

2023
ADVENT AT-HOME GUIDE

Advent

A TIME OF WAITING, WONDER,
AND WORSHIP



Christ Fellowship's Advent Experience

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Christmas is coming!

Let's celebrate Advent together! Advent is a tradition observed by Christians around the world, to remember and celebrate the arrival of Jesus throughout the whole Christmas season.

This Advent Experience is a weekly guide for yourself and those in your home over the next four weeks. If you'd like to go even deeper, you can follow along with our Engage God Daily to prepare your heart more fully for Christmas. (Scan the QR code below to subscribe.)

Whether you're a newlywed, raising young children, empty nesters, or sharing a place with roommates, consider how you can bring your home together for Advent. Gather around the dinner table, bundle up on the couch, connect through video chat – whatever works best for your family and friends. Let's celebrate the coming of the Messiah!

What is Advent?

The word "advent" comes from the Latin word that means "coming." Advent is a time of expectant waiting as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus and look forward to his return.

Traditionally, Advent is celebrated for four Sundays and Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Some Christians use an Advent wreath or "crown" that holds four candles around it, and one in the center. A different candle is lit each week, and the center candle is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. This year, we will light two candles on Christmas Eve, since it falls on a Sunday. During this special time each Sunday, we read scriptures and sing hymns in celebration of Jesus' arrival.

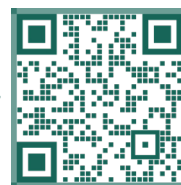
2023 Advent Overview

To follow this weekly Advent plan, you'll need: five candles (any candles of any color will work – we've even included a coloring sheet if you prefer to create and cut out your own candles each week) and a Bible. You'll also want to find versions of the hymns included, so you can sing along.

Adapt this plan for your family. Use a children's Bible if you have younger children. Find comparisons to movie characters if you have teenagers. Explore deeper questions if your household is all adults. Create your own nativity scene and act out the characters using Lego people, stuffed animals, or action figures – be creative! The point is to gather together and remember what's truly special about this time of year – the arrival of Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

To go even deeper, we highly recommend following along with the Engage God Daily throughout the week before each Sunday's Advent celebration. Scan the QR code to subscribe!

Scan code to
subscribe to the
Engage God Daily



cfhome.org/resources

WEEK 1: THE PROPHETS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3

Get Ready:

- ✦ Advent Candle + something to light it with
- ✦ For Families: Find some figures around your house to represent Nativity Characters Isaiah and Micah (And Simeon and Anna if you're reading additional Scriptures)
- ✦ For Kids: Advent coloring sheet + something to color with (pg. 10-11)

Read the Scripture

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 (NIV)

²The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

⁶For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty
will accomplish this.

Micah 5:2 (NIV)

²“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times.”

Additional Scripture Reading:
Isaiah 53:1–5, Luke 2:25-38 (Simeon and Anna)

Reflect Together

Long before Jesus was born, God told us he was coming. God announced that help was on the way, that everything would be made right again, all through a ruler who was coming. He revealed details about this future king to people called prophets (those who bring messages from God). Prophets like Isaiah and Micah boldly proclaimed the message of the Lord, and their words were saved for us in what we call the Old Testament. Micah even announced exactly where this ruler would be born (Bethlehem) hundreds of years before Jesus was born!

These messages from God about a king who would make everything right and rule David's throne with justice and righteousness brought people hope for so many years (and still do!). However, people were probably confused about who this ruler would be and what he would look like when he came. They may have imagined him being born as the son of a current king, in a royal, extravagant palace. Don't you think that's where someone who would be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" would be born?

The way Jesus arrived is probably different from the way anyone imagined he would come, but He came exactly the way God said He would. In His great love for us, God had a plan long ago to bring His own Son into this world so that we could have life through Him. God's plan for us to live peacefully forever with Him has begun, and one day it will be complete. Let's celebrate Jesus, the Messiah who was, and is, and is to come!

Light the Candles

Light a candle for the prophets who announced Christ's coming.

Sing Together

O Come O Come Emmanuel

Pray

Praise God for sending Jesus just like He said He would!

Pray that God would open your hearts to experience the wonder of our Messiah in a new way this year.

