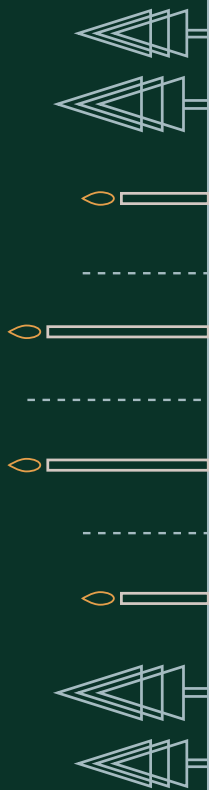




Advent

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL



A woman is shown in profile, lighting a purple Advent candle. In the background, a Christmas tree is decorated with red berries and lights. The scene is dimly lit, with the candle providing a warm glow.

Advent

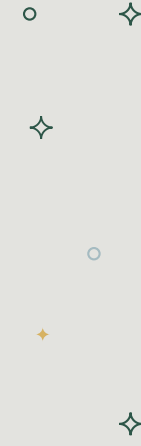
FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

*Celebrating the
Gift of Christmas*

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of
Peace. Of the greatness of his government
and peace there will be no end.”*

ISAIAH 9:6-7A

Advent Family Devotional has been created to help you anticipate the celebration of the birth of Jesus and capture the tradition of Advent this Christmas season. Enjoy these activities together as an individual, couple, family with kids of all ages, or with a group of friends each week throughout Advent. Set this out in a special place, like the kitchen table, to prepare for Christmas together and to serve as a reminder throughout the week.



WHAT IS ADVENT?

When you think of the word Advent, you may think of getting a chocolate or treat each day in December, anticipating the greatest treat on the day of Christmas. The word **ADVENT** comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means *coming* or *arrival*. Advent is a time for holy expectation, as we wait and prepare for the coming of Christ, both the first coming 2000 years ago and the second coming, when all will be made new. Advent worship is like a journey through the Christmas story, a time for remembering and rejoicing. These are meaningful traditions that bring rhythm to our lives and deepen our experiences.

For centuries the Church has celebrated the four-week Advent season by lighting candles in a wreath and reflecting on the coming of Jesus as told in Scripture. Beginning the fourth Sunday before Christmas, a new candle is lit each week to represent the anticipation of Christmas coming. The circle of the wreath represents God's never-ending love for us, the evergreens represent Christ's gift of eternal life and the candles announce Jesus as the Light of the World. Each week of Advent focuses on one of the different gifts that Christ's arrival has brought to us - **HOPE, FAITH, PEACE, JOY, and LOVE.**

May the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ be with you and your family during this season as you prepare your hearts for His coming.

Advance Preparation

The Advent tradition often follows the progression of the season through an Advent wreath with five candles. Advent wreaths and candles are easy to find in the holiday section of many stores or online.

Traditionally, there are three purple, one pink, and one white candle, but any color will work. Arrange the wreath and candles in the center of your table with this ***Advent Family Devotional*** to guide your family during a meal or family time each of the four weeks before Christmas and on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Each week has the following:

VERSE OF THE WEEK A verse will be provided for you to recite and/or memorize together.

ADVENT ACTIVITY An activity to do as you light the candle and talk about the focus for the week.

CHRISTMAS SONG A special song to help you focus on the theme for the week.

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY A special activity to live out the focus of the week, make holiday memories and create traditions.

NATIVITY A specific character in the Nativity scene that you add each week to help you focus on the theme and talk through the Christmas Story.

RECIPE A Christmas recipe to make during the week. *Recipes can be found at the back of the book.*

VERSE OF THE WEEK

Romans 15:13 *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

CHRISTMAS SONG

Listen to *O Holy Night*

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY

Make or gather items for your Advent wreath

NATIVITY

Stable, Animals

RECIPE

Peppermint Cocoa
(See back of book)



ADVENT ACTIVITY: HOPE

Light the First Candle Start by lighting the first candle. Traditionally a purple candle is lit first, but any color will work. Consider taking turns lighting the candles and reading the verses each week.

Talk About It The first week of Advent is the week of Hope. Hope is looking forward to something, waiting with expectation for something yet to come. The story of Jesus' birth actually began thousands of years before He was born. God promised the people of Israel that He would provide a Messiah (Savior) to save them from their sins. For centuries, the people of Israel waited with great hope for the Messiah to come. This candle represents HOPE. When Jesus came, He brought hope to a dark, lost world. Just like the candle, Jesus brings light to our darkness.

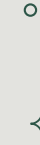
Read Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”

Explain The prophet Isaiah, who lived hundreds of years before Jesus, predicted the birth of Jesus as a promise of hope from God. The word Immanuel means *God living with us*, and was fulfilled when Jesus came to live on earth as the Messiah.

Discuss

- What is something you are hoping for this Christmas?
- What is the hardest part of waiting until Christmas?
- Can you imagine waiting hundreds of years for Jesus to come like the people of Israel had to do?
- How did a baby bring hope into the world?
- How can we as a family share hope with others?
- What if Jesus came to visit our home? How would we want to prepare for Him?

