





All the Colors of Christmas Devotional

Copyright © 2011, 2016 Focus on the Family. All rights reserved.

Writers: Chris Brack, Vance Fry, Cheryl Gochnauer, Megan Gordan, Marty Machowski, Sheila Seifert and the *Focus on the Family* magazine staff

Illustrator: David Bates

Designer: Cary Bates

Focus on the Family and the accompanying logo and design are federally registered trademarks of Focus on the Family, 8605 Explorer Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version[®] (ESV[®]), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise—without prior permission of Focus on the Family.

Cover design: David Bates and Cary Bates



$FCCUS^{\text{on}}_{\text{the}}FAMILY^{\circ}$

When does Advent start?

Look at a calendar and count back to the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day. This Sunday is the first Sunday of Advent, and this year it starts on Nov. 27. This booklet includes 28 days of activities and devotions.

Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus*, for "coming." It is the beginning of the liturgical year in many churches. Throughout church history, this celebration of "coming" has referred to both the second coming of Christ and Christ's first coming at Christmas.

HOW DO YOU MAKE AN ADVENT WREATH?

The Advent wreath is part of the liturgical countdown to Christmas. You can buy an Advent wreath, or you can make one yourself. Here is how:

- 1. With green crafting wire, fasten live or plastic evergreen branches to a circular wire wreath frame.
- 2. After you attach the first branch, lay the second branch over the end of the first so it covers the stem.
- 3. Continue in this way until you reach where you began.
- 4. Tuck the ends of your final branches under the foliage of the beginning branches.
- 5. Set four candles in candleholders inside the wreath. Traditionally, the wreath holds three purple candles and one rose-colored candle. An optional white candle may be placed in the center of your Advent wreath; it is only lit on Christmas Day.
- 6. Place the wreath in a central location in your home.

HOW SHOULD I USE THIS RESOURCE DURING ADVENT?

Help your family focus on Jesus during the Christmas season with this devotional. Here is how you can use this resource every day during Advent:

- 1. Read the daily family devotions and Scriptures.
- 2. Do the activity.
- 3. Light the mentioned candle (or candles) on the Advent wreath.

Advent ends on Christmas Eve, but on Christmas Day, there is a family devotion to help you celebrate Jesus' birth.

—Chris Brack

Week One

AT ONE MEAL EACH DAY THIS WEEK. LIGHT THE FIRST PURPLE CANDLE OF YOUR ADVENT WREATH. IT SIGNIFIES HOPE. THIS HOPE STEMS FROM A PROMISE MADE TO ADAM AND EVE---THAT GOD WOULD SEND A SAVIOR TO REDEEM HUMANKIND FROM SIN AND DEATH.

)ay

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: ROMANS 1:20

Lead your kids into a darkened room to read Genesis 1:1-26. (You may need a small flashlight.) When you arrive at verse 3, turn on the lights. As you read through the remaining verses, pass around items that offer glimpses of God's creation—a leaf from a plant, magazine photos of fish and wildlife. You can challenge your older kids to research short videos online. Images of the planets and wildlife can be very inspirational. Explain that the Bible says we can see God's power and know He is real by all the things He has made.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: GENESIS 3:1-6: ROMANS 5:12

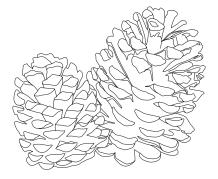
Look through pictures of your kids when they were younger, asking your children if they can remember the story behind each image. Then ask if they can remember the first time they disobeyed Mom or Dad. Who taught them to disobey? The Bible teaches that sin was passed down from Adam and Eve to all people. Sin has become part of our fallen nature. Tell your kids that it wasn't a surprise to God when Adam and Eve sinned; even then, He had a plan to save the world.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: GENESIS 3:23-24; ISAIAH 59:2