Pray about who you can share God's loving plan for a Prince of Peace with this week.

WEEK 2 : THE ANGELS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10

Get Ready:

- ✦ Advent Candle + something to light it with
- ✦ For Families: Gather Nativity Characters for the Angels, Mary, Joseph, and Shepherds
- ✦ For Kids: Advent coloring sheet + something to color with (pg. 10-11)

Read the Scripture

Luke 1:26–33 (NIV)

An Angel Appears to Mary

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary.

²⁸ The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

Matthew 1:18–21 (NIV)

An Angel Appears to Joseph

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph

son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Luke 2:8–15

Angels Appear to the Shepherds

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

Additional Scripture Reading:

Luke 1:11–45 (An Angel to Zechariah)

Reflect Together

Have you ever wondered what an angel looked like or what it might feel like to be in the same room as an angel?

Maybe we can imagine the angel looked just like a man or woman, but tall like a tree and with a shining face. And being in presence of the angel might've felt like standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon—beautiful but also, terrifying.

So it's no surprise Mary was afraid when the angel appeared to her. But the angel had really good news for her—she would be pregnant by the Holy Spirit and give birth to king Jesus!

Joseph, who was engaged to Mary, found out that Mary was pregnant, and he was confused and angry, since they weren't married yet.

The angel came to Joseph in a dream to tell him that the Holy Spirit himself had put the baby inside Mary's womb, and not just any baby—this baby would be Jesus, the one who would save people from their sins.

Then, on the night Jesus was born, an angel came to the fields where the shepherds were watching over their sheep. Just like Mary, the shepherds were fearful, but the angel had good news for them—the Savior, the Messiah has been born!

As soon as the angel finished delivering this good news, more angels came and surrounded the shepherds and sung praises to God. Can you even imagine a whole host of angels all around you, singing praises to God?

And how did the shepherds respond? As soon as the angels went back up into heaven, the shepherds went as fast they could to Bethlehem to meet the baby who would be the Savior of the world. This Christmas, as we look back on Jesus' birth, what will our response be? How will we prepare our hearts for Jesus coming back again?

Light the Candles

Light a candle for the angels who announced Christ's coming.

Sing Together

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Pray

Thank God for the angels who came to deliver the message about Jesus' coming!

Talk to God about the ways he amazes you through this story.

Ask God to grow your trust in him, knowing that he is an awesome God with a good plan.

WEEK 3 : THE SHEPHERDS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

Get Ready:

- ✦ Advent Candle + something to light it with
- ✦ For Families: Gather Nativity Characters for the Angels, Mary, Joseph, and Shepherds
- ✦ For Kids: advent candle coloring sheet + something to color with (pg. 10-11)

Read the Scripture

Luke 2:8–20 (NIV)

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Reflect Together

Out in the countryside some shepherds watch over their flock. Suddenly, a company of angels light up the night sky! With great joy they announce the good news—the Messiah has been born!

“Let’s go see what God has done!” the shepherds decide.

The Son of God came in an unexpected way, didn’t he? He was not born in a palace, but in a stable. His birth was not witnessed by royalty, but by these common shepherds.

Imagine the shepherds huddled together around the baby—their weather-worn faces smiling down on the perfect Son of God. And after they saw him? They went off praising God and telling everyone about Jesus.

Because here’s the thing about good news: it’s meant to be shared.

Christmas is our time to be like the angels, excitedly proclaiming the good news of great joy to all people. It’s our time to be like the shepherds, joyfully seeking and worshiping the Lord, and then spreading the news of his arrival.

Take some time to think about how you might share the good news this Christmas, and pray that God will give you the opportunities.

Light the Candles

Add a candle for the shepherds who came to worship Jesus.

Sing Together

Joy to the World

Pray

How are you reaching out to others this season with the good news of Jesus’ birth?

How can you encourage those who are hurting? Those in need?

Pray about ways you can share Christ’s love this Christmas season.

