
2026
ADVENT
FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

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CROSSLIFE CHURCH

A family guide for the four weeks before Christmas

Advent: What Is It?

December has a sound to it. Carols in the car. Paper tearing. A kitchen with too many people talking at once. It is a season built around waiting for something good.

But waiting is not always easy. Some Christmases carry an empty chair. Some mornings bring a gift that disappoints. Christ has come, and the world is still broken. Both of those things are true at the same time.

That is exactly what Advent is for. Advent is the season the church sets aside to get ready. We remember that Jesus came once as a baby in Bethlehem. We look ahead to the day He comes back as King. In between, we worship, we watch, and we wait.

The word Advent comes from a Latin word that means coming or arrival. For four weeks we light candles, read the promises God made long ago, and remind each other that He kept every one of them.

Here is the honest part. December fills up fast. Parties, programs, practices, parades. Before your calendar gets away from you, sit down as a family and decide what you want this season to be. Then make a plan. A short plan you actually follow beats a long one you abandon by the tenth.

This guide is that plan. Five to ten minutes a night. A candle, a few verses, a question, a prayer. That is all it takes.

The Advent Wreath and Candles

Families have gathered around an Advent wreath for generations. The wreath is a circle, and a circle has no end, so it stands for the life God gives that never runs out.

Five candles sit in the wreath. The first candle is hope, the long wait for the Messiah. The second is peace, the quiet town of Bethlehem where the Prince of Peace was born. The third is joy, the shepherds running down the hill with news. The fourth is love, the angel's announcement. The fifth candle stands in the center, and that one is the Christ candle.

On each of the four Sundays before Christmas, light one more candle. On Christmas Eve or Christmas morning, light the white one in the middle. Week by week the table gets brighter. That is the point. The Light of the World is on His way.

To build one at home, set four purple candles in holders or press them into a foam base. Tuck evergreen, holly, or pine cones around the bottom. Put a taller white candle in the center. Purple is the color of kings and of getting ready. White is the color of light and purity. Some families use a pink candle in the third week to mark joy, and either way works.

Pick a spot everyone walks past: the dining table, the mantel, the kitchen counter. Let the kids take turns striking the match and reading the words out loud. If you know another family looking for a way to slow down this December, pass this along.



WEEK 1

HOPE

Week 1: Hope
The First Sunday of Advent

Introduction:
Long before Jesus was born, God told His people that a rescuer was coming.
He said it through prophets, people who carried God's messages.
Families waited on that promise for hundreds of years. Parents told their children. Those children told their children. Every one of them hoped they would be the ones to see it come true. We are waiting too. Jesus came once, and He promised to come back.

Isaiah 9:2, 6–7
"The people who are now living in darkness will see a great light. They are now living in a very dark land. But a light will shine on them....
A child will be born to us. A son will be given to us. He will rule over us.
And he will be called Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God.
He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever and Prince Who Brings Peace."

The Lighting of the Prophecy Candle:
Parent says: Look at that flame. It is small, but right now it is the only light on this table. God's people waited a long time in the dark for this promise. Tonight we light the first candle because Jesus is our hope.

Application:
Get a blank piece of paper. Write or draw one thing you are hoping for this Christmas. It might be a tradition you love, a person coming to visit, or something you have been asking God for. Go around and
let everyone share.

Prayer:
God, You are good and You keep Your word.
You have never once broken a promise.
As we get ready for Christmas, fill us with
hope while we wait on You.
Amen.

Week 1: Hope
Monday

Introduction: Relight the 1st candle.
Think about where a king would be born. A palace, probably. A hospital with the best doctors. Guards at the door. That is not what happened. Mary and Joseph knocked on doors all over Bethlehem and every one of them was full. The only space left was a stable, a place where animals ate and slept. That is where the King of the world was born.

Luke 2:6–7
"While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the child to be born. She gave birth to her first baby. It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger. That's because there was no guest room where they could stay."

(Carol) "Away in a Manger" (See lyrics in back of this book.)

Application:
Yesterday we talked about what we hope for at Christmas. Traditions are good. Lights and cookies and presents are good. But the reason underneath all of it is Jesus, who came to forgive us and give us life that lasts forever.

Ask each person: what is one tradition our family loves, and how can it point us back to Jesus?

Prayer:
Thank You, God, for a warm house and a bed to sleep in.
Thank You that Jesus gave those up to come to us.
Thank You that He is getting a place ready for us too.
Amen.