Place a special dessert on the dining room table and close the door or create some kind of barrier to the room. Call your kids to come and get their dessert. When they arrive, allow them to see what's on the table, but tell them they need to wash their hands before they can come inside to have the treat. As they enjoy the dessert, explain that sin separates people from the goodness of God. Because God is holy, He cannot tolerate sin. It is only when our sin has been "washed away" that we can enter God's presence.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: GENESIS 12:1-3: GALATIANS 3:6-8

Tell your kids to retrieve several items that your family has received from extended family members. Talk about the influence these relatives have had on your family. Uncles and aunts, grandparents, older cousins—how is your family different because of these people? Explain to your kids that Abraham is often considered a "father" to all Christians and Jews. He was first in a line of people who were special to the Lord, and it was through Abraham's descendants that Jesus was born.





BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: GENESIS 22:1-13; JAMES 2:21-22

Place a small trash can with a clean liner in a corner of the room. Tell your children to get a favorite toy, movie or video game, then ask them to place it in the trash can. If they protest, ask them whether they trust you and know that you love them. Explain that God never intended for Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. (You can return your kids' toys as you say this.) God was testing Abraham's faith. He was also giving Abraham a glimpse of His plan to save humanity: God's only Son would be offered as the sacrifice for our sins. He would have thorns on His head, similar to the ram caught by his horns in the thicket.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: GENESIS 25:29-34; MATTHEW 4:4

Gather a few grocery items in a paper bag. Then, take out the items one at a time and ask your kids to guess what each item costs. Now ask them how much they would pay for each item if they were stranded in the desert and hadn't eaten in more than a week. Discuss the fact that Esau foolishly traded the most valuable thing he had—his birthright—for a bowl of soup. Explain that when we accept Christ as our Savior, we become children of God, a birthright that we should value above everything else.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: GENESIS 37:23-28: MATTHEW 27:1-4

Tell your kids that you want to see how much your family has in common. Then ask, "Who can curl their tongue?" Instruct everyone who can do this to stand together in one corner of the room. Then ask, "Who can hop on one foot?" Repeat with new questions to find other similarities between family members. Explain that the lives of Joseph and Jesus had remarkable similarities. Both men were betrayed by someone close to them. Both were also used by God to save His people. Joseph saved his father and brothers from a terrible famine, and Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross delivered mankind from sin.

Neek Two

THIS WEEK, LIGHT THE FIRST AND SECOND PURPLE CANDLES OF YOUR ADVENT WREATH. THE SECOND PURPLE CANDLE SIGNIFIES PREPARATION. IT REMINDS US OF HOW LONG THE JEWISH PEOPLE HAD TO PREPARE FOR THE COMING OF JESUS AND THAT WE NEED TO PREPARE FOR HIS SECOND COMING.

)ay

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: EXODUS 11:1-7: JOHN 1:29

Have your kids write a list of all the firstborn sons in the families they know. Include relatives, church friends and neighbors. Ask your children to imagine that those families would lose their eldest sons if they didn't follow certain instructions. That's exactly what happened during the first Passover in Egypt. We often think of the Israelites as having escaped death. But really, death came to every home. For God's people, a lamb died in place of the firstborn son. This was a picture of how God would send His Son, Jesus, to be our Passover Lamb.

)ay

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: EXODUS 19:7-9: ROMANS 8:34

Tell your kids that you are going to temporarily appoint their oldest sibling as a "go-between." Whenever you need to say something to the other children, you'll be sending the message with this child. Likewise, your kids should respond to you through the go-between. Using your go-between, or mediator, ask your children to do a few silly tasks like walking backward or imitating someone famous. Explain that Moses acted as a mediator between God and His people. Moses was, in a way, a picture of Jesus, who stands in His Father's presence, representing those who trust in Him.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: EXODUS 17:5-6: JOHN 7:37-39