WEEK 4 : WISE MEN AND JESUS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24

Get Ready:

- ✦ Advent Candle + something to light it with
- ✦ For Families: Gather Nativity Characters for Wise Men, Jesus
- ✦ For Kids: advent candle coloring sheet + something to color with (pg. 10-11)

Read the Scripture

Matthew 2:1–2 (NIV)

² After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

Matthew 2:9–11 (NIV)

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Luke 2:1–7 (NIV)

² In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Reflect Together

We don't really know much about the Wise Men. Sometimes they're called "Magi" and other times "kings." We're not even sure how many there were. What we do know is that these royal visitors came a long, long way to bring expensive gifts to the newborn king. They followed a bright object in the sky, and it led them to Jesus.

Jesus, the King of kings and the Lord of lords was born in a small, out of the way town. A chorus of angels announced his birth—in a manger near the animals. Royal visitors from a faraway land came to worship him, and so did common shepherds from a nearby field. Heaven and earth, unique and ordinary, rejoicing in the love of a God who sent his son to rescue the world from sin and death.

This was the way it was always meant to be. All of creation celebrating Jesus. All kinds of people from all kinds of places. All coming to worship Jesus and give him their best.

Giving and getting gifts may be a big part of the Christmas season, but we know that the best gift-giver is God and the best gift is Jesus. How can we give back to God to show our love and appreciation for Him?

Light the Candles

Light the first three candles.

Light a candle for the wise men who came from far away to bring gifts to worship Jesus.

Light the final candle for Jesus, the Savior of the World.