Week 1: Hope
TUESDAY

INTRODUCTION: RELIGHT THE 1ST CANDLE.
Turn on the news and you will hear about fighting. Countries at war. Neighbors who cannot get along. It can make you wonder whether the world will ever settle down. God told His people it would, and He painted a picture of it: a wolf lying down next to a lamb, a lion eating hay, and a little child leading the whole group. It sounds impossible. That is exactly why it is worth hoping for.

ISAIAH 11:6–7
"Wolves will live with lambs. Leopards will lie down with goats. Calves and lions will eat together. And little children will lead them around. Cows will eat with bears. Their little ones will lie down together. And lions will eat straw like oxen."

(CAROL) "AWAY IN A MANGER"

APPLICATION:
Talk together about what it looks like to be a peacemaker. Sharing a toy before anyone asks. Helping at home without being told. Stepping in when two friends are arguing.

Parents, watch for these this week and say out loud when you catch one.

PRAYER:
Lord, You are the Prince of Peace.
Make us peacemakers at home,
at school, and everywhere we go.
Amen.

Week 1: Hope
Wednesday

Introduction: Relight the 1st candle.
Getting somewhere today is easy. You buckle up and turn on the radio. In Mary and Joseph's day, you walked. Almost everybody walked, because only the wealthy could afford a cart. Nazareth to Bethlehem is roughly ninety miles through hill country, which is three days of hard travel at the very least. And Mary was days away from having a baby. Picture that trip.

Luke 2:1–5
"In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world. It was the first time a list was made of the people while Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone went to their own town to be listed. So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David. He went there with Mary to be listed. Mary was engaged to him. She was expecting a baby."

(Carol) "Away in a Manger"

Application:
Look up Nazareth and Bethlehem on a map of Israel and trace the distance with your finger. Then talk about the longest walk or hike your family has ever taken. How did your legs feel at the end? How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when Bethlehem finally came into view?

Prayer:
Lord, that was a hard trip, and they made it because You asked them to. Help us be the kind of family that notices people who are tired or far from home.
Amen.

Week 1: Hope
Thursday

Introduction: Relight the 1st candle.
God promised Abraham something enormous. Abraham was a shepherd with no children, and God told him his family would grow into nations, and that the whole world would be blessed through one of his descendants. Abraham believed Him. Hundreds of years later, Jesus was born into that same family line. Here is what God said to him.

Genesis 17:4–6
"This is my covenant with you. You will be the father of many nations. You will not be called Abram anymore. Your name will be Abraham, because I have made you a father of many nations. I will greatly increase the number of your children after you. Nations and kings will come from you."

Genesis 22:18
"All nations on earth will be blessed because of your children. All these things will happen because you have obeyed me."

(Carol) "Away in a Manger"

Application:
Get a big piece of paper and draw your family tree together. Include grandparents, cousins, and the people you count as family even though you are not related by blood. Every family looks different. Then talk about who in your family first told you about Jesus.

Prayer:
Lord, make us like Abraham. Give us faith to trust You and courage to obey You, even when we cannot see how it will work out.
Amen.t

Week 1: Hope
FRIDAY

INTRODUCTION: RELIGHT THE 1ST CANDLE.
The prophets said the Messiah would come from King David's family and that He would bring peace. David started out as the youngest of eight brothers, a shepherd boy watching sheep while everyone else did the jobs people noticed. He was born in Bethlehem about a thousand years before Jesus was born in that same town. God has a habit of picking people nobody else would pick.

JEREMIAH 23:5
"A new day is coming," announces the Lord. "At that time I will raise up for David's royal line a godly Branch. He will be a King who will rule wisely. He will do what is fair and right in the land."

ISAIAH 9:7
"There will be no limit to how great his authority is. The peace he brings will never end. He will rule on David's throne and over his kingdom. He will make the kingdom strong and secure. His rule will be based on what is fair and right. It will last forever. The Lord's great love will make sure that happens. He rules over all."

(CAROL) "AWAY IN A MANGER"

APPLICATION:
David was the youngest. Jesus was born in a stable. God keeps choosing the people the world overlooks.

Talk about it: what is something you are good at, even a small thing? How could God use that this week? Parents, tell a story about a time God used you when your life was not going the way you planned.

PRAYER:
Lord, thank You for keeping Your promises and for giving us what we need. We can count on You.
Amen.

Week 1: Hope
Saturday

Introduction: Relight the 1st candle.
Jesus' first bed was a feed trough. Not a crib. A box where animals ate. If you had walked past that stable on the first Christmas, you would not have guessed a king was inside. That is how God chose to arrive.

