Amen.

When Strength Forgot to Listen

DAY 9 - THE STORY OF SAUL

1 SAMUEL 9:1-2; 13:11-15; PROVERBS 11:2

Read

Israel wanted a king like the nations, and Saul looked the part—tall, strong, brave. At first, he obeyed God's word through the prophet Samuel and won battles because **God** was with him. But pride crept in. Saul began to trust his own strength more than God's voice. When God told him to follow specific instructions, Saul chose his own way, kept what God said to give up, and built a monument to himself.

Activity

Trophies

Make two paper medals or trophies—one labeled "Looks Impressive" and the other "Listens to God." Share real family examples that fit each medal, then hang "Listens to God" on the fridge as this week's goal. *Alternative idea:* Think of one way to show strength through kindness this week—maybe by defending someone, serving quietly, or admitting a mistake. That's real courage.

Saul's strength couldn't save him when his heart drifted from God. Samuel confronted him: obedience matters more than sacrifice, and listening is better than looking impressive. Because Saul wouldn't repent, the kingdom would pass to another. Real greatness isn't measured in size or courage but in surrender.

Jesus came as the humble king who obeyed perfectly and gave Himself for us. His strength is gentle love that never fails. Saul's life warns us that outward success without inward surrender drifts far from God. It also makes us long for a better King—One who obeys perfectly and rules with mercy and truth. That King is **Jesus**.

Ask

1. Saul won many battles. What's the biggest win you had this week?
2. What's the difference between looking strong and truly trusting God?
3. Why does God care more about obedience than about "big" religious actions?
4. How does Saul's story make you thankful for Jesus, our true king?

Pray

Holy God, guard our hearts from pride that forgets you. Teach us to listen quickly and obey joyfully. Thank you for Jesus, the faithful King who never sinned and always did your will. Please shape our family to follow His humble, obedient way. Amen.

Giant-Slayer, Heart-Seeker

DAY 10 - THE STORY OF DAVID

1 SAMUEL 16:6-13; PSALM 51:10-12

Read

God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint a new king from Jesse's sons. The seven oldest looked kingly, but God said, "People look at the outside, but the Lord looks at the heart." They brought in the youngest—David, a shepherd boy—and God chose him. The Spirit rushed upon David, and in time, he would defeat Goliath, write songs of worship, and lead God's people with courage.

But David also sinned badly. When God confronted him, David didn't make excuses. He ran to God with a broken heart and prayed Psalm 51: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." David shows us both the beauty of a heart for God and the honesty of repentance.

God chose David for his heart, not his height. When David failed, he ran back to the God who forgives and restores. David's story points to **Jesus** whose perfect heart makes our hearts new. Through Him, our broken hearts can be made whole again. God looks past our flaws and failures to see what His love is shaping within us—hearts being made new through Jesus, our forever King.

Ask

1. David went from shepherd to king. What is the hardest job you've ever done?
2. Why did God choose David when others looked more impressive?
3. What does real repentance sound like in Psalm 51?
4. How does Jesus, the Son of David, give us clean hearts?

Activity

Healing the Broken Heart

Take an ornament and "break it" into several pieces (you can also do this with paper). Then, as a project, put it back together with glue or tape. Hang the repaired ornament on your tree as a reminder of what God has done to restore your own heart.

Pray

Searcher of hearts, thank you for seeing beyond appearances. When we sin, lead us to honest confession and restore us by your mercy. Thank you for Jesus, whose perfect life and cross make our hearts new. Teach our family to love you from the inside out. Amen.

Glory in the House of God

DAY 11 - THE STORY OF THE TEMPLE

2 CHRONICLES 5:1-7, 13-14; 7:1-3; PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

Read

King David had seen God's goodness again and again. God had **rescued** him from giants and battles, forgiven his sins, and kept every promise. As David grew older, he dreamed of building something beautiful—a house where people could worship God. "I'll build God a home more wonderful than any palace!" he said. David gathered gold, silver, stone, wood, and everything needed for the temple, but God told him that his son Solomon would be the one to build it.

So David prepared everything and passed it to Solomon, who built the most magnificent temple ever seen. When it was finished, Solomon gathered the people and prayed, thanking God for His faithfulness. Then something amazing happened—God's presence filled the temple! Fire came down from heaven, and a bright cloud surrounded them. The people fell on their faces and sang, "God is good! His love lasts forever!"

The temple became a sign that God wanted to live among His people. Every year, they brought sacrifices to show their thankfulness and to find forgiveness. But even though the temple was grand, people kept turning away from God. Eventually, enemies destroyed the temple, and the people wondered, "Where is God now?" But God's plan wasn't over—He was preparing to come live with His people in a new way. One day, Jesus Himself would come to be "**God with us.**"

Activity

Gift Box for Jesus

Set out a box under the tree labeled "For Jesus." Feel free to decorate the box but be sure to leave an opening on top. All Advent season, write notes of gratitude, prayers, or ways you've seen God's goodness. Put the notes in the box and then read them aloud later in the Christmas season or on Christmas morning.

