



# ADVENT DEVOTION FOR FAMILIES

# Resources Needed

Leaders or parents, you will need to gather the following resources for these Advent devotions. We recommend you gather all of them and place in a bag so you will have them ready to go. Several of the items you will use more than once.

## Needed Items:

- A small lock with a key
- Three small cups (like bathroom paper cup size)
- Piece of brown paper (like craft paper)
- Small cloth strips (2-3 pieces)
- A party invitation
- Small gift box (large enough to fit your lock key)
- Noise makers (one for each family member)

This resource is a free resource from the Youth Ministry Institute. The Youth Ministry Institute is a non-profit organization whose mission is to guide the Church and its leaders toward success in youth and children's ministry. We hope this resource is helpful to you and your families.



# Hope

## Advent Week 1

The first week of advent is traditionally represented by the Prophets of old. These prophets told others that God had a plan and that He would send a Messiah to set wrong things right. They encouraged others to hold on to this promise- to believe that God would send the Messiah.



### Activity #1

Take a key from your bag. (We will use this key every week in our devotionals so be sure to hold onto this key by returning it to your bag when you are done.) Try this key in different locks found all over your house.

### Did any work?

**Which lock was the closest for your key to fit?**

Now, take the lock out of your bag.

**Do you think the key will fit in this lock?**

Go ahead and put the key in the lock.

Imagine this key as the promised Messiah. The people of Israel kept looking and looking, waiting for the Messiah to come. But just like the key wouldn't fit into some of your locks. It wasn't the right time just yet for the prophecies to be fulfilled.

**Read Galatians 4:4-5 NLT**

"But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children."

**What's your favorite part of those verses?**

Thinking about Advent, let's look at the first phrase in verse 4- "When the right time came." As the Prophets foretold and the people waited, finally the right time came and the key fit the lock. This phrase in the Greek carries with it the idea of a ship being packed with cargo and then everything is loaded and the ship is full and ready to sail.

**Looking at your own life, what have you waited on for God to finally give you in the right time?**

People had hoped and wished for this good thing that the Prophets had talked about for years. Then finally in the right time, it was the right fit, and Messiah was born!

**Activity #2**

Take the three small cups out of the bag and then take the key. Place the key under one of the upside down cups and then place the other two cups, also upside down. Think of the traditional shell game. Slide the cup with the key around and also slide the other cups around, trying to not reveal which cup the key is under.

If you're doing this devotional with others, ask them to figure out which cup the key is under. Play for a couple of times and allow others to have a chance to guess and a chance to move the key around. If you're playing by yourself- mix it up for yourself. Slide those cups around and leave it for the following day. See if you can remember which cup the key is under tomorrow.

**When you went to guess and lift up a cup- how did you feel?**

**If the key was not there, how did that feel when you lifted the cup?**

**If the key was there, how did you feel when you saw that you had guessed correctly?**

Hope is that kind of anticipation experienced right before you flip over the cup.

With that feeling in mind, imagine the excitement of those around the Christmas story who understood that this Messiah, the KEY to salvation, had been born. They had found him and their Hope was realized.

**Read Isaiah 7:14 NLT**

"All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us')."

**Read Isaiah 9:6 NLT**

"For a child is born to us,  
a son is given to us.  
The government will rest on his shoulders.  
And he will be called:  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

**From these verses, name some things that the people of Israel would have looked forward to in the Messiah.**

If you are lighting a candle, many traditions would light a purple one to represent the Prophets and the Hope they shared. If you choose, light the candle now.

**Pray to close**

Father God, thank you that the world got to experience the Hope of the Prophets when you were born. Please help us to be people who share Hope with those around us. Help us to expect good things from You and to believe what You say. We look forward to Christmas when we will celebrate You, Jesus, as the key to Hope. In Your name, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

# Love

## Advent Week 2

The second week of Advent traditionally focuses on the town of Bethlehem and we think of the word LOVE.



**How do you think the town of Bethlehem and the idea of Love relate to each other?**

### Read Micah 5:2 NLT

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
are only a small village among all the people of  
Judah.

Yet a ruler of Israel,  
whose origins are in the distant past,  
will come from you on my behalf.

Micah is a prophet telling about where the Messiah would be born hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus. **What stands out to you in this verse?**

Bethlehem was small and seemingly insignificant in the country of Israel, especially when compared to the capital Jerusalem which was only 7-8 miles away. It really couldn't compare to that major city. And yet, God chose Bethlehem to be where the Messiah would be born.

**Why do you think God picked a tiny town rather than a metropolis?  
How do you think this shows the Love of God?**

### Activity #1

Take the brown paper from your bag. Get creative. In any way that you can, take this paper and make it into a manger. The manger was the place that Jesus was laid in a stable in that tiny town.

**Now that you've made your version of a "manger," what do you think of your efforts?**

**Do you think it looks significant or insignificant?**

The story of the stable and the manger looks messy and a little insignificant from an earthly perspective- maybe just like your attempt at a manger. The manger wasn't really made to hold a baby. It was actually made to feed animals. It wasn't a neat and tidy nursery with a perfect cradle that Jesus was born into.

**How do you think the messy manger reflects God's love?**

### Read Luke 2:1-7 NLT

<sup>1</sup> At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. <sup>4</sup> And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. <sup>5</sup> He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. <sup>7</sup> She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

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#### Activity #2

Take the key you used in the first week's devotional. Let that represent the baby Jesus. Take the cloth strips found in your bag and wrap the key up in snugly cloth strips.