Sing Together

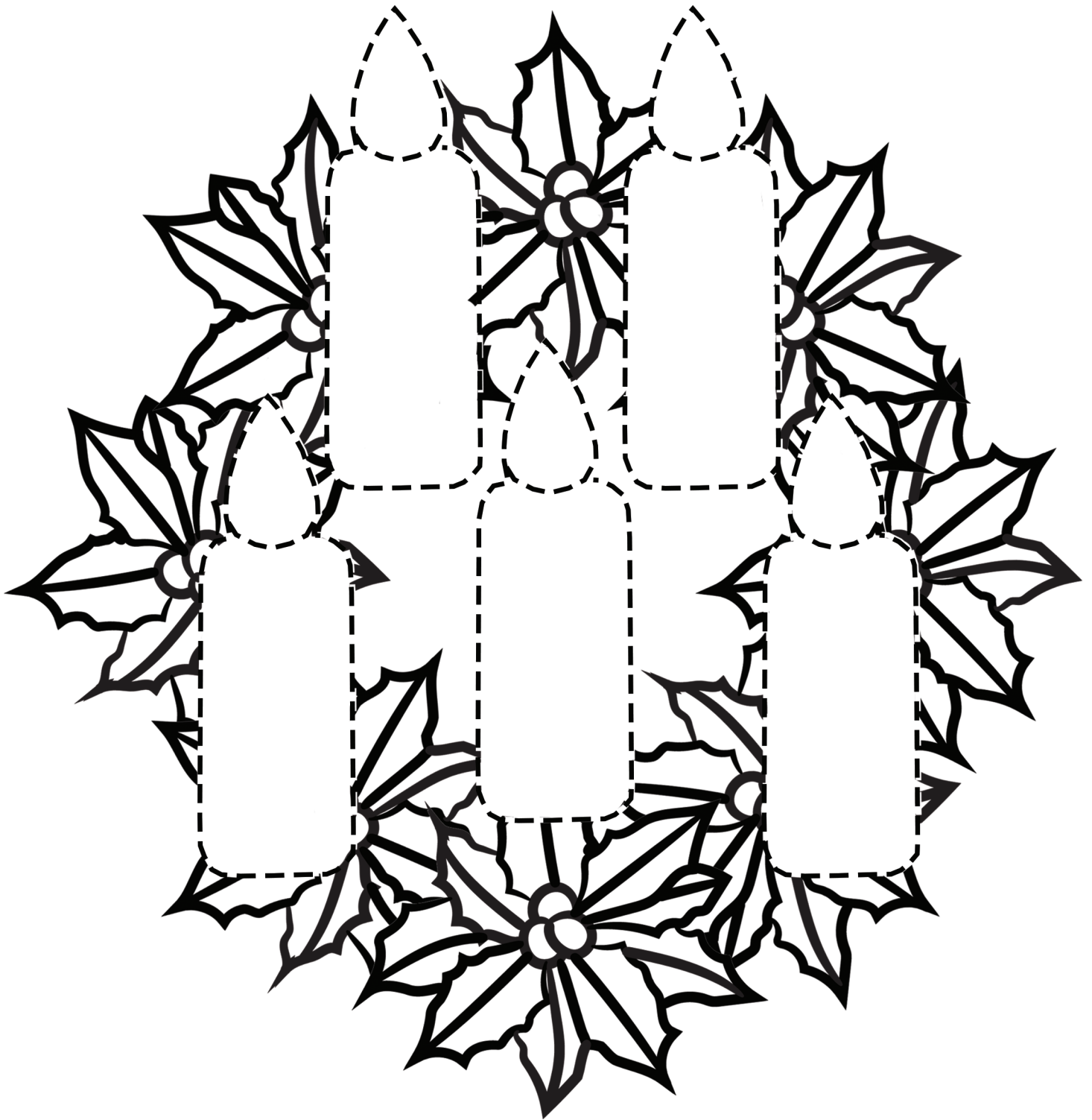
Silent Night

Pray

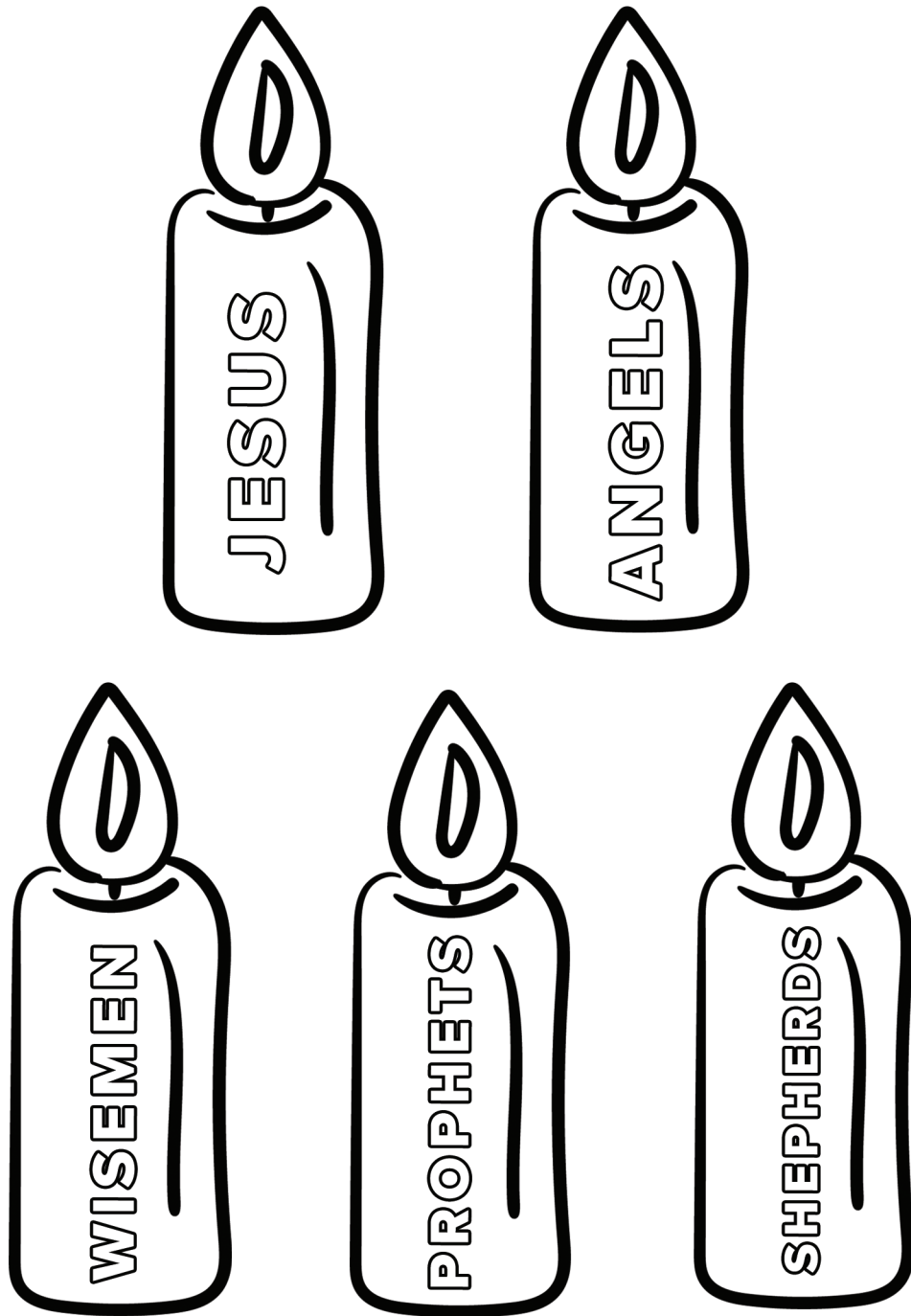
Praise God for the gift of Jesus.