Ask

1. If you could rebuild your home, what changes would you make?
2. Why did David want to build a house for God?
3. What does it mean that God's presence filled the temple?
4. How does Jesus show us that God wants to live with His people forever?

Pray

God, thank you for being with your people from David's time to today. You don't need fancy buildings to show your love—you live in the hearts of those who follow you. Help us be thankful for your presence in our home and in our world. Thank you for sending Jesus, who is the true temple and your greatest gift of love. Amen.

Running Scared

DAY 12 - THE STORY OF ELIJAH

1 KINGS 18:36-39; 19:1-13; PSALM 139:7-12

Read

After King Solomon died, many kings ruled Israel. Some listened to God, but most ignored Him. They worshiped false gods and forgot the one who rescued them from Egypt. Still, **God's love never stopped**. He sent prophets to remind His people that joy and peace only come when they walk with Him. One of those prophets was Elijah.

Elijah challenged the king and 450 prophets of Baal to meet him on Mount Carmel. "Let's see whose God is real!" he said. The prophets of Baal danced and shouted all day, but nothing happened. Then Elijah poured buckets of water over his altar—so much that everything was soaked! He prayed, "Lord, show everyone that you are the true God!" And in an instant, fire fell from heaven and burned up everything, even the water. The crowd shouted, "The Lord—He is God!"

But after this victory, Elijah grew afraid and ran into the wilderness. He had just seen God work in a miraculous way, yet he felt alone and tired, hiding in a cave. God met him there—not with fire or wind, but with a gentle whisper. God reminded Elijah that He was never alone, and His plan was still moving forward. God's whisper said what you and every heart needs to hear: **"I am with you."**

Ask

1. What is your high (something good) and low (something hard) for today?
2. What was your favorite part of Elijah's story?
3. Why do you think God spoke in a whisper instead of loud thunder?
4. How can we listen for God's "gentle whisper" in our lives?

Activity

Sounds of the Night

Go outside on a quiet night. Be silent and listen to the sounds around you, and after a few minutes, talk about the sounds you heard. Discuss how God speaks to us in different ways, then take turns sharing where you've seen or heard God's presence this week. **Alternative idea:** Use your phone's flashlight in a dark room and read 1 Kings 18:37-39 aloud. Then pray that God would shine through in how you respond to challenges.

Pray

God, you are powerful and kind. Thank you for showing Elijah—and us—that you are always nearby. Help us to trust you in both the big, exciting moments and the quiet ones. Teach our hearts to listen when you whisper your truth and peace to us. Amen.

Hope Still Speaks

DAY 13 - THE STORY OF JEREMIAH

JEREMIAH 29:10-14; JOHN 3:16-17

Read

God's people had forgotten how to listen. Even after prophets warned them to come back to God, they kept running the wrong way. One of those prophets was Jeremiah—called the “weeping prophet” because his messages were often sad. He warned that if people didn’t turn back, they would be taken away from their homes.

Activity

Family Scroll

Using paper make a scroll. Write down “Words from God” (favorite verses or things you are thankful for) and roll up the scroll. Read one section each night this week. *Alternative idea:* Write anonymous letters of encouragement to people who might be lonely this season (teachers, coaches, nursing home residents). Mail or deliver them secretly.

And that’s what happened—the temple was destroyed, and the people were captured and carried far from Jerusalem.

They felt lost and abandoned. But God gave Jeremiah a new message—a letter filled with **hope**. “Build homes,” God said. “Plant gardens. Love your neighbors. Even in this faraway land, I am still with you.” Then came the most wonderful promise: “I know the plans I have for you—plans to give you hope and a future.” God was reminding His people that His story wasn’t finished. He would bring them home again.

God’s forever plan didn’t stop with their return to Jerusalem—it pointed to **Jesus**. He would come to rescue not just one nation but the whole world. Through Him, God would make all the wrong things right again and all the dark things light. Jeremiah’s tears turned to joy because he knew God would keep every promise.

Ask

1. Have you ever lost something? What was it, and did you find it later?
2. Can you describe a time when you felt like things were going to turn out badly, but after you prayed, everything turned out better than you thought?
3. What kind of plan did God promise His people?
4. How does Jesus show us that God always keeps His promises?

Pray

Faithful God, thank you for loving your people even when they wandered away. When life feels uncertain, help us remember that you always have a plan. Thank you for sending Jesus to bring us hope and a future. Teach us to trust you every day. Amen.