Luke 2:7
"She gave birth to her first baby. It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger. That's because there was no guest room where they could stay."

Application:
Look up the word humble in a dictionary together and read the definition out loud. Talk about what Jesus gave up in order to be born in a stable. Then name someone you know who is humble. What do they do that makes you say that?

Prayer:
Lord, get us ready for the day You come back,
not as a baby in a manger but as King.
Thank You for showing us what humble looks like.
You could have come to be served, and instead
You came to serve. We love You.
Amen.



WEEK 2
PEACE

Week 2: Peace
The Second Sunday of Advent

Introduction: Relight the 1st candle.
Light helps you find your way. A lighthouse guides a ship past the rocks. A headlamp shows a miner the path out. A porch light tells a guest which house is yours. One night, wise men far to the east looked up and saw a star they had never seen before. They had heard about a king coming out of Israel who would bring peace to everyone. They packed up and followed it, and that star led them to Jesus.

Matthew 2:1–2, 9
"Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea. This happened while Herod was king of Judea. After Jesus' birth, Wise Men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the child who has been born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose. Now we have come to worship him."
"...After the Wise Men had listened to the king, they went on their way. The star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them. It finally stopped over the place where the child was."

The Lighting of the Prophecy Candle:
Parent says: Two candles tonight, and the table is brighter already. The wise men could not have found Jesus on their own, and neither can we. God gave them a light to follow, and He still gives us one today. The Prince of Peace is coming. Let's get our hearts ready for Him.

Application:
Bundle up and go outside tonight. Find the brightest star you can see. Talk about how travelers used the stars to find their way long before maps and phones.

Prayer:
God, You sent the Prince of Peace at exactly the right moment. You are never early and never late. We trust You.
Amen

Week 2: Peace
MONDAY

INTRODUCTION: RELIGHT THE 1ST AND 2ND CANDLES.
Imagine you got invited to a royal wedding in another country. How would you get ready? What would you pack? In the ancient world, nobody set out on a long trip without careful planning, and the wise men planned for months. We have a trip to get ready for too, except this one is about our hearts. Jesus is coming. Let's be ready when He gets here.

MATTHEW 2:1–2
"Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea. This happened while Herod was king of Judea. After Jesus' birth, Wise Men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the child who has been born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose. Now we have come to worship him."

(CAROL) "O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM"
(See lyrics in back of this book.)

APPLICATION:
Talk about it: how would you pack for a trip across the world? Now the harder question. God looks at our hearts. How do you get a heart ready to meet Jesus?

PRAYER:
Lord, while we hang lights and wrap presents,
get our hearts ready too. Nothing matters more
than being ready to meet You, our King.
Amen.

Week 2: Peace
TUESDAY

INTRODUCTION: RELIGHT THE 1ST AND 2ND CANDLES.
Not everyone was happy about Jesus' birth. King Herod ruled Judea, and when he heard that a new king had been born, he was afraid. He did not want to share his throne with anyone. People still feel that way. Letting Jesus be King means He is in charge and we are not, and that is a hard thing to hand over.

MATTHEW 2:3–8, 12
"When King Herod heard about it, he was very upset. Everyone in Jerusalem was troubled too. So Herod called together all the chief priests of the people. He also called the teachers of the law. He asked them where the Messiah was going to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied. "This is what the prophet has written. He said, " 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are certainly not the least important among the towns of Judah. A ruler will come out of you. He will rule my people Israel like a shepherd.' " (Micah 5:2) Then Herod secretly called for the Wise Men. He found out from them exactly when the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem. He said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report it to me. Then I can go and worship him too."

"But God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod. So they returned to their country on a different road."

(CAROL) "O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM"

APPLICATION:
Play a round of Simon Says and take turns being Simon.
Then talk about it: What happens when we do not listen carefully? Was it hard to do what Simon said? Is it hard to follow instructions in real life, with chores or homework or practice? Why do you think that is?

PRAYER:
God, show us how You want us to live,
and give us the courage to follow.
Lead us the way the star led the wise men.
Amen.

Week 2: Peace
Wednesday

Introduction: Relight the 1st and 2nd candles.
The wise men did not show up empty-handed. They brought gold, which was the gift you gave a king. They brought frankincense, which was burned in worship. And they brought myrrh, a costly perfume used to prepare a body for burial. Three gifts that said king, God, and one day He will die for you. These were not ordinary gifts, because Jesus was not an ordinary baby.

Matthew 2:11
"The Wise Men went to the house. There they saw the child with his mother Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures. They gave him gold, frankincense and myrrh."