Put a washcloth in a bowl filled with water. Have your children take turns soaking the cloth and squeezing it into an empty glass. Who can squeeze out the most water? Now place a small rock in the bottom of the bowl. Ask your kids what kind of strength it would take to squeeze water out of the rock. When God provided water to the Israelites in the desert, He was giving His people a lesson on His power. He was also providing a picture of how Jesus would someday satisfy our needs. Jesus, the Rock, satisfies our spiritual thirst.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: JOSHUA 2:2-21

Tie a small piece of red yarn or ribbon around each of your children's wrists. Ask them to think of one thing that the red string might remind them of. Explain that Rahab was instructed to hang a red cord from her window so she would be saved from the destruction of her city. Rahab was an ancestor of Jesus. Her red cord reminds us of Christ's blood, which was shed to save us from our sins.



BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: 1 SAMUEL 16:6-12; ISAIAH 53:2

Wrap your wedding ring in gift wrap. Then put a Christmas bow on a large empty box. Put both packages in different corners of the room. Tell your kids that you'd like to show them one of the best gifts you've ever received, and ask them to "open the present." After they open the empty box, show them the smaller package. Explain that appearances don't always tell the complete story. As the prophet Samuel was looking for the future king of Israel, he was impressed with one individual. But God told him not to be impressed by outward appearance because God looks at the heart. Centuries later, God once again showed that appearance was unimportant when the long-awaited Savior came as an ordinary-looking man.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: 1 CHRONICLES 17:16-24: MATTHEW 20:30

)ay

Cut a few crowns from thick paper, and cover them with tinfoil. Encourage your children to wear the crowns, and discuss what decisions they would make if they were "king" or "queen" of the household. Of the country. Ask them if these jobs would be difficult. Would they need God's wisdom, and if so, how would they seek it? Explain that King David often prayed to God for help in doing his job. Tell your kids that it was through the line of David that the Savior of the world was born. In fact, Jesus was called "the Son of David."



BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: JONAH 1:1-6: MATTHEW 12:39-41

Play hide-and-seek for a few minutes, allowing your kids to hide. After repeatedly finding your kids' hiding spots, ask them if they think they could find a hiding spot where you could never find them. Now explain that Jonah tried to hide from God because he didn't want to obey His command. Point out how Jesus illustrates His death and resurrection using the story of Jonah. Tell your children that Jonah eventually obeyed God, and those who believed Jonah's message were saved. So, too, all who believe in the Gospel message will be saved.

Week Three

THIS WEEK, LIGHT THE FIRST TWO PURPLE CANDLES PLUS THE ROSE-COLORED CANDLE. THE ROSE-COLORED CANDLE REPRESENTS JOY. IT SYMBOLIZES THE JOY THE JEWS FELT FOR THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH AND THE JOY WE FEEL AS WE LOOK FORWARD TO CHRIST'S SECOND COMING.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: PSALM 118:22-24: 1 PETER 2:4-7

Ancient builders often completed construction of a building with a commemorative capstone placed at the peak. Provide sugar cubes, blocks or LEGOs and have each of your kids construct a building, leaving a spot open at the top for a capstone. As they place the capstone, tell your kids that this stone is very important because it signals the completion of the building. The book of Psalms foretold that Jesus would be like a capstone. When He came, He completed the work of salvation, creating a "house" of believers.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: ISAIAH 53:4: MATTHEW 8:16-17

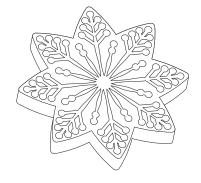
Jesus is sometimes referred to as the "Great Physician." Just as the prophet Isaiah foretold, Jesus healed people of a variety of sicknesses and injuries. Using gauze, adhesive bandages or toilet paper, perform imaginary triage and first aid on each child in the family. Have a parent play the role of Jesus, blessing each "hurt" person and removing the bandages. Discuss how Jesus heals us both physically and spiritually.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: ISAIAH 53:5: MARK 15:16-20