Faith in the Lion's Shadow

DAY 14 - THE STORY OF DANIEL

DANIEL 6:1-4, 16-23; EPHESIANS 6:10-13

Read

Daniel **loved** God with his whole heart. Even though he lived far from home, he prayed to God three times a day. He worked hard, and King Darius trusted him more than anyone else. But jealous officials tricked the king into making a terrible law: for thirty days, no one could pray to anyone except the king. Daniel refused to stop praying. He opened his window and prayed as usual.

The officials caught him and brought him before the king. Darius was upset but couldn't change the law. "May your God rescue you," he told Daniel as soldiers threw him into a den of lions. All night long, the king worried. At sunrise, he ran to the den. "Daniel! Did your God save you," he shouted. "Yes," Daniel called back. "God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths!"

Daniel's courage reminded everyone that God was real and powerful. King Darius made a new law—everyone must honor the God of Daniel. Just like Daniel, **Jesus** would face a dark place (the tomb) and come out **alive**. His victory over death roars louder than fear. Because of Him, we can rest safely in God's care. God's presence turns even the scariest nights into stories of victory.

Ask

1. What is the scariest animal you've seen in person, perhaps at a zoo?
2. Why didn't Daniel stop praying, even when it was dangerous?
3. What can we learn from Daniel's courage?
4. How does Jesus' story remind you of Daniel's rescue?

Activity

Lion Paws

Trace handprints as "lion paws" on a piece or pieces of paper. On each paw, write the name of someone who needs courage or protection this Christmas season. Remind each other that God is with us even in scary times. Pray for them before bed. **Alternative idea:** Set a daily alarm or phone reminder titled "Pray like Daniel." When it goes off, pause for 30 seconds to pray for someone who needs courage.

Pray

God, thank you for Daniel's faith and bravery. Help us to stand firm in what's right, even when others don't understand. Remind us that you are with us in every dark and difficult moment. Thank you for Jesus, who rescues us from fear and gives us courage to follow you. Amen.

Storms, Whales, and Second Chances

DAY 15 - THE STORY OF JONAH

JONAH 1:1-5, 15-17; 2:1-2; 3:1-6; ACTS 3:19-20

Read

Jonah was a prophet who loved delivering God's messages—until one day, God told him to go to Nineveh. "Tell them I want to forgive and bring them close to Me," God said. But Jonah didn't want to. He thought the people there were too bad for God's love. So Jonah ran the opposite way and boarded a ship going far, far away.

But God followed Jonah. A wild storm shook the boat, and Jonah knew it was because of his disobedience. "Throw me overboard," he told the sailors. The moment they did, the sea grew calm—and a huge fish swallowed Jonah whole! Inside that dark, smelly belly, Jonah prayed. He realized that no matter where he ran, God was still with him. After three days, the fish spit him out on dry land. This time, Jonah obeyed. He went to Nineveh and told the people that God loved them. To his surprise, they believed! Everyone—from the king to the kids—turned to God.

Jonah ran, but God's **love** ran faster. Jonah learned what we all need to remember: God's love is bigger than our mistakes, and His mercy reaches everyone. Jesus would one day prove that love perfectly—after three days in the darkness, He would rise to bring **light** to the whole world.

Ask

1. Do you like to fish? Why or why not? If yes, what is the biggest fish you've caught?
2. Why did Jonah try to run from God's command?
3. What did Jonah learn while he was inside the fish?
4. How does Jonah's story help you understand God's love for all people?

Activity

Go Fishing

Work together to draw or make a "big fish" out of paper or cardboard. Inside the fish's belly, write the words: "God is with me—even here." Hang it where everyone can see it this week. **Alternative idea:** Do one unexpected good deed this week—buy someone's coffee, leave a gift card for someone, or clean without being asked. Reflect on how Jonah turned around, too.

Pray

God, thank you for never giving up on us, even when we run the wrong way. Thank you for loving every person, no matter where they come from or what they've done. Teach us to listen, obey, and share your mercy freely. We praise you for Jesus, who shows us your love in every way. Amen.

Brick by Brick, Hope Returns

DAY 16 - THE STORY OF ZERUBBABEL

EZRA 3:10-13; HAGGAI 2:4-9; EPHESIANS 3:16-17

Read

Zerubbabel (say, “Zeh-ROO-bah-bell”) was one of King David’s great-great-great-grandsons. He lived far from home in Persia, a beautiful place that still wasn’t *home*. Then God whispered a surprising assignment: “Go back and rebuild My temple.” If

the temple was rebuilt, it meant God was coming close again! Zerubbabel asked the mighty Persian king for permission—and God moved the king’s heart. “Yes, yes, yes,” the king said, sending God’s people home with supplies, money, and courage.