(Carol) "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Application:
Have some fun as a family and fill in the Mad Lib below. Be ready to laugh.

I'm So Excited for Christmas:
I am so excited for Christmas this year! I've been doing a lot of (**verb**_____)ing to get ready!

We picked out the perfect (**noun**_____).
It is (**adjective**_____) and (**adjective**_____),
and it smells like (**scent**_____).

It's my job to (**verb**_____) the tree every day.

I have been hoping for a (**noun**_____) under the tree this year. I really do not want to get a (**adjective**_____)
(**noun**_____) again!

I hope everyone has a (**adjective**_____) Christmas!

Prayer:
Lord, we want our lives to be a gift to You.
Give us willing hearts, ready to give our
best to Your kingdom. You deserve it.
Amen.

Week 2: Peace
Thursday

Introduction: Relight the 1st and 2nd candles.
They had traveled for months, and then the star stopped. It was shining right over the place where Jesus was. Here is something interesting: most nativity scenes put the wise men at the stable next to the shepherds, but by the time they arrived, Jesus and His family were living in a house. Wherever it was, the wise men dropped to their knees. They had found the Son of God, and worship was the only thing left to do.

Matthew 2:9–11
"After the Wise Men had listened to the king, they went on their way. The star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them. It finally stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. The Wise Men went to the house. There they saw the child with his mother Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures. They gave him gold, frankincense and myrrh."

(Carol) "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Application:
Talk about it: besides singing, what are some other ways we can worship God? Then pick something to give up between now and Sunday as an act of worship. Dessert, screen time, a favorite toy. Choose it together and hold each other to it.

Prayer:
Lord, we are waiting and we are excited.
While we wait, make our hearts more
like Yours. Like the wise men, we want
to kneel down in front of You and worship.
Amen.

Week 2: Peace
FRIDAY

INTRODUCTION: RELIGHT THE 1ST AND 2ND CANDLES.
On a long journey, somebody had to take care of the animals and the gear. Saddles, bags, bridles, water. That job belonged to servants. It was hard work and nobody wrote songs about it. Then Jesus came, the King over everything, and He picked up a towel and washed feet. He showed us what serving actually looks like.

PHILIPPIANS 2:6–11
"In his very nature he was God. Jesus was equal with God. But Jesus didn't take advantage of that fact. Instead, he made himself nothing. He did this by taking on the nature of a servant. He was made just like human beings. He appeared as a man. He was humble and obeyed God completely. He did this even though it led to his death. Even worse, he died on a cross! So God lifted him up to the highest place. God gave him the name that is above every name. When the name of Jesus is spoken, everyone will kneel down to worship him. Everyone in heaven and on earth and under the earth will kneel down to worship him. Everyone's mouth will say that Jesus Christ is Lord. And God the Father will receive the glory."

(CAROL) "O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM"

APPLICATION:
Choose one thing to do together for somebody else. Bake cookies for a neighbor. Put together a care package and take it to a shelter. Rake a yard. Pick one, put it on the calendar, and actually do it this week.

PRAYER:
Lord, give us hearts like Jesus, the heart of a servant. Help us love people with the same love You have given us.
Amen.

Week 2: Peace
Saturday

Introduction: Relight the 1st and 2nd candles.
John the Baptist would stand out in any crowd. He lived out in the wilderness, ate locusts and wild honey, and wore clothes made of camel hair. But the strangest thing about him was not his diet or his coat. It was his job. God sent him ahead of Jesus to tell everyone to get ready.

Mark 1:1–8
"This is the beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. Long ago Isaiah the prophet wrote, "I will send my messenger ahead of you. He will prepare your way." (Malachi 3:1) "A messenger is calling out in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord. Make straight paths for him.'" (Isaiah 40:3) And so John the Baptist appeared in the desert. He preached that people should be baptized and turn away from their sins. Then God would forgive them. All the people from the countryside of Judea went out to him. All the people from Jerusalem went too. When they admitted they had sinned, John baptized them in the Jordan River. John wore clothes made out of camel's hair. He had a leather belt around his waist. And he ate locusts and wild honey. Here is what John was preaching. "After me, there is someone coming who is more powerful than I am. I'm not good enough to bend down and untie his sandals. I baptize you with water. But he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

(Carol) "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Application:
Make a list together of people you could invite to church this month, or send a link to a Christmas service they can watch from home. Then decide how you will invite them. A card, a text, a phone call. Put the names on paper and decide who asks who.

