



FAMILY ADVENT GUIDE

The month before Christmas can mean a lot of waiting for kids. Some of the waiting is exciting: like waiting for cookies to come out of the oven or waiting to unwrap the presents under the tree. But honestly, some of the waiting is hard: like long lines at the store or extra traffic on the road. Celebrating Advent as a family helps us to wait with a purpose. The word advent means “coming” or “arrival”. Therefore, the focus of Advent is not actually on “waiting” but on the “arrival” of baby Jesus. The following activities are designed for your family to remember the hope, love, peace, and joy that we have through a relationship with Jesus and to build memories as a family as you celebrate Jesus’ birth.

WEEK 1 | NOVEMBER 27 - DECEMBER 3

Patriarchs | Hope/Prophecy Candle

WEEK 2 | DECEMBER 4 - 10


Promised Land | Love/Bethlehem Candle

WEEK 3 | DECEMBER 11 - 17

Prophets | Peace/Angel Candle

WEEK 4 | DECEMBER 18 - 24

Promise | Joy/Shepherd Candle



We'd love to hear which activities you do and how you were able to celebrate Advent this Christmas! Tag us on social @waysidesa #advent



HOPE (WEEK 1)

Most people think of hope as “wishful thinking”. Like hoping to have a white Christmas. You may be wishing for a bike for Christmas and hope that wish will come true. When our hope is just “wishful thinking”, we don’t feel very sure that it will happen. That kind of hope is like flipping a coin: sometimes it’s heads and sometimes it’s tails, but we can’t know for sure. HOPE is so much more than that. Hope is more about WHOM we hope in than WHAT we hope for. The Bible tells us to put our hope in God. In the Bible, hope is certain. You can think of it like gravity. When you throw a ball up, you know it will come down. Hebrews 6:18-19 (NIRV) says, “When God made His promise, He gave His word. He did this so we would have good reason not to give up. Instead, we have to run to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope is set before us in God’s promise. So God made His promise and gave His word. These two things can’t change. He couldn’t lie about them. Our hope is certain. It is something we can hold onto. It is strong and secure.” Long ago God told prophets to tell everyone that He promised to send a Messiah, someone who would save us from our sins. For generations, people waited in hope for the promises of God to come true. This Advent we can also wait in hope looking back at God’s fulfilled promises and forward to His return one day.

1	Make a Christmas “bucket list” of things you want to do as a family during Advent.
2	Make a Christmas paper chain to count down the days until Christmas.
3	Finding Jesus: Use a baby Jesus figure from a nativity set. Hide the figure each day for the kids to look for. Each day hide it closer to the nativity.
4	Hang your Christmas stockings. Talk about how the Christmas stockings hang from a hook, but we hang our hope on Jesus (Hebrews 6:19).
5	Hope in Jesus helps us to keep from sinking into despair. Make hot chocolate and add marshmallows. Like the marshmallows, hope floats.
6	Plant winter rye grass or another fast-growing plant and watch it grow. Just as the grass grows, the more we trust in God, the more our hope grows!
7	Ask your kids what they “hope” for. Decide together if their hope is merely “wishful thinking” or if it is a confident hope in the promises of God.



LOVE (WEEK 2)

The dictionary says that love means "a strong liking for something." People sometimes say they love gingerbread cookies, or twinkling Christmas lights, or visiting grandma. What do you love? In the Bible, the word "love" means so much more than a strong liking for something. Read 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8a. Love is an action. When we love others, we SHOW them by putting them first and caring for their needs.

God's love for us is a special kind of love. God's love is not conditional, which means He loves us NO MATTER WHAT. Also, God loves us ALL the time. There is never a moment when His love stops. Lastly, God loves us without expecting ANYTHING in return. That is an amazing kind of love! We see God's love very clearly during Advent as we look to the birth of His Son, Jesus. As we remember His love, we can focus this week on showing love to others.

1	Bake Christmas cookies to enjoy and share with others.
2	Think of ways to help others in need and then act on it! If you want, try to keep your act of love a secret.
3	Donate toys as part of the Wayside Christmas Outreach Project (pick up information in the Foyer on Sundays).
4	Make a Birthday card for Jesus and thank Him for all the ways He has shown love to you.
5	Look at family photos from when each of you was first born.
6	Write a Christmas letter to a deployed soldier.
7	Do chores to earn money to buy gifts for a child in need.