Jerusalem was a mess when they arrived, but they got to work. Enemies mocked them; some neighbors tried to stop them. Still, stone by stone, the foundation was laid. Trumpets blared, people shouted, and old men cried as they remembered Solomon’s glorious temple. The new one wasn’t as fancy, but God sent this **promise** through Haggai: “Be strong... My Spirit remains among you... The glory of this present house will be greater than the former.”

God’s presence—not gold—makes a temple glorious. One day, He would do something even better. He would come not to a building but as a person. Jesus, “**God with us**,” would walk our streets and turn hearts into His living temples.

Activity

Photo Journey

String together photos or small paper notes representing your family’s milestones this year. Hang it near the tree as a “faith journey” decoration. *Alternative idea:* Use your photo app on your phone and look through past photos together. Talk about where you saw God at work over the past year.

Ask

1. What is your favorite Christmas decoration or ornament? Why?
2. Why did some people cheer while others cried when the foundation was laid?
3. What makes a place truly special—its decorations or God’s presence?
4. How does Jesus fulfill God’s promise to be with His people?

Pray

Faithful God, thank you for bringing your people home and giving them courage to rebuild. Teach us to value your presence more than impressive things. Thank you that through Jesus, you make our hearts your home. Strengthen us to keep building what you’ve called us to, even when it’s hard. Amen.

Words Worth Waiting For

DAY 17 - ELIZABETH & ZECHARIAH (PART I)

LUKE 1:5-20, 23-25; PSALM 33:20-22

Read

Four hundred silent years. No prophet, no fresh message—just waiting. Then God’s plan moved again through an older couple, few would have chosen: Elizabeth and Zechariah. While Zechariah served in the temple, a blazing angel appeared: “Don’t be afraid! Your wife will have a son. He will prepare the way for the Lord—God is coming to stay.” Zechariah struggled to believe, so the angel gave him a sign—no speaking until the baby arrived!

Activity

Paper Angels

Cut angel shapes from paper and write messages of hope on them (for example, “God hears you”). Hang them in windows or deliver them to neighbors.

Alternative idea: Look up a Christmas hymn (like *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*) and read the lyrics as a prayer instead of a song. Reflect on what it means that God really did come to stay—not just for Christmas, but forever.

After centuries of silence, **God’s** voice broke through with a promise of new life. Zechariah and Elizabeth’s story reminds us that waiting is never wasted. The child God gave them would make ready a people for the Lord. Their story shows how God loves to begin big miracles in quiet homes and unlikely hearts. The promised child—John—would point to the Promised One—**Jesus**. The silence was ending because the Savior was coming. Every kick in Elizabeth’s womb was a drumbeat of hope: *God keeps His word. God draws near. God will dwell with us.*

Ask

1. Who are the oldest people in your life? Can you picture them with a new baby?
2. Why do you think God chose an older, unlikely couple for this miracle?
3. What does it mean that John would “prepare the way” for the Lord?
4. Where might God be inviting our family to believe His promises again?

Pray

Lord, thank you for breaking the silence with good news. Help us trust your timing when answers feel slow or impossible. Prepare our hearts, like John prepared a people, to welcome Jesus with faith and joy. Let our home echo with hope: You are coming close to us. Amen.

Joy Breaks the Silence

DAY 18 - ELIZABETH & ZECHARIAH (PART 2)

LUKE 1:57-64, 76-79; PSALM 98:7-9

Read

Nine months of silence taught Zechariah to listen and believe again. Months passed with Zechariah quietly watching God keep His word. Elizabeth gave birth to a son, and relatives assumed his name would be Zechariah. But on a tablet, the silent father wrote, "His name is John." At that moment, his tongue was loosed! Zechariah burst into praise, blessing God for visiting His people, keeping His promises, and raising a horn of salvation. The *Quiet Game* ended with a song that filled the house with joy. When he finally spoke, his words were filled with praise for the coming Savior. God turns quiet seasons into sacred ones when we let Him.

John's birth was a signpost: **the King is close**. Zechariah prophesied that John would go before the Lord, giving people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins. Then he used a beautiful picture—"the tender mercy of our God will shine on us like the sunrise." After a long night, the light was breaking. Soon, **Jesus** would step into the world to guide our feet into the path of peace.

Ask

1. What is the longest you think you can go without talking?
2. What do you think God taught Zechariah during his months of silence?
3. Which line from Zechariah's song (Luke 1:68-79) stands out to you and why?
4. How does Jesus bring sunrise-light into our everyday lives?

Activity

Quiet Game

Play a one-minute (or longer) Quiet Game. Afterward, read Luke 1:78-79 aloud. Each person shares one way Jesus is bringing light or peace to them this Christmas season. Write them on sticky notes and make a "sunrise" on a wall.

Alternative idea: Spend one hour without devices, background noise, or talking. Sit by the Christmas lights, read Luke 1-2 quietly, then share what stood out most.