Prayer:
God, give us courage to invite our friends and neighbors, so they can hear about You too.
Amen.



WEEK 3

Joy

Week 3: Joy
THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

INTRODUCTION: RELIGHT THE 1ST AND 2ND CANDLES.
The angels did not take the news to the palace. They took it to shepherds, working the night shift on a hillside. The message was joy, and it was for everybody. The shepherds did not sit on it. They ran. And here is what happens with joy: the more of it you hand out, the more of it you end up with.

LUKE 2:10, 15–18
"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people."
..."The angels left and went into heaven. Then the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem. Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby. The baby was lying in the manger. After the shepherds had seen him, they told everyone. They reported what the angel had said about this child. All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them."

THE LIGHTING OF THE SHEPHERD'S CANDLE
Parent says: Three candles tonight. This one belongs to the shepherds. When the angel showed up on that hillside, joy spread across the whole countryside and into their hearts. Let's be glad together. Jesus is here.

APPLICATION:
Make paper chains for the Christmas tree and write a verse about joy on each link.

Here are a few to start with: Romans 12:12, Philippians 4:4, Psalm 16:11, 1 Thessalonians 2:20, and Psalm 66:1.

PRAYER:
God, our hearts are full because of the good news of Christmas.
Like the shepherds, help us tell somebody.
Amen.

Week 3: Joy
MONDAY

INTRODUCTION: RELIGHT THE 1ST, 2ND AND 3RD CANDLES.
Sheep cannot see far. A few feet ahead is about it. Left alone they wander off and get lost, and they are not clever enough to find their way back. That is why they need a shepherd. The good news of Christmas is that Jesus came looking for us the same way a shepherd goes after a lost sheep.

ISAIAH 53:6
"All of us are like sheep. We have wandered away from God. All of us have turned to our own way. And the Lord has placed on his servant the sins of all of us."

(CAROL) "JOY TO THE WORLD" (See lyrics in back of this book.)

APPLICATION:
Play Pin the Cotton Ball on the Sheep. Draw a big sheep on a piece of paper, tape it to the wall, blindfold the player, and hand them a cotton ball.

PRAYER:
Lord, forgive us when we wander.
Thank You for being a kind and patient shepherd who comes after us.
Help us tell the people around us the good news.
Amen.

Week 3: Joy
Tuesday

Introduction: Relight the 1st, 2nd and 3rd candles.
A shepherd's whole job was keeping the flock safe. He fought off wild animals. He counted the sheep at night and kept watch while they slept. Living out in the fields together, a shepherd came to know every sheep in his care. When Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd, that is the picture He had in mind. He knows us. He protects us. He stays.

John 10:11, 14–15
"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep."
..."I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and my sheep know me.
They know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.
And I give my life for the sheep."

(Carol) "Joy to the World"

Application:
Play Follow the Shepherd, which works just like Follow the Leader. The leader picks an animal and walks and sounds like that animal. Everyone else copies. Take turns and pick a new animal each round.

Prayer:
Lord, we want to follow You the way sheep follow their shepherd.
We trust that You love us and we depend on You.
Lead us today and we will follow.
Amen.

Week 3: Joy
Wednesday

Introduction: Relight the 1st, 2nd and 3rd candles.
John the Baptist looked at Jesus one day and called Him the Lamb of God. In the Old Testament, a lamb was offered in place of a person's sin, and it happened every year on a day called the Day of Atonement. Jesus came to deal with sin once and for all, so that no more lambs would ever be needed. He was the last one.

John 1:29
"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him. John said, 'Look! The Lamb of God! He takes away the sin of the world!' "

(Carol) "Joy to the World"

Application:
Work on the word search on the next page together as a family.

Prayer:
Jesus, thank You for coming to take away the sin of the world.
Thank You that we do not have to bring an offering for our sin anymore, because You went to the cross and rose again.
Help us love people and tell them about You.
Amen.

Advent Word Search

Find the words listed below.