**How does the wording and imagery of Mary wrapping Jesus in swaddling clothes bring to mind the idea of LOVE?**

#### Read John 3:16 NLT

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

#### Read Luke 2:15-20 NLT

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

<sup>16</sup> They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. <sup>18</sup> All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, <sup>19</sup> but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

If you are lighting a candle, many traditions would light a purple one to represent the town of Bethlehem and the Love of God. If you choose, light the candle now.

#### Pray to close

Father God, your great love is all throughout the Christmas story. Thank you that you loved the world so much that you sent your son. Thank you that it didn't look exactly like what someone might have expected just like my life doesn't always look like how I might expect. But You,



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God, still use me just like you used the little town of Bethlehem. Thank you for showing me how to love. Help me to believe your love and embrace your love. Help me to share your great love with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# Joy

## Advent Week 3

This 3rd week of Advent is the week we celebrate the Joy of the Christmas season.



**Where do you hear joy in the following verses? Pause as you're reading and underline any part of the Scripture below that reminds you of Joy.**

### Read Luke 2:8-15 NLT

<sup>8</sup> "That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. <sup>9</sup> Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, <sup>10</sup> but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. <sup>11</sup> The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! <sup>12</sup> And you will recognize him by this

sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

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<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." <sup>15</sup> When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

### Activity #1

From your bag, grab the party invitation. God sent an invitation to the shepherds that the angels delivered. Fill out this party invitation as if it was the message the angels gave to the shepherds.

**How do you feel when you're invited to a party?**

**Do you think the shepherds had the same feeling? Why or why not?**

### Activity #2

Take the key and place it in the gift box.

**As the key continues to represent Jesus for us, how does the gift of Jesus bring us Joy?**

(If you have young children, take turns letting them hide the present. And take turns looking for it! Have the kids show JOY when they find the gift.)

**How do you think the angels spread joy to the shepherds?**

Read verse 13 again.

**What do you think praising God and saying Glory to God would be like to those shepherds?**

### 3

#### Read Luke 2:15-20 NLT

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<sup>16</sup> They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. <sup>18</sup> All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, <sup>19</sup> but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. <sup>20</sup> The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

#### Activity #3

There's a lot of noise around JOY. Take the noise maker out and make some noise!!!

**How did the shepherds make noise around the birth of Jesus?**

**How can we show our Joy in Jesus' birth as well?**

If you are lighting a candle, many traditions would light a pink one to represent the Shepherds and the joy they experienced. If you choose, light the candle now.

#### Pray to close

Father God, we celebrate this Christmas season with happiness and laughter. We experience the joy of your coming and we want to share that with others. Help us, Lord, to live in your Joy and to remember how great it is that you came to earth. May we never be afraid to tell others that good news. Help us, Lord. Love you Jesus- In your name, I pray, Amen.

# Peace

## Advent Week 4

This is the fourth week of Advent and traditionally it is known as the week to reflect on the Peace that God gives us through the



birth of Jesus. Often in tradition it is a week that we look at the angels in the Christmas story.

### What is peace?

#### Read Luke 1:26-33 NLT

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. <sup>28</sup> Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

<sup>29</sup> Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. <sup>30</sup> "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be very great and will be called the Son

of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup> And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

The angel is talking to Mary. How do you see the idea of peace in this Scripture?

#### Read Matthew 1:18-21 NLT

<sup>18</sup> This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a

virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

<sup>20</sup> As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. "Joseph, son of David," the angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

**The angel is talking to Joseph. How do you see the idea of peace in this Scripture?**

Peace comes in many forms. In the Christmas story, Jesus is called the Prince of Peace.

**What do you think that tells us about who Jesus is?**

Peace is a result of being sure of something.

**Have you or someone you know ever lost their keys? How did they react to not being able to find their keys?**

There's an unsettled feeling when you need something but you're not sure where it is. That unsettled feeling is the opposite of peace. Think about peace as being sure of something. **What can you be sure of because of Jesus?**

### Activity #1

Take the key ring out of the bag. Place the key on the key ring. How does a key ring help us be sure where a key is?

Peace comes from being sure of something. Just like this keyring helps us to be sure we know where the key is- What can help us be sure of who Jesus is and how he relates to us?

If you are lighting a candle, many traditions would light a purple one to represent the Angels and the Peace of God If you choose, light the candle now.

**Read Psalm 46:10 NLT**

"Be still, and know that I am God!  
I will be honored by every nation.  
I will be honored throughout the world."

**How does knowing that He is God- being sure of that- bring peace?**

**Activity #2**

Use a timer on your phone and pick a specific amount of time- maybe one minute or two minutes, maybe longer- to be absolutely still. In this quiet time, think about God. Think about the good things He's done. Think about how great He is.

**Pray to close**

Father God, there is a surety in who You are that I need in my life. Help me to live in the stillness of belief in what You say about Yourself and about me. Help me to hold onto the Truth of your presence and what you came to earth to do. May it bring me peace. Help me to step into the peace that You promise by the very act of the Prince of Peace being born to mankind. In the stillness of this moment, I recognize that You are in control and I can have peace because of that. Praying all this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

We hope you enjoyed your time looking at each week of Advent. Our prayer for you this Holiday season is that you hear from God regarding the story of His birth and you speak to Him about your hopes and dreams for the coming New Year.

**Merry Christmas!**