Pray

Merciful God, thank you for turning silence into singing. Teach us to listen deeply so our words line up with your promises. Let the light of Jesus rise in our hearts and guide our steps into the path of peace. Use our family to shine your hope on others who feel stuck in the dark. Amen.

A Voice in the Wilderness

DAY 19 - THE STORY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

ISAIAH 40:3; MATTHEW 3:1-6, 11-17

Read

John grew up knowing his mission: make hearts ready for the Lord. He lived simply in the wilderness—camel-hair clothes, wild honey, and a clear message: “Repent—turn around—because the King is near!” Crowds streamed to the Jordan River. John baptized them as a sign of a new direction and a fresh start, reminding Israel of every watery rescue God had given—from the flood to the Red Sea to the Jordan crossing.

John’s message was simple: “Get ready—**God is coming!**” Then one day, Jesus came. John knew: *This is the One*. He tried to step aside, but Jesus asked to be baptized “to fulfill all righteousness.” When Jesus rose from the water, the heavens opened, the Spirit descended like a dove, and the Father’s voice declared, “This is My beloved Son.”

This baptism marked the beginning of a new life for all who would follow Him. Advent teaches us to do what John did: point away from ourselves, lift our eyes to **Jesus**, and make a straight path for Him in our hearts and homes.

Ask

1. John’s job was to point to Jesus. Who in your life helps point you toward Jesus?
2. What does it mean for us to “prepare the way” for Jesus today?
3. Why did Jesus—who never sinned—choose to be baptized?
4. What could our family “turn from” and “turn to” this week to make room for Jesus?

Activity

Stone Path

Collect small stones and write words on them like “Prepare,” “Trust,” “Obey.” Line them along a path or windowsill as reminders to prepare our hearts for Jesus. *Alternative idea:* Clean up a small space in your room or car while you pray, “God, prepare my heart for you.” Just like John cleared the way for Jesus, let this act of tidying be a symbol of clearing space for peace and joy.

Pray

Father, thank you for sending John to call us back to you. Make our hearts soft and ready for your Son. Holy Spirit, lead us to turn from anything that crowds out Jesus and to walk in newness of life. Let our words and actions point others to the true King. Amen.

Eyes That Finally Saw Hope

DAY 20 - THE STORY OF SIMEON & ANNA

LUKE 2:25-32, 36-38; COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

Read

Two faithful friends waited at the temple: Simeon, promised by the Spirit that he would see the Messiah before he died, and Anna, the prayerful widow who worshiped there day and night. Years rolled on; hope could have dimmed. Then Mary and Joseph arrived with their baby to present Him to the Lord. The Spirit nudged Simeon: *Now*. He took Jesus in his arms and blessed God, calling this Child “a light for revelation to the nations and the glory of Israel.”

Anna heard the news and hurried over, her face bright with joy. She began to thank God and tell everyone who was waiting for rescue: “He’s here!” Simeon and Anna waited faithfully, and at last their eyes saw **salvation** wrapped in swaddling cloths.

Simeon and Anna show us how to wait—prayerful, hopeful, eyes open for God’s arrival. God turned their lifelong longing into joy. In Jesus, the long night ended. The **light** had come, not just for one person, but for the whole world—including your family and mine. In Him, every waiting heart finds peace.

Ask

1. Describe a time you had to wait for something special, like a Christmas gift.
2. What do Simeon and Anna teach us about waiting well?
3. Why does Luke call Jesus “a light for the nations”?
4. Who in your world needs to hear the good news that the light has come?

Activity

Light Walk

Bundle up and take a short evening “light walk.” Look at porch lights and stars; each time you see one, say together, “Jesus is our Light.” If you know the neighbor, you might stop and pray quietly for them as you pass. **Alternative idea:** Write a thank-you note or text message to an older mentor, teacher, or family member who has encouraged your faith. Let them know you see God’s faithfulness through them.

Pray

God of hope, thank you for keeping your promise to Simeon and Anna. Teach us to wait with prayer and joy, trusting your timing. Thank you for Jesus, the light for every nation and every neighborhood. Help us share His light with words of hope and acts of love. Amen.

Favored and Fearless

DAY 21 - THE STORY OF MARY

LUKE 1:26-38, 46-55; GALATIANS 4:4-5

Read

Mary was an ordinary young woman in a quiet town when heaven burst into her room. A brilliant messenger greeted her: "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." Mary trembled—angels don't usually show up at supper time. But the angel had good news: God was doing something completely new. He wasn't just sending a baby; He was sending a **King**—*Emmanuel*, *God with us*. By the Holy Spirit, Mary would carry the promised Savior whose kingdom would never end.

Mary had questions. She wasn't yet married to Joseph—how could this be? The angel reminded her that nothing is impossible with God. Then Mary spoke the bravest words: "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." Faith took root, and joy sprang up.