F L H H S W W W A I T J L Q M R R
G C C P H B D U C D J C Q N J K D
X H F F R Z D J H E B A R W J O Y
R U X P G O X P R E P A R E A W N
P R H U I T B S I W O W Y B D O P
G C T H F Z S K S V S W T I V W H
Q H R N T Z P Y T F S H A R E W T
D P J Q A J R F M D B D V T N L J
E K F S P L A D A D X J O H T I P
W Y V T X T Y Q S O A E Z D G Q F
U M U F H T I M E U T P T A T W Z
T S F A M I L Y Q Q K K Z Y F B W
C A E N C E L E B R A T I O N R A
P A S D Q U F U G S G L O A H G W
U P L S D P N O C C B O X O R R V
J W T W Q P N T L B F V S O M B O
V J E S U S A V J W U E U M M W P

Word Bank:

ADVENT BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION CHRISTMAS CHURCH FAMILY
GIFT JESUS JOY LOVE PRAY PREPARE SHARE TIME WAIT

Week 3: Joy
Thursday

Introduction: Relight the 1st, 2nd and 3rd candles.
When something amazing happens, it is almost impossible to keep quiet about it. Has that ever happened to you? What was it? Those shepherds on the hillside had the biggest night of their lives. They saw angels. They found the baby. Then they went home telling everyone they passed along the way. Good news was never meant to be kept.

Luke 2:20
"The shepherds returned. They gave glory and praise to God. Everything they had seen and heard was just as they had been told."

(Carol) "Joy to the World"

Application:
Play Telephone with a Christmas phrase. Whisper it down the line and let the last person say out loud what they heard. It usually comes out sideways. Then talk about it: the message got scrambled, and that happens in real life too. How do we make sure people really hear that Jesus loves them?

Prayer:
Lord, thank You for the shepherds
who could not stop talking about You.
This Christmas, give us the courage and
the words to tell people what we
have seen and heard.
Amen.

Week 3: Joy
Friday

Introduction: Relight the 1st, 2nd and 3rd candles.
Prophets were people God gave messages to. Isaiah was one of them, and he wrote about a Messiah who would come and rescue God's people. He said this Messiah would gather His sheep and hold them close to His heart. That is how Jesus feels about you. Close is where He wants you.

Isaiah 40:9–11
Zion, you are bringing good news to your people. Go up on a high mountain and announce it. Jerusalem, you are bringing good news to them. Shout the message loudly. Shout it out loud. Don't be afraid. Say to the towns of Judah, "Your God is coming!" The Lord and King is coming with power. He rules with a powerful arm. He has set his people free. He is bringing them back as his reward. He has won the battle over their enemies. He takes care of his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms. He carries them close to his heart. He gently leads those that have little ones.

(Carol) "Joy to the World"

Application:
Make megaphones out of rolled paper and tape, then decorate them with markers or crayons. Use them to read today's verses out loud, one line each.

Prayer:
God, make us like Isaiah, brave enough
to tell people the good news about Jesus.
Let our lives be a megaphone.
Teach us to see You more clearly,
love You more dearly, and follow You more nearly.
Amen.

Week 3: Joy
Saturday

Introduction: Relight the 1st, 2nd and 3rd candles.
Have you heard any good news lately? A test that went well, a new baby in the family, something you had been hoping for. How did it feel when you found out? Good news lights people up. On a hillside outside Bethlehem, a group of shepherds got the best news anyone has ever been handed, and they could not wait to spread the word.

Luke 2:17–18
After the shepherds had seen him, they told everyone. They reported what the angel had said about this child. 18 All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

Romans 10:14
"How can they call on him unless they believe in him? How can they believe in him unless they hear about him? How can they hear about him unless someone preaches to them?"

(Carol) "Joy to the World"

Application:
Have you ever been in a play or a school program?
Remember rehearsing until you knew it cold?
Take turns practicing how you would tell the Christmas story to a neighbor who has never heard it. Keep it in your own words and give everyone a turn.

Prayer:
Lord, we are glad You came to earth at Christmas.
Use us to tell the story to people who have not heard it.
Give us joy while we tell it.
Amen.



WEEK 4

Love

Week 4: Love
The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Introduction: Relight the 1st, 2nd and 3rd candles.
Everybody loves getting good news. It lifts your head up. It makes the whole day feel different. The angel Gabriel brought Mary the best news anyone has ever been handed: she was going to have a son, His name would be Jesus, and He would save people from their sins.

Luke 1:26–33
"In the sixth month after Elizabeth had become pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He was sent to a virgin. The girl was engaged to a man named Joseph. He came from the family line of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel greeted her and said, "The Lord has blessed you in a special way. He is with you." Mary was very upset because of his words. She wondered what kind of greeting this could be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary. God is very pleased with you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king like his father David of long ago. The Son of the Most High God will rule forever over his people. They are from the family line of Jacob. That kingdom will never end."

The Lighting of the Shepherd's Candle
Parent says: Four candles now, and look how much light is on this table. The way that light fills the room is the way the news about Jesus is meant to fill the world. The angels announced it from the sky. Christ is born in Bethlehem.

