

Advent

A SIMPLE GUIDE FOR FAMILIES
from Muscadine Press

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Advent is a time of holy expectation. Of waiting. Of preparation for the coming of the Christ child. In fact, the word *advent* literally means *coming*. And so it is that for four Sundays before Christmas, we prepare our hearts for the season by recounting and remembering both the prophecies that foretold of Christ's coming and the gospel stories of his birth.

Traditionally, each week focuses on one of the different gifts that Jesus' arrival brought us: the gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love. This guide is meant to be a simple tool to help focus your heart and mind's attention on the things that matter most this season. As your family gathers around the Advent wreath, use the cards to lead you through a simple devotion. There's a card for each of the four Sundays of Advent, and another for Christmas day.

As the light from your candles grows brighter each week, may it spark conversations and questions with your children about the hope we have in Christ, the peace he has wrought between us and God, the joy he has instilled in our hearts, and the tremendous love he has shown us.

May the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ be with you!

Leslie Ann

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Adore

SAY Jesus is the Light of the World, the Prince of Peace, the Joy of our Salvation, and the demonstration of God's love. That is why we celebrate his coming on this Christmas day and offer him our deepest adoration.

ASK What does it mean to adore something?

EXPLAIN To adore is to give honor and worship. It's to love deeply. It's to cherish above all else.

LIGHT all five candles of your wreath.

SAY These candles represent hope, peace, joy, love, and the birth of Jesus. As we light them, we thank God for these great gifts.

READ & DISCUSS Luke 2:1-20 and Matthew 2:1-12

PRAY O Lord, our God, thank you for sending Jesus. He is a gift beyond our wildest imagination. Through him we have light and life, hope and peace, joy and love. We're so grateful, Lord, for your great love. May we carry your hope, peace, joy, and love with us as we work and wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

FURTHER DISCUSSION How can we show Jesus how much we adore Him? What are some ways we can share the "Christmas spirit" all year long?

Love

SAY Jesus is the demonstration of God's love, and at Advent, we light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope, promise of peace, joy of salvation, and overwhelming love he brought to us.

ASK What is love?

EXPLAIN Love is when you care more about others than yourself. It's sacrifice. The Bible tells us that God is love.

LIGHT the first, second, third, and fourth candles of your wreath.

SAY These candles represent hope, peace, joy, and love. When Jesus came, he showed us how much God loves us.

READ & DISCUSS John 3:16-17 and Romans 5:8

PRAY O Lord, our God, thank you for your unfailing, steadfast love. Thank you for loving us enough to die for us. Help us to love you with our whole hearts. Enable us to love our neighbors with your great love. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

FURTHER DISCUSSION Do you love anyone enough to die for them? What are some ways we can show God's love to one another? To our neighbors? To our friends?

Hope

SAY Jesus called himself the Light of the World, and at Advent, we light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope he brought into a world filled with the darkness of sin.

ASK What is hope?

EXPLAIN Hope is looking forward to something wonderful. It's expecting something good to happen. It's light in the darkness.

LIGHT the first candle of your wreath.

SAY This candle represents hope. When Jesus came, he brought hope for people lost in sin.

READ & DISCUSS Isaiah 9:2 and Matthew 1:18-25

PRAY O Lord, our God, thank you for not leaving us in darkness but for sending your light into the world instead. Help us to shine your light in the dark and dreary corners of the world. May your light and love radiate from us and give hope where it seems that all hope is lost. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

FURTHER DISCUSSION What are some things you hope for? What are some ways our family can give hope to others? What's so hopeful about Jesus coming into the world?

Peace

SAY Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and at Advent, we light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope and promise of peace he brought to a world ravaged by sin.

ASK What is peace?

EXPLAIN Peace is the end of hostility and fighting. It's when all is as it should be. It's harmony. It's rightness and wholeness.

LIGHT the first and second candles of your wreath.

SAY These candles represent hope and peace. When Jesus came, he brought peace between God and humanity.

READ & DISCUSS Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 2:1-7

PRAY O Lord, our God, thank you for sending Jesus to make everything right between us. We're grateful for the peace that comes through knowing Him. Help us to be champions of your peace. May we be peacemakers in a world torn by sin and strife. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

FURTHER DISCUSSION Why is it so hard to "keep the peace?" How does knowing that Jesus came to bring peace between us and God make you feel? What are some ways that we can be peacemakers?

Joy

SAY Jesus is the Joy of our Salvation, and at Advent, we light candles to remind ourselves of the light of hope, promise of peace, and joy of salvation he brought to a lost and broken world.

ASK What is joy?

EXPLAIN Joy is a feeling of great happiness. It's pure bliss. It's overwhelming gladness bubbling up in your soul.

LIGHT the first, second, and third candles of your wreath.

SAY These candles represent hope, peace, and joy. When Jesus came, he brought joy to our hearts.

READ & DISCUSS Isaiah 9:3-4 and Luke 2:8-14

PRAY O Lord, our God, thank you for sending Jesus to bring us salvation and restore our joy. We rejoice because he came to live with us and in us and through us. May the good news of great joy of Jesus' coming be ever on our lips. Help us to be yours as we wait for you to come again. We love you. Amen.

FURTHER DISCUSSION What brings you joy? What part of the Christmas story makes you most glad? What are some ways that our family can bring joy to others this Christmas?