Pray *Father in Heaven, thank you for the gift of your son Jesus, who was not only the hope of Israel thousands of years ago but our hope of salvation today. Help us to keep the hope of Jesus in our home this Christmas season, to look past all the decorations and gifts to remember that we are waiting more than anything for You. Amen.*



VERSE OF THE WEEK

Hebrews 11:1 “*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*”

CHRISTMAS SONG

Listen to *O Come All Ye Faithful*

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY

Leave a note, gift or treat on a neighbors porch. Consider an elderly, sick, or lonely neighbor that might truly need a reminder that God loves and sees them.

NATIVITY

Mary and Joseph

RECIPE

Christmas Crunchies
(See *back of book*)



ADVENT ACTIVITY: FAITH

Light the Candles Start by lighting last week's purple candle and remind everyone that it is the candle of Hope. Then light the second candle and explain that it is the candle of Faith. Traditionally the first two candles lit are purple.

Talk About It The second week of Advent is the week of Faith. Can you imagine how much faith Mary and Joseph had to have as they learned they were going to be parents to the Son of God! When things were not easy, and there was no room in the inn, I'm sure it was easy to be anxious! But their faith was bigger than their fear. They had faith that God loved them and was taking care of them, even when they didn't understand.

Romans 10:17 says, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." When we read the Bible and learn about Jesus and the ways He has been faithful to His followers, it helps us to trust that He loves us too!

Explain When we read the Bible and look to Jesus, we see all the ways that he has been faithful to his followers. It helps us to trust that he loves us and will be faithful to us too!

Read Hebrews 12:2 "looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Discuss

- What are the ways that Mary and Joseph showed faith – even though they may have been afraid?
- Do you have any ideas of ways that we can be faithful and look to Jesus each day?
- What are some things that might distract us from focusing on Jesus?
- Isn't it wonderful that Jesus is the perfecter of our faith?

Pray *Father in Heaven, we thank you for the gift of your son Jesus, who came to help us understand your love. Help our faith to grow and that we will trust and believe in Your constant love of us, your children. Amen.*



VERSE OF THE WEEK

Psalms 126:3 *“The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.”*

CHRISTMAS SONG

Listen to *Joy to the World*

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY

Go look at Christmas lights or go caroling

NATIVITY

Angel

RECIPE

Christmas Mints
(See back of book)

ADVENT ACTIVITY: JOY

Light the Candles Start by lighting the first two candles and remind everyone that these are the candles of Hope and Faith. Then light the third candle and explain it is the candle of Joy. Traditionally the first two candles lit are purple, and the third is pink, the color of Joy, but any color will work.

Talk About It The third week of Advent is Joy. Joy is great happiness or delight, a deep sense of well-being that goes beyond our circumstances. Joy comes from the Lord in good times and bad. In Luke 2:10-11, the angels appeared to the shepherds in the fields nearby to announce that a baby has been born in a manger. The angels describe Jesus' birth as "good news of great joy" because He came to be our Savior! The Bible tells us that right after they announced this news to the shepherds, thousands of angels appeared and sang glory to God because Jesus had been born. This week we are reminded of the joy of salvation, the most incredible gift that was given to a lost and broken world.

Read Luke 2:10-11 "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause 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.'"

Discuss

- What are some things that bring us joy at Christmas? (family, gifts, parties, etc.)
- Why did the angels say that the news of Jesus' birth is great joy? (Because He came to be the Savior of all people.)
- The Christmas carol, *Joy to the World* includes the line "let every heart prepare Him (Jesus) room." Have you prepared room in your heart for Jesus by trusting in Him as your Savior? Have we prepared room in our Christmas activities for Him?
- How can we prepare for Him this Christmas?
- How can we share His joy with others during this season?

Pray *Father in Heaven, thank You for the gift of Your son Jesus, who came to be the Savior for everyone who trusts in Him. Help us to remember that Jesus came to save us and help us to share the great joy of this Good News with one another. Amen.*





WEEK FOUR

Peace



VERSE OF THE WEEK

John 14:27 *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

CHRISTMAS SONG

Listen to *Away in a Manger*

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY

Make Christmas cards or ornaments for family or friends

NATIVITY

Shepherds and Wise men

RECIPE

Gingerbread Waffles
(See back of book)

ADVENT ACTIVITY: PEACE

Light the Candles Start by lighting the first three candles and remind everyone that these are the candles of Hope, Faith, and Joy. Then light the fourth candle and explain that it is the candle of Peace. Traditionally this candle is purple.

Talk About It The fourth week of Advent is the week of Peace. Isaiah 9:6 tells us that Jesus came to be the Prince of Peace. The word peace is the Hebrew word *shalom*, which means *completeness* or *well-being*. Jesus didn't come just to end wars but to make us complete by saving us from our sinfulness. All we have to do is trust in Jesus as the Son of God who came to save us, and we will have the peace, or *shalom*, of God. This week we are reminded that Jesus brings the promise of peace to our lives.

Read Isaiah 9:6 “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Discuss

- Did you know that *shalom* continues to this day as a Hebrew greeting that wishes someone well? Turn to one another and greet each other with, “*Shalom!*”
- What are some areas where we don't always have peace in our lives? (Not getting along with our family or friends, overloaded schedule, finances, etc.)
- What are some things that can keep us from having peace with God? (Not obeying our parents, breaking rules at school, arguing with our spouse, etc.)
- How can we be peacemakers?