(Carol) "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"
(See lyrics in back of this book.)

Application:
Talk about it: how do we show people God's love? Telling them is one way. What are the others?
Helping someone who is struggling. Listening when a friend needs to talk. Obeying your parents without being asked twice. See how many you can name.

Prayer:
Lord, make us like the angels, people who carry good news wherever we go. Help us share the love of Christmas all year long.
Amen.

Week 4: Love
Monday

Introduction: Relight the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th candles.
Being the first to hear something big is exciting, especially when it is good. The shepherds were the first to hear about the night that would split history in two. At first they were terrified, because an angel is a frightening thing to run into in a dark field. Then the angel told them why he had come, and their fear turned into joy.

Luke 2:8–11
"There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were taking care of their sheep. An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord."

(Carol) "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

Application:
Go around and share the best news you heard this week. A good grade, a kind word, a great meal. Then say one thing you are hoping to hear soon.

Talk about it: why was the news about Jesus such good news?
And how does good news push out fear?

Prayer:
Lord, thank You for coming to earth to save us.
Remind us that You love us this week at school and at work.
And when we remember Your love, help us love people the same way.
Amen.

Week 4: Love
TUESDAY

INTRODUCTION: RELIGHT THE 1ST, 2ND, 3RD AND 4TH CANDLES.
Christmas comes with music. Songs in the car, songs at church, songs playing in every store you walk into. The first Christmas had music too. When Jesus was born, the sky filled with angels singing, and the song was about peace. The birth of Jesus was so big that heaven started the celebration.

LUKE 2:13–14
Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven also appeared. They were praising God. They said, "May glory be given to God in the highest heaven! And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!"

(CAROL) "HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING"

APPLICATION:
Ask everyone for their favorite Christmas song and why they love it. Sing a few together. After each one, talk about what the song is actually saying.

Then look at the angels' song in Luke 2:13-14.
What were they telling the shepherds?
Why does that song still matter to us?

PRAYER:
Jesus, make us messengers of peace like those angels.
Thank You for coming to live with us and making it possible
for us to be at peace with God and with each other.
Amen.

Week 4: Love
Wednesday

Introduction: Relight the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th candles.

We do not know much about Joseph, but we know God chose him with the same care He used in choosing Mary. When Joseph found out Mary was pregnant, he had every right to make it public, and most men in his position would have. He did not. He lay awake at night trying to figure out how to step back quietly without hurting her. Then an angel showed up in a dream.
Here is what happened.

Matthew 1:18–21

"This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that she was going to have a baby. She became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph was faithful to the law. But he did not want to put her to shame in public. So he planned to divorce her quietly. But as Joseph was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That's because he will save his people from their sins."

(Carol) "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

Application:

Talk about your favorite Christmas movie and the one scene that always gets you. Then ask each other: if an angel appeared to you in a dream the way one did to Joseph, how do you think you would react?

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for Joseph and the way he protected Mary.
Make us that kind of family, the kind that treats people
with compassion the way You treat us.
Amen.

Week 4: Love
THURSDAY

INTRODUCTION: RELIGHT THE 1ST, 2ND, 3RD AND 4TH CANDLES.

We use the word love for almost everything. I love pizza. I love baseball. I love these shoes. But love is bigger than liking something a lot. 1 Corinthians 13 describes love as patient and kind and never giving up. John 3:16 shows us what that looks like: God sent His only Son, knowing exactly what it would cost Him. You might love pizza today and be tired of it next year. God's love does not work that way. It holds, every day, now and forever.

JOHN 3:16

"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life."

(CAROL) "HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING"

APPLICATION:

Cut hearts out of red construction paper, or color white paper red. Write the words of John 3:16 on each one. Hang them on the Christmas tree, then pray together and thank God for loving us enough to send Jesus.

PRAYER:

Lord, thank You for sending Jesus because You love us that much.
There are a lot of things in this world we mistake for love.
This Christmas, show us the real thing.
Help us live inside Your love every day and let it guide everything we do.
Amen.

Week 4: Love
FRIDAY

INTRODUCTION: RELIGHT THE 1ST, 2ND, 3RD AND 4TH CANDLES.

Some news is too good to keep to yourself. Has that ever happened to you? Mary heard she was going to be the mother of the Messiah, and she went straight to her cousin Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard, she said Mary was blessed for believing God would do what He said He would do. And Mary sang. The words she sang that day are still in the Bible.