We'd love to hear which activities you do and how you were able to show love to others this Christmas! Tag us on social @waysidesa #advent



PEACE (WEEK 3)

What are you afraid of? Some people are afraid of the dark, or they are afraid of spiders, or thunderstorms. All of us have times in our lives when we feel afraid or worried about what we see going on around us. When we feel scared, we would say that we are not at peace. In Hebrew, the word for peace is shalom. Shalom means "wholeness" or being "complete". Have you ever done a puzzle, gotten to the end, and realized you were missing a few of the pieces? Without those pieces, the puzzle was not complete. It was not whole. Sometimes our lives feel like we are missing things. We may be sick or lonely. When that happens, we may not feel peaceful. God's peace doesn't only happen when everything is exactly how we want it. We can have God's peace even when everything around us is going wrong. How can we do that? We can do that by spending time with God and remembering He promises He is ALWAYS with us, that He ALWAYS loves us, and that He ALWAYS cares for us. When we believe that, we can choose not to focus on the things that make us afraid and worried. And when we stop focusing on those things and focus on God, then we can feel His peace. Our world is not always a peaceful one. That was true even back when Jesus was born. During Advent, we can look to the "Prince of Peace" to be our peace and we can seek peace with those around us.

1	Do a Christmas puzzle as a family but remove some of the pieces. Tie it to the devotional above. Then bring out the missing pieces to make the puzzle complete.
2	Go to look at Christmas lights. Discuss that Jesus is the "Light of the world."
3	Eat dinner by candlelight and soft music. Talk about things that are "peaceful".
4	Name someone who is hard to enjoy. Pray for that person and leave a secret surprise for them with a note.
5	God gave Jesus many names. Read Isaiah 9:2,6. Ask everyone to tell their favorite name and why.
6	Tell about a time you walked in the dark. (Give it a try). How did you feel? How can Jesus help you when you feel that way?
7	<u>Play 'Separation Anxiety' Minute to Win It Game.</u> Each participant needs a cup full of the same number of various holiday candies. Sort the candies by type in under sixty seconds without dumping them out and using only one hand.



JOY (WEEK 4)

What makes you feel happy? Maybe spending time with people you love, opening up your Christmas presents, playing with a new toy, or eating your favorite dessert? It is easy to feel happy when things are good and you have everything you need. It is harder to feel happy when bad things happen. Joy is when we feel happy and content even when things aren't always going well. How is that even possible? Psalm 126:3 says, "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy." Do you want to have joy? One of the best ways to have joy is to REMEMBER all of the great things God has done for us. We call that counting our blessings. When something goes wrong in your life, it is normal to feel sad. The next time you feel sad, take a moment and think REALLY hard about things that God has done for you that make you happy. When we are thankful for what we DO have instead of looking at what we DON'T have, and when we trust that God loves and cares for us, then we will find that we are joyful more and more often. For kids, the Advent season is often filled with lots of joyful anticipation but with all of the twinkling sights, yummy smells, and lively Christmas carols, there can be anxious thoughts and worries as well. Use this week, to focus on what God has done and is doing in their lives. . . and make some JOYFUL memories.


1	Play the "Jump for Joy" Game. How high you can jump? How far you can jump? Can you jump on one foot? The other? Can you jump in place? In between the different ways to jump, have kids share what makes them feel joy.
2	Cut out stars or snowflakes from paper. Write "Jesus is . . ." on each one. Then complete the sentence.
3	Sing Christmas carols. Turn on your favorite Christmas songs and have a dance party.
4	Read Luke 1:46-47. Mary was happy that God chose her to be Jesus' mom. What's something you're happy about today? Praise God for it today.
5	At the dinner table, instead of saying a prayer of blessing sing it! It can be a prayer you are familiar with, or you can be creative and make one up!
6	Share some Christmas Jokes and have a good laugh.
7	Write a Christmas list but instead of making it what you want, make it a list of what you have that you are thankful for.





ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

1	Go to the Christmas Eve service at church (3:30 or 5:30 pm).
2	Trust Walk: Turn out all of the lights in the house. Choose a leader and let them hold the flashlight. When done discuss the importance of sticking close to the leader. Tie that to our walk with God. Psalm 119:105.
3	Go on a walk in your neighborhood but make it a holiday scavenger hunt (wreath, snowflake, star, lights, candy cane, bow, candles, gift, ornaments, snowman, Christmas tree, sleigh, nutcracker, menorah, garland, etc. https://studiodiy.com/neighborhood-holiday-scavenger-hunt-free-printable/).
4	Have an indoor snowball fight.
5	Have a white elephant gift exchange.
6	Create some fun Christmas crafts: https://abcdelearning.com/christmas-activities-for-kids/ .



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