Pray *Father in Heaven, thank You for the gift of Your son Jesus, who came to be the Prince of Peace and save us from our sinfulness. Help us to trust in Jesus to make us complete and to show the peace of Jesus to one another. Amen.*

Peace



VERSE OF THE WEEK

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

CHRISTMAS SONG

Listen to *Silent Night*

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY

Have a birthday party for Jesus

NATIVITY

Baby Jesus

RECIPE

Christmas Pull-Apart Bread
(See back of book)

ADVENT ACTIVITY: CHRIST

**To help keep Jesus at the center of your Christmas, consider starting your Christmas Day celebrating Jesus' birthday.*

Light the Candles Start your time by lighting the first four candles and remind everyone that these are the candles of Hope, Faith, Joy, and Peace. Light the fifth candle and explain it is the candle of Christ. Traditionally, three candles lit are purple, one is pink, and the fifth is white, but any colors will work.

Read John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Explain The fifth candle celebrates the arrival of Jesus. These verses tell us that Jesus came as a baby born in a manger. The Bible tells us in Philippians 2:7 that even though Jesus is God and deserved to remain in Heaven with God, He chose to come and be born as a baby to be our Savior. In Week 3 - Joy, we read how

the angels had appeared to the shepherds to tell them about Jesus being born. We see how these shepherds responded when they finally saw Jesus for themselves - they were so excited they went and told everyone. Today we celebrate with the same excitement!

Discuss

- What about Christmas makes you so excited that you want to tell everyone you see? (favorite gift, house with the most lights, trip you took, etc.)
- Why were the shepherds so excited to tell everyone about Jesus? (the angels had appeared to them, Jesus was born in a manger, Jesus was the Savior they had been waiting for, etc.)
- Who are some people with whom you could share the story of Jesus coming to be our Savior?

Pray *Father in Heaven, thank You for the gift of Your son Jesus, who chose to come and be born as a baby in a manger to be our Savior. Help us to find ways to share the story of Jesus with others. Amen.*



WEEK 3 RECIPE

CHRISTMAS MINTS



CHRISTMAS EVE/DAY

CHRISTMAS PULL-APART BREAD



WEEK 2 RECIPE

GINGERBREAD WAFFLES



WEEK 4 RECIPE

CHRISTMAS CRUNCHIES



Weekly Recipes



PEPPERMINT COCOA

16 oz. nondairy creamer

8 cups nonfat dry milk

1 lb. powdered sugar

3 tbsp. dark cocoa

Dash of salt

1 cup crushed candy cane

Mix together creamer, milk, sugar, cocoa, salt, and crushed candy canes. Store in a container until ready to use.

To use:

Add $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cocoa mix to 1 cup hot water; stir well.

WEEK 1 RECIPE

PEPPERMINT COCOA



CHRISTMAS MINTS

1 (8 oz.) package cream cheese,
room temperature

$\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. flavoring (peppermint, butter,
almond, wintergreen, other)

Food coloring

5 cups or more powdered sugar

Sugar, as needed

In a medium bowl, beat cream cheese, flavoring, and coloring. Gradually add powdered sugar. Mix and knead until the mixture reaches the consistency of pie dough or putty. Roll into marble-sized balls. Dip in sugar and put on waxed paper. Use a fork or thumb to press into a flat mint. Once firm, transfer to a wire rack and let dry for 2 hours. Store in an airtight container. Yield: About 6 dozen mints.

GINGERBREAD WAFFLES

1 cup light molasses

2 cups flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ginger

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking soda

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cinnamon

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt

1 egg

whipped topping

Preheat waffle iron and spray with nonstick cooking spray. In a small saucepan, heat molasses and butter until almost boiling. Remove from heat and let cool slightly. Stir baking soda into the molasses mixture, milk, and egg; set aside. In a large bowl, mix flour, ginger, cinnamon, and salt. Make a well in the center and pour in the molasses mixture. Mix until smooth. Pour batter onto hot waffle iron. Cook until golden brown. Serve with whipped topping if desired.

CHRISTMAS

PULL-APART BREAD

3 large tubes refrigerated biscuits, separated

1 tsp. cinnamon

½ cup sugar

½ cup margarine, melted

¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar

Cut each biscuit into quarters. Combine cinnamon and sugar; roll biscuit pieces in mixture, coating each piece well. Place in a greased Bundt pan. Mix margarine and brown sugar; pour over biscuits. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 30 minutes. Consider adding candles and using this as your birthday cake for Jesus.

CHRISTMAS CRUNCHIES

1 cup butterscotch chips

½ cup crunchy peanut butter

5 cups crisp rice cereal

In a saucepan, stir butterscotch chips and peanut butter over low heat until the chips are melted. Pour the mixture over the cereal in a large bowl. Stir gently until cereal is completely coated. Drop by teaspoons onto waxed paper. Chill for at least 2 hours.



**St. Luke's**
METHODIST CHURCH
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