

ST. LUKE'S FAMILY ADVENT WREATH GUIDE



FAMILY ADVENT GUIDE

Advent is a time of holy expectation; waiting and preparing for the coming of Jesus. The word advent means “coming.” For the four Sundays before Christmas, we’ll prepare our hearts by remembering that Jesus is the Light of the World. Each week, we’ll focus on one of the different gifts that Jesus’ coming brought us: love, peace, joy, and faith.

Gather your family around your Advent Wreath as you focus your hearts and minds on the thing that matters most. Use these weekly devotions to lead your family through the lighting of your Advent wreath each week and on Christmas Day.



WEEK ONE - RECEIVING HOPE

Supplies: 1 Coin

Action: Sit together with your family. Flip the coin and call either heads or tails. Ask a family member to flip the coin a few times and guess heads or tails.

Say: When you said either heads or tails you were hoping the coin would land on the side you chose. This is like wishing for something to happen.

Ask: What are some things you wish for?

(Examples: Vacation, a special toy, a visit from your favorite relative.)

Say: When we hope or wish things will turn out a certain way, we really don't have a sure guarantee that it will work out as we think it should.

It's much like flipping the coin. Sometimes it lands on heads and sometimes it lands on tails. Each day, some things go the way we hope they will, and other times they don't.

Ask: What are some things you've hoped for that haven't happened?

Say: When we talk about having Hope in the Lord, it's not the same thing. God is faithful and unchanging. We can Hope in Him because He always has our best interest in mind. God wants only good for us.

Light the first (purple) candle on your Advent wreath.

As we light this first candle of Advent, the Hope candle, let's prepare our hearts and remember that we have Hope in God because He never fails.

Prayer

Merciful Christ, You are the Everlasting Light that shines in the darkness. In the midst of despair, You offer hope. While we have known difficult times, we know that we were never alone. You are always with us, and we receive our hope from You. Let our lives reflect Your light to the world and offer hope to all. - Amen.



WEEK TWO - RECEIVING PEACE

Supplies: Anything that can be stacked (deck of cards, blocks, cups, boxes, can be a mix of anything you have at home)

Action: Work together as a family and see how high you can make a stack with the objects. (Can you go completely to the ceiling?)

Say: Wow! We really made a tall tower with our objects. Let's look at our tower and I want you to think of it as representing things in our lives like school, work, family, friends and so on. Encourage family members to add comments/ideas.

Say: Our lives can get very full of things, can't they? Then sometimes, other things get added like sickness, maybe someone loses a job, divorce, the death of someone you love, your school closes, a friend moves away and so on. When these things happen, they can cause our tower to get a little bit shaky, can't they?



Ask: What are some things that have caused your life to get a bit shaky?

Say: Just like this tower can get shaky, our lives can get that way, too. But there's something we can add to our tower that will help it stand strong, even when things are added. What is something we could do to our tower to make it stronger and less likely to fall over? (Hopefully, someone will suggest gluing the items together or securing the tower with heavy objects.)

Say: We can secure this tower with glue or heavy objects, or any number of different things. But for our lives to stand strong, there's only one thing we need and that's

Jesus! When we have Jesus in our hearts, we can have Peace even when bad things happen because we know Jesus is with us always. He's the glue that holds us together and gives us Peace.

Light the first (purple) and second candles (purple) on your Advent wreath.

Say: As we light this 2nd candle of Advent, let's remember the Peace that only comes from Jesus.

Pray: *Holy God, thank You for the peace that comes through knowing Jesus. Help us to be peacemakers. Help us to be Yours as we wait for You to come again. - Amen.*

WEEK THREE - RECEIVING THE GIFTS OF GOD

Supplies: Book or movie of "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" by Dr. Seuss.

Action: Read the book or watch the movie together as a family.

Say: In this story, the Who's had a big struggle. What was it? (The Grinch stole everything from them.)

Ask: Although the Who's woke up and everything had been taken from them, they were still joy filled. How was this possible? (They knew the true meaning of Christmas wasn't about THINGS.)

Say: During this Christmas season, we'll exchange gifts, eat lots of food, have wonderful decorations, sing Christmas carols, and do lots of other things. But none of them is the true gift we receive from God and celebrate at Christmas time.

Ask: What is the true gift? (Jesus)

Ask: How can we remember to make Jesus the focus of our celebrations?

Light the first (purple), second (purple), and third candles (pink) of your Advent wreath.

Say: As we light this 3rd candle of Advent, let's remember that we've already received the greatest gift of God's love-Jesus!

Pray: *Holy God, thank You for sending Jesus to save us and bring us joy. We celebrate because He came to live with us and in us and through us. Help us to be Yours as we wait for You to come again. - Amen.*



WEEK FOUR - RECEIVING EMMANUEL

Supplies: 1 Balloon

Action: Gather your family together and show everyone the limp balloon.

Say: Look at this cool balloon I have. Do you think we could have fun with this balloon? (Someone will tell you to blow up the balloon.) Oh, you're right! Balloons aren't much fun unless they're inflated. Hey balloon, blow yourself up! (Look at the balloon as if expecting it to inflate.)

Say: I don't think this balloon is paying attention. (Hopefully, someone will say that you need to blow it up.) You mean a balloon needs help to inflate? Blow a bit of air into the balloon. Pretend to be blowing very hard, but not gaining.

Then say: I think I need your help to do this. Take a deep breath and hold it, please. Now as I blow into the balloon, I want you to blow out some of the air you're holding. As everyone blows, add more air to the balloon.

Say: Hmm, we're getting somewhere, I think. Take another deep breath and hold it, please. When I blow into the balloon, you blow out your air. Continue this several times until the balloon is inflated.

Then say: This balloon could not blow itself up. It reminds me of us because we can't grow up by ourselves either. We need God's help to grow, just like the balloon needed help to grow bigger.

Say: Let's say the word, "Emmanuel"! (repeat the Emmanuel several times) This word means God with us.

Emmanuel is another name for Jesus, so Jesus means "God with us"! When we have God with us, we can learn and grow and serve God. But without Him, we can do nothing!

Light the first (purple), second (purple), third (pink), and fourth (purple) candles of your Advent wreath.

Say: As we light this 4th candle of Advent, let's open our hearts to receive Emmanuel; God With Us!

Pray: *Holy God, thank You for being Emmanuel, thank you for being with us and for loving us. Help us to focus on You as we wait for You to come again. - Amen.*



CHRISTMAS EVE/DAY - JESUS IS BORN

Supplies: World Atlas or map of Israel, picture of Church of the Nativity (easy to find online)

Action: Gather your family together around the Christmas tree and read aloud or sing these lyrics from 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*

Say: Bethlehem. Let's see exactly where that's located. Open the atlas or map and locate Bethlehem.

Discuss: Bethlehem is situated approximately five and a half miles west of Jerusalem. It is the place where Jesus was born. The most important site in Bethlehem is the Church of the Nativity in Manger Square, which was built in the fourth century (show picture). This is the most-visited site in Israel. Every Christmas Eve, faithful Christians gather at this church to worship. For many it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to commemorate Jesus' birth in the city where he was born. Although we can't be in Bethlehem tonight to celebrate, we can do it right here in our home.



Light all five candles of your Advent wreath.

As we light this 5th and final candle, we remember that all our hopes and fears are met in Christ.

Pray: *Jesus, thank You for bringing Light into the world. Your love is the best gift we could receive. Help us to share Your love with others. Help us carry Your love, peace, joy, and faith with us as we work and wait for You to come again. - Amen.*



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