Mary's humble "yes" opened the door for heaven to touch earth. God chose an ordinary girl to carry extraordinary grace. When Jesus entered her life, everything changed—and through Him, everything changes for us too. His coming still turns fear into faith and ordinary lives into miracles. Christmas begins right here—in a simple room with a willing heart, where God plants hope that will change the world.

Ask

1. How would you react if an angel showed up right now?
2. What do Mary's words, "I am the Lord's servant," teach us about trusting God?
3. Why is Jesus called *Emmanuel* ("God with us"), and why does that matter for us?
4. What are some ways God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things?

Pray

God, thank you for choosing Mary and for doing the impossible in ordinary places. Give us hearts that say "yes" even when we don't understand everything. Help our family trust your promises and celebrate the coming of Jesus, our King. Let your presence fill our home with courage and joy. Amen.

Activity

New Beginnings Wreath

Make a small wreath from evergreen branches or paper. Write notes of "new beginnings" you hope for—new friendships, habits, or faith goals—and attach them to the wreath as a reminder that God is making you new. **Alternative idea:** Find one way to say "yes" to God this week—pray for someone, forgive a friend, or lend a hand. Mary's small "yes" changed the world.

Faith in the Night

DAY 22 - THE STORY OF JOSEPH

MATTHEW 1:18-24; 2 CORINTHIANS 1:20; PSALM 28:7

Read

News of Mary's pregnancy shattered Joseph's plans. He was a good man and didn't want to embarrass her, but he decided to end the engagement quietly. Then—*while Joseph slept*—God sent an angel into his dreams: "Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call His name **Jesus**, for He will save His people from their sins."

Joseph woke with a heart pierced by **peace**. The prophecy was true—this child would be *Emmanuel, God with us*. Joseph did exactly as the Lord commanded. Through Joseph's "yes," the Savior would have a home, a name, and a father's steady love.

Joseph's obedience teaches us that real courage is quiet and kind. It chooses trust over fear and faithfulness over reputation. Joseph's dream showed him that God was working in ways he couldn't yet see. Through **Jesus**, God invites us to trust even when we don't understand. Every act of faith becomes part of His redemption story.

Ask

1. Do you remember your last dream? Can you share it?
2. What fears might Joseph have felt, and how did God address them?
3. Why is the name **Jesus** ("the Lord saves") perfect for the child Mary would bear?
4. Where is God inviting our family to trade fear for faithful obedience?

Activity

Late-Night Blessings

At night, turn off the lights except for your Christmas tree. Sit together under the tree and take turns reading your favorite Bible verses about hope and light. Use the Bible app on your phone to find some. Capture a photo under the glow of the tree. **Alternative idea:** Use a light to make hand shadows on the wall. Talk about how even when we can't see clearly, God's light shines behind every shadow.

Pray

Father, thank you for speaking peace to Joseph in the dark. Teach us to trust you when our plans change and the path is unclear. Give us the courage to obey quickly and kindly, like Joseph. May the name of Jesus be honored in our home and welcomed in our hearts. Amen.

Following a Star

DAY 23 - THE STORY OF THE WISE MEN

MATTHEW 2:1-12; ISAIAH 9:6-7

Read

Far to the east, scholars who studied the skies spotted a brand-new star. Ancient prophecies stirred in their minds: a great Light would dawn, a child would be born, a royal Son would bring peace. They packed royal gifts—**gold** for a king, **frankincense** for worship, **myrrh** for a life that would one day be wrapped for burial—and began the long journey. The star led them not to a palace, but to a simple home in Bethlehem, the “little” town Isaiah said would shine with great light.

Kneeling before the child, the wise men worshiped. God had kept His word: the king had come for **all nations**. Their joy-filled laughter turned into holy wonder as they offered treasures to the Treasure of heaven. Warned in a dream not to return to the jealous King Herod, they went home by another route—changed men with a new map in their hearts.

The wise men followed a distant light and found the Light of the world. Their journey ended in worship, their treasures laid before a humble King. We find joy when we do the same—when we offer our hearts to Jesus. He is the gift that makes every other gift complete.

Activity

Three Gifts

Take a moment and choose three small ways to give before the new year—as a group or as individuals—one gift of time, one word of kindness, and one act of generosity. If needed, write them down and put them somewhere visible to help you stay accountable over the next week.

Ask

1. What is your favorite gift you have ever received?
2. What do the three gifts tell us about who Jesus is and what He would do?
3. How did God guide the wise men, and how does He guide us today?
4. What “treasure” can you offer Jesus this week (time, kindness, generosity)?

Pray

God of the nations, thank you for shining your light so everyone can find Jesus. Lead us, like the wise men, to kneel, adore, and offer our best. Keep our hearts sensitive to your direction when you ask us to take a different path. Fill our home with the joy of worship. Amen.