One gift we can give Jesus is to love and care for people He loves—which is everybody!

Celebrate his birth and ask Him how you can share His love with someone today.



**For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given...
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Isaiah 9:6**



INSTRUCTIONS:

First, color in the wreath on page 10. Then, each week:

1. Find the right candle to go with the story of the week.
2. Color it in (whatever color(s) you like!).
3. Carefully cut the candle out.
4. Glue it onto the wreath (save the center spot for last!).
5. On Christmas Eve, when all the candles have been added, cut out your wreath and display your completed advent celebration!

Advent Activities to do Together

Looking for more festive activities to gather your crew together throughout the Advent season? Here are a few to get you started. Remember, it's not about how much you do, but how much fun you have doing it – and doing it together!

- 1 Bake Christmas cookies for a neighbor.
- 2 Make or buy an ornament that represents something significant for your family this year.
- 3 Build a fort, decorate it with Christmas lights, and have a Christmas campout in your living room.
- 4 Make a list together of blessings you're thankful for in your household.
- 5 Bake brownies for a nearby police or fire station.
- 6 Make Christmas cards for a nearby retirement community.
- 7 Go look at Christmas lights together while listening to Christmas music.
- 8 Write a short prayer to Jesus about what He means to you.
- 9 Leave a thank you note for your mail carrier or trash pickup.
- 10 Read some of your favorite Christmas books by your tree.

Additional Resources

Visit our website to explore more Christmas resources and Bible studies for your family!



cfhome.org/christmas

Christmas Movies and Conversation Questions

What better way to bring your home together during the Advent season than with a Christmas movie night? Gather your favorite snacks, some hot cocoa, and settle in for one of these classic festive movies. Afterwards, take the opportunity to have a meaningful conversation, using the suggested discussion questions as a conversation starter!

**Note to parents: These movies may not be appropriate for every family. If you're not familiar with the movie, we recommend reading a content description or review at your favorite online movie guide. Some of these movies are also available, "edited for content." You know your kids best, so as always, use your best judgment!*

A Christmas Story

What are some things that disappointed Ralphie throughout the movie?

How could he have changed his perspective to feel better?

Do you ever feel like your tongue is stuck to a frozen light pole when you're trying to talk about God with others?

What are some ways you could talk about the real story of Christmas that might feel less intimidating?

Elf

Notice how Buddy is searching for his father, but meeting his father is not what he expected. What do you feel like you're searching for?

What are you expecting when you receive it? How can you actively search for more of God in your life?

The Grinch

What made the Grinch mean? How did acts of kindness change him?

How can we show kindness to someone this Christmas, just like Cindy Lou Who did for the Grinch in the movie?

It's a Wonderful Life

Why did the dad struggle?

What happened when his family forgave him for his mistakes? Is there anything that you think God would have trouble forgiving?

What really makes a wonderful life?

White Christmas

In White Christmas, the characters learn the importance of helping others and being kind. Can you think of ways to be more helpful and kind to those around you, especially during the holidays?

How do you think forgiveness and second chances are important, and how can we practice this in our own lives?

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

Have you ever felt like you were excluded from a group? How did it make you feel?

What unique gifts do you think God gave you? How do you think God could use your unique gifts to bless others?

