



Family Advent Guide

Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas. This year Advent begins on December 2, 2018. By tradition five candles are used during Advent. There is one candle for each Sunday; four purple candles the color of royalty, and one candle at the center called the Christ candle for Christmas, white the color of purity and light. Advent candles are often placed in an evergreen wreath. The circle of the wreath symbolizes the eternal nature of God and the evergreen represents the everlasting life found in Christ. Each week in Advent carries its own theme to consider.

Each Sunday during Advent gather as a family and read the short teaching, light the candle(s), read the week's scripture, and pray. Complete the other activities throughout the week as you are able.



Advent – A Christmas Experience

Sunday, December 16th

The Third Candle: meditate on **Love**

Teaching: PROCLAMATION

God wanted everyone to know how much he loved the world. He placed a special star in the sky that shown ever so brightly and proclaimed the coming of the savior. Important men, wealthy men, saw the star and traveled a long distance and many days to find Jesus. God sent a crowd of angels to light up the night sky and tell shepherds working in the fields the savior was born. The angels invited the shepherds to come, to see, and to know Jesus. God is with us.

God shouted to the world through nature and through the angels God shouted to lowly shepherds and to wise men. God calls out to us. God proclaimed that there was no reason to fear. That the special man about whom the prophets spoke had come. God wants everyone to know of his great love and his precious gift to the world, the gift of knowing and having God with us always, now and forever.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 2:10 "And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.'"

Isaiah 61:1 "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound."

ACTIVITIES

Activity For Kids: Bells

The sound of a bell ringing gets our attention. Showing someone love through kind words, small gifts, acts of service, spending time together, or giving hugs or handshakes is a great way to get their attention. When you have their attention, you can look for an opportunity to tell them the Good News of God's love.

What you need:

- A package of medium size jingle bells from a craft store
- Green pipe cleaners (or color of your choice)
- 12 oz. red disposable cups (or color of your choice)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Paint or decorate the cup and let dry. Use glitter, paint pens, markers, stickers or anything you have on hand
2. Make two small holes in the bottom of the cup.
3. Thread one end of the pipe cleaner through the opening at the top of the jingle bell. Twist the pipe cleaner onto itself to hold the bell in place.
4. Thread the other end of the pipe cleaner out and back in the holes to make a loop for hanging. Inside the cup twist the pipe cleaner onto itself to hold it in place.
5. Tie a decorative ribbon on the hanging loop.

Hang your bells on a door, so that you can hear them ring every time the door moves. Each time you hear the bell you might thank God for his unfailing love or ask God to show you a way to share his love with others.

Activity For The Family: Give to those in need

There are many ways to give to others. We just need to be intentional. Who needs your love?

Go to the bank and get some dollar bills. Put them in a special place to be ready and available every time you go shopping, then when you are out at the stores look for a bell ringer asking you to help those in need. Commit to putting in a dollar every time you hear those bells. Remember those bells declare God's love.

Activity For The Family: Watch a Movie

There is a longing in our heart that that no trip to the store, decorations, Christmas dishes or new ornaments can fill. If we are not careful, the enemy can steal the joy from our Christmas. All it takes is to get us to focus on the wrong things. The longing in the most hidden corners of our heart is something holy, a Holy Longing, a desire for a deeper relationship with God. "*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*" is a good illustration that Christmas is so much more than all the extras. Pop some popcorn. Grab a cozy blanket and watch and discuss together.

PRAYER AND DEVOTION

Prayer and Devotion: For Kids

Week Three: Pray for your Enemies

Take out your prayer hand and write the words "Enemies" on the middle finger.

God teaches us in the Bible to love our enemies and pray for those who are mean to us or treat us badly. (Matthew 5:44) This is not always easy, but it glorifies God and makes the world a better place. Praying for your enemies is a powerful force for good.

Touch your ring finger and pray for your enemies. Do this every day.

Prayer and Devotion: For Parents

Are you a risk-taker? Are you willing to be vulnerable? You must be both to truly experience the love of God and to share that love with others. You can trust God's love for you. He is faithful and loving even when we are not.

1. Take a deep breath. Quiet your heart. Check your body. Do you feel open and ready to receive?

2. Pray and ask God to be present with you. Invite the Holy Spirit to come to teach and guide you into truth.

3. Read a short section of scripture. Read the passage again slowly.

What phrase or word(s) caught your attention?

*Circle or underline that word or phrase.

Reread the passage do you notice anything?

*What are you feeling?

*What thoughts are forming?

4. Meditate on what God is showing you: How is God inviting you to become like Christ?

5. Pray: respond to God's invitation - honestly, openly. Will you accept, reject, or postpone your response... how can he help you?

6. Contemplate: Sit with God, feel his presence, let the Holy Spirit guide and direct you into truth in the presence of God's light.

You may choose to begin with the following prayer.

"I know God that you are here present. Take any stray thoughts from my mind. Help me to understand the truths that you wish to teach me in our time together. Help me, merciful God, to do what you ask and go where you lead me, and not merely hear and thereby deceive myself. Speak, dear Lord, to my soul."

Monday December 17: 1 **John 4:14-16b** "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us."

Tuesday December 18: 1 **Timothy 1:9** "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God."

Wednesday December 19: **Psalms 92:1-2** "It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night."

Thursday December 20: **Ephesians 3:11-12** "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

Friday December 21: **Matthew 22:36-40** "'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.'"

Saturday December 22: Revisit the scripture that was the most meaningful to you. Commit it to memory.