Emmanuel, God with Us

DAY 24 - THE STORY OF JESUS

LUKE 2:1-7; JOHN 1:14; PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

Advent Block Users: Before you read today's devotion, be sure to turn all your blocks (1-23) a quarter turn and read the special message: "Emmanuel, God with us!"

Read

Bethlehem was crowded, noisy, and not at all ready for a royal birth. No guest room. No cradle. Just a stable, scratchy hay, and animals shifting in the dark. Yet there, in the least likely place, **God became human**. Mary wrapped Jesus in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger. The invisible Creator took a breath; the King of Kings cried. Heaven's song slipped into earth's quiet: *Emmanuel—God with us*.

But Christmas was only the opening chapter. Jesus grew, loved perfectly, healed the hurting, welcomed children, lifted the poor, and obeyed the Father in everything. At the cross, He carried our sin; in the tomb, He rested; on the third day, He rose—defeating death and throwing open the door to life with God forever. Now the risen Lord is exalted, and at His name every knee will bow.

In the stillness of that holy night, God took on flesh and moved into our neighborhood. Jesus was born in simplicity so He could meet us in ours. The manger leads to the cross, the cross to the empty tomb, and the empty tomb to a forever **Kingdom**.

Ask

1. What is your earliest memory as a child?
2. Why do you think God chose such a humble place for Jesus' birth?
3. How does Christmas connect to the cross and resurrection?
4. Where do you most need to remember "God is with us" today?

Activity

Your Story

Tell each child the story of their birth or how they came to be part of your family. Then wrap a small empty box and label it "The Best Gift: Jesus" and put it under the Christmas tree. Keep the gift around all year or bring it out each Christmas as a reminder that the story continues. **Alternative idea:** On your phone record a short voice memo or phone video where each person answers, "Where did I see God with us this year?" Save it and replay it next Advent.

Pray Lord Jesus, thank you for coming low so you could lift us high. We worship you for your perfect life, your saving death, and your victorious resurrection. Be Emmanuel in our home—present in our joys and our worries. Teach us to live with your humble, courageous love. Amen.

The Night Everything Changed

DAY 25 - THE SHEPHERDS' STORY— AND OUR STORY

LUKE 2:8-20; REVELATION 21:1-5; 22:1-5

Read

Night watch. Cold fields. Ordinary shepherds. Suddenly, the sky split open with blazing glory and an angelic announcement: "Don't be afraid! I bring good news of great joy for **all people**. Today a Savior has been born—Christ the Lord!" A choir of thousands filled the heavens with "Glory to God!"

The shepherds ran, found the baby just as the angel said, and left—telling everyone they met. First witnesses, first worshipers—God loves to start with the humble.

The shepherds couldn't keep quiet after meeting the Savior; they had to share the good news. That same joy still fills every heart that meets Jesus. His coming began the story of God making all things new.

Christmas doesn't have to end, because the best part lasts forever: **Jesus is still with us**. His Spirit lives in those who trust Him—guiding, comforting, and sending us to share the news. And one day, the story will reach its happiest ending: Jesus will return, make everything new, wipe away every tear, and flood the world with light. Until then, we live like the shepherds—receiving the good news and running to spread it.

Activity

Baby Jesus

Set up your nativity (or improvise one). Leave the manger empty for a little bit, then place "baby Jesus" in it while reading the Christmas story in Luke 2. Afterward, each person shares one way Jesus' birth changes their life.

Ask

1. What was your favorite memory from this Christmas Season?
2. Why do you think God chose shepherds to receive the first announcement?
3. What does it look like to keep Christmas going all year long?
4. Who can your family tell or bless with the good news this week?

Pray

Glorious God, thank you for the good news of great joy—Jesus our Savior and King. Keep our hearts like the shepherds': quick to run to you and eager to share your love. Fill us with your Spirit so Christmas hope keeps shining through us all year. We look forward to the day you make all things new. Amen.

Traditional Advent Candles

EACH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Along with your daily readings, these last five reflections give you a simple way to walk through a traditional Advent wreath and candles each Sunday in Advent. If you have older kids or teens, lighting the traditional Advent wreath might take on even deeper meaning as you share this time as a family.

Each Sunday, light the candle associated with that week as well as any from previous Sundays on your Advent wreath. Then read the verses and reflection out loud, and take a moment to talk or pray together. On Christmas Eve, light the center candle, known as the Christ Candle, to celebrate that Jesus has come!

We recommend that each Sunday, you take part in this traditional Advent moment and then move into the daily reading and activity for that day.

Note: *Because as a church we are observing Advent from December 1–25 this year, you may need to light the first candle on the Sunday before December 1 so that all four Sundays align.*

First Sunday of Advent

The Hope Candle (Purple)

Isaiah 40:31, John 8:12, Micah 7:7

Read

Hope is about looking to God and trusting that He's still writing the story. It's that quiet confidence that—even when life feels uncertain—God is at work, and His promises will hold true.