LUKE 1:46–55

"Mary said, "My soul gives glory to the Lord. My spirit delights in God my Savior. He has taken note of me even though I am not considered important. From now on all people will call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me. His name is holy. He shows his mercy to those who have respect for him, from parent to child down through the years. He has done mighty things with his powerful arm. He has scattered those who are proud in their deepest thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones. But he has lifted up people who are not considered important. He has filled with good things those who are hungry. But he has sent away empty those who are rich. He has helped the people of Israel, who serve him. He has always remembered to be kind to Abraham and his children down through the years. He has done it just as he promised to our people of long ago."

(CAROL) "HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING"

APPLICATION:

Time for another ornament. Yesterday you made one with John 3:16 on it.
Today, draw a gift. It can be a real gift you received for a birthday or Christmas.
Color it, cut it out, and tell your family why you drew that one.
Then hang them on the tree. Jesus is the best gift anyone has ever been given.

PRAYER:

God, help us see Your rescue plan all through the Bible.
You sent Jesus to rescue us from sin, and that plan is not just for us.
It is for everyone. Help us believe how deeply You love us. We love You.
Amen.

Week 4: Love
Saturday

Introduction: Relight the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th candles.

Has anyone ever made you a promise and actually kept it? Now imagine thousands of promises, every single one of them kept. That is God through the whole Bible. The biggest promise of all was that He would send His own Son. For that promise to come true, Mary and Joseph had to make the long walk to Joseph's hometown of Bethlehem. When they finally arrived, it was as though the whole world held its breath.

Luke 2:1–6

"In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world. It was the first time a list was made of the people while Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone went to their own town to be listed. So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David. He went there with Mary to be listed. Mary was engaged to him. She was expecting a baby. While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the child to be born."

(Carol) "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

Application:

When Mary and Joseph got to Bethlehem, there was no room and no bed.
A stable and a feed trough were all they had.

Grab a piece of paper or open a note on your phone. As a family, list everything God has given you this year. See how long you can make the list. Keep it somewhere you will find it again, so the next time you need a reminder that God keeps His promises, it is right there.

Prayer:

God, thank You for reminding us that You keep Your promises.
Thank You for this year and everything in it.
Most of all, thank You for Jesus.
He is the best promise ever kept.
Amen.



CHRISTMAS EVE + DAY

EMMANUEL

EMMANUEL

DECEMBER 24 + 25

INTRODUCTION: RELIGHT THE 1ST, 2ND, 3RD AND 4TH CANDLES.

Look at the wreath. Four weeks ago there was one small flame on this table, and now it is full of light. That is what we have been doing every night: watching the light grow while we waited. The waiting is over. The Light of the World is here. Christ is born today.

ISAIAH 9:2, 6–7

"The people who are now living in darkness will see a great light. They are now living in a very dark land. But a light will shine on them."

"...A child will be born to us. A son will be given to us. He will rule over us. And he will be called Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God. He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever and Prince Who Brings Peace. There will be no limit to how great his authority is. The peace he brings will never end. He will rule on David's throne and over his kingdom. He will make the kingdom strong and secure. His rule will be based on what is fair and right. It will last forever. The Lord's great love will make sure that happens. He rules over all.

(CAROL) PICK YOUR FAVORITE CAROL AND SING IT AS A FAMILY.

THE LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

Parent says: This last candle is the Christ candle. It stands for Jesus, our Savior, the Light of the World. Let's light it together and thank Him for being here with us. (Light the center candle.)

APPLICATION:

Throw Jesus a birthday party. Bake a cake, put on paper hats, light the candles, and sing happy birthday to Him. It is the biggest birthday there has ever been.

PRAYER:

Lord, thank You for leaving Your throne in heaven and coming to live among us. This has been a good season of learning more about You and Your plan for us. Thank You for wanting us. Amen.


CHRISTMAS
CAROLS

Away in a Manger

Away in a manger, no crib for His bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head;
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the poor Baby awakes.
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the night sky.
And stay by my side till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay.
Close by me forever, and love me I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care.
And take us to Heaven to live with Thee there.

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary
And gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love
O morning stars together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And Peace to men on earth

Joy to the World

Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing (x2)
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the world! the Savior reigns;
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy (x2)
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found (x2)
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love (x2)
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Hark the herald angels sing,
Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
Christ is born in Bethlehem
Hark! The herald angels sing,
Glory to the newborn King!
Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Ris'n with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth
Hark! The herald angels sing,
Glory to the newborn King!


2026
ADVENT
FAMILY DEVOTIONAL


CrossLife
CHURCH