The prophet Isaiah predicted that Jesus would take the punishment for our sin. With this in mind, imagine or role-play a courtroom setting. Pretend your child is the defendant accused of a crime. The judge glares down from the bench, pounds the gavel and declares, "Guilty as charged!" As your child is being "sentenced" to life in prison, Jesus stands up and says, "Take Me instead." The judge demands to know why Jesus should be punished. After all, He's done nothing wrong. Jesus replies, "I love her, and I want to take her place." Discuss Jesus' willingness to suffer our punishment in order to set us free.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: ISAIAH 63:7-9: ROMANS 6:23

Hand each child a wrapped—but not yet decorated—present meant for a family member or friend. Encourage your kids to express their creativity by adding ribbon, bows, glitter or other decorations to adorn the packages. While decorating their packages, ask your kids to identify gifts God gives them. Highlight His creativity through creation—sunshine, fresh air, animals—and His love for people as shown through the gift of salvation.



BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: MICAH 5:2; MATTHEW 2:4-6

What do your children want to be when they grow up? Ask each child to share a clue that represents his or her dream job. The clue can be a word, a picture or an object. See who can guess the profession! Remind your children that God wants to use them in ways they can't yet imagine. Even though they're small, God has great plans for them. God also had big plans for the tiny town of Bethlehem. Point out that He chose Bethlehem to be the birthplace of Jesus. And to make sure everyone knew what a big deal this was, He talked about it in the book of Micah, hundreds of years before it happened. God uses ordinary people and places in big ways!

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: MICAH 5:4: LUKE 15:4-7: LUKE 19:10

The prophet Micah used the image of a shepherd to describe the coming Messiah. Jesus used the same imagery to tell people about himself, saying that He came to seek and save the lost. Choose a family member to become the "lost sheep." While all the other family members close their eyes and count to 30, the one "lost sheep" hides somewhere in the house (or outside, weather permitting). The family searches for the one who has gone astray, and when he is found, everyone celebrates. Together, thank Jesus for seeking and saving His lost lambs.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: ISAIAH 40:3-5: LUKE 3:15-16

Tell your kids that you're going to see who can get ready first. Then ask, "What do you need to get ready for swimming?" Have them find something needed for swimming (swimsuit, goggles, etc.) and bring it to you as fast as they can. Then repeat the game with items needed to get ready for school, soccer practice and so on. Explain that it's important to be prepared. That's why God sent John the Baptist to help people get ready for the coming Savior. Many people came to John to be baptized, confessing their sins and preparing their hearts for Jesus.

Week Four

THIS WEEK. LIGHT ALL THREE PURPLE CANDLES. PLUS THE ROSE-COLORED CANDLE. THE PURPLE CANDLE THIS WEEK REPRESENTS GOD'S LOVE FOR US AND HIS PEACE.



BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: LUKE 1:26-33

Our names are a special part of who we are. Do your children realize that God knew their names even before they were born? Using a book of baby names or the internet, look up the meaning of each family member's name. Now share why you chose that name for your child. When Mary was pregnant, an angel told her to name her child Jesus, which means "God saves." Discuss why Jesus is an especially fitting name for the Christ child.



BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: MATTHEW 1:18-24

Joseph was chosen to be Jesus' earthly father. God showed confidence in Joseph's character when He entrusted the humble carpenter with the raising of His Son. One of the ways Joseph nurtured Jesus was by teaching Him how to make things out of wood. Jesus probably worked as a carpenter until He was 30. Give each child a small hammer, nails and some lightweight pieces of wood. Show them how to hammer a nail and, depending on their ability, nail pieces of wood together. Imagine Jesus and Joseph working side by side. What are some things Joseph might have taught Jesus to make?



BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: LUKE 2:1-5

Joseph and Mary's trek from Nazareth to Bethlehem was more complicated than a holiday road trip to see relatives. The total distance they traveled was only about 80 miles, but since Joseph likely walked and Mary (pregnant with Jesus) possibly rode a donkey, it took them almost a week to make the trip. To help your kids better understand Joseph and Mary's journey, use an atlas or website such as Google Maps to plot the way to a destination about 80 miles from your house. If your children were traveling on foot, what obstacles might they face along the way? Where would they sleep? What would they eat and drink?

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: HEBREWS 1:6,14

Cut out the shape of an angel, no more than 5 inches high, in a piece of dark construction paper. Then help each child cut an angel shape in his own paper. Give everyone a flashlight and dim the room. Using your flashlight, read Luke 2:8-14. When you get to verse 9, shine the flashlight beam through your paper so that an angel appears on the wall. When you read verse 13, have the whole family project their own angels onto the wall. Angels are God's messengers. Throughout history, they have delivered important messages to various people. But a "great company" of angels announced the most important event since the beginning of the world—Christ's birth!



BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: LUKE 2:15-20

Encourage your children to dress up like shepherds. Help them put on a bathrobe or large towel secured with a belt. Place a smaller towel on their heads, and hold it in place with a bandana or headband. Explain that shepherds were considered unimportant men. So it was a surprise that God chose them to be the very first to hear the message of Jesus' birth. This surprise announcement showed that baby Jesus was a gift for all people, not just for the rich and famous.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD:

MATTHEW 2:1-6

The Magi were distinguished men from the East who traveled a great distance to honor Jesus after His birth. They followed a star that eventually led them to the Christ child. Take your children on a journey throughout your home, searching for the hidden star in each room. These could be star ornaments, stickers or simply stars drawn on paper. Conclude your search in front of your Christmas tree, and consider allowing each child to place the star of his or her choice on the tree as a symbol of your (and the Magi's) journey.

BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: LUKE 2:6-7

Jesus was born in a stable and was laid in an animal's feeding trough. While this isn't the place you would expect a king to sleep, it was all Joseph and Mary had available on this miraculous night. Using bedsheets, create a "stable" big enough for the family to huddle in. Use a flashlight for a lantern, and choose stuffed animals for the animals that may have been present when Jesus was born. Talk with your children about the sights, sounds and smells of the stable. This humble setting was the birthplace of our Savior and King.



BEGIN WITH GOD'S WORD: MATTHEW 2:7-12: JOHN 3:16

On Christmas Eve, after your children are asleep, place the Jesus figurine from your Nativity scene in a beautifully wrapped box. Put this box in front of all the other presents under the tree. On Christmas morning, have your kids open this present first. Thank God for His perfect gift—His one and only Son—as you lay the figurine in the manger. Discuss the amazing truth that this gift is not for just a few select families, but for every family in the world—past, present and future.



WEEKLY COLORING SHEETS CHRISTMAS-DAY FAMILY DEVOTION CHRISTMAS-DAY STAR

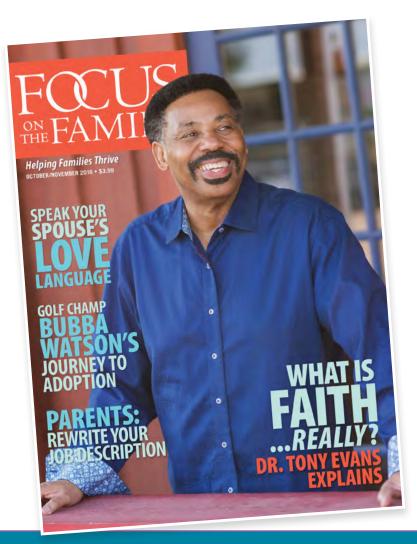
A GIFT FOR YOU!

ORDER TODAY

AND GET \$5 OFF

Only at FocusOnTheFamily.com/store

ENTER CODE: ADVFNT16 ONLY ONE COUPON PER PURCHASE



faith • parenting • marriage

advice, tips and activities from a biblically based perspective

Subscribe today FocusOnTheFamily.com/magazine