The people of Israel waited a long time for their Messiah. They were weary, under foreign rule, and crying out, "*Come, O Come, Emmanuel.*" But their waiting wasn't wasted—it was filled with hope. That same hope still lives in us today. Jesus came into the world to bring light where there was darkness, healing where there was pain, and freedom where there was fear.

When we light this candle, we remember that Jesus *is* our hope—yesterday, today, and forever.

Pray

God, thank you for being our source of hope. When things feel heavy, help us remember that you always keep your promises. Fill our hearts with peace and confidence as we trust in you. Amen.

Traditional Advent Candles

EACH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Second Sunday of Advent

The Peace Candle (Purple)

Luke 2:13-14, Isaiah 9:6-7, Romans 5:1

Read

Peace can be hard to find in a world full of noise, stress, and struggle. But that's why Jesus came—to bring peace right into the middle of the chaos. He didn't come to erase every problem or force everyone to get along. He came to heal what was broken between us and God, and to bring peace to our hearts from the inside out.

When we light this candle, we remember that real peace doesn't come from perfect circumstances—it comes from knowing Jesus. The Prince of Peace invites us to lay down our worries, our pride, and our fears and rest in His presence.

Pray

Father, thank you for sending Jesus to bring true peace. Quiet our hearts and help us trust you more deeply. Let your peace fill our homes and flow through us to others. Amen.

Third Sunday of Advent

The Joy Candle (Pink)

Luke 2:10-11, Isaiah 9:2, Psalm 16:11

Read

Joy isn't just about being happy—it's about knowing deep down that God loves us and is with us, no matter what. When the angels told the shepherds about Jesus' birth, they said it was "*good news of great joy for all people.*"

Imagine their excitement as they ran to see the baby in the manger. That same joy still fills our hearts today when we remember that Jesus came for us—for every heart that needs saving, every person longing to be known and loved. Joy is the light that keeps glowing even when life feels dark, because Jesus' love never fades.

Pray

Jesus, thank you for bringing joy that lasts beyond the moment. Help us see your goodness in everyday life and share your joy with others this week. Amen.

Traditional Advent Candles

EACH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Fourth Sunday of Advent

The Love Candle (Purple)

John 3:16, Lamentations 3:22-23, 1 John 4:9

Read

Love is at the center of the Christmas story. God didn't send Jesus to impress us or scare us—He sent Him because He *loves* us.

John 3:16 says, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son."* That's the heart of Christmas: a Father giving His best so that we could be made whole. When we light this candle, we remember that love came to us—born in a manger, walking among us, healing, forgiving, restoring. No matter how far we feel from God, His love never runs out.

Pray

Father, thank you for loving us with a love that never gives up. Teach us to love others the way you've loved us—with grace, kindness, and patience. Amen.

Christmas Eve

The Christ Candle (White)

Luke 2:4-7, Isaiah 60:1, Galatians 4:4-5

Read

On this holy night, we light the final candle—the Christ Candle. Everything we've been waiting for leads to this moment. Jesus, the Light of the World, has come!

It wasn't a grand entrance in a palace or a royal parade. It was a humble birth in a stable, with the sounds of animals and the glow of starlight. But in that quiet moment, heaven touched earth. The Savior was born—not just for the world, but for you.

When we light this candle, we remember that God keeps His promises. Jesus is the light that still shines in every darkness, the hope that never fades, and the love that changes everything.

Pray

Father, thank you for the incredible gift of your Son. As we celebrate His birth, fill our hearts with wonder, gratitude, and peace. May the light of Christ shine brightly in our homes and through our lives. Amen.

Next Steps

As Advent comes to a close, we want to thank you for journeying with us through these 25 days of reflection, prayer, and celebration. Our prayer is that this guide has helped you and your family slow down and rediscover the wonder of Emmanuel – God with us.

Advent doesn't end with Christmas Day. It launches us into a new year filled with opportunities to live out what we've learned in our homes, workplaces, and community. Take time to share with us and one another what God has shown you during this season. What moment, verse, or activity meant the most? What truth about Jesus' coming do you want to carry into the days ahead?

As we step into the new year, we'd love for you to continue growing in faith with us. Join us for worship at First McKinney each Sunday as we keep celebrating the story God is writing in and through us. You're also invited to read through our Bible plan with our church family this year. You can find our **Bible Reading Plan** and other daily resources at <https://firstmckinney.com/Bible>.

May the joy of Christ's birth continue to shine in your heart and home – today, tomorrow, and through every season ahead.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Your friends at First McKinney





FIRST MCKINNEY
BAPTIST CHURCH