ADVENT 2026 · A FAMILY DEVOTIONAL



Jesus › Christmas

Four weeks of hope, peace, joy and love for your family

NOVEMBER 29 – DECEMBER 25

Grace Community Church

Welcome

Advent means “coming.” For four weeks before Christmas, we get our hearts ready, not just our houses, to celebrate and worship Jesus. This guide gives your family 10 to 15 minutes a day to do that together. It follows our Sunday series, *Jesus > Christmas*.

The Advent wreath

The Advent wreath is a simple way to count down to Christmas with light. It started in 1839 with a German pastor named Johann Hinrich Wichern, who ran a school for children in Hamburg. The children kept asking whether Christmas had come yet, so he put candles on a wooden ring and lit one more each day.



- **The circle** has no beginning and no end. It reminds us that God’s love never ends.
- **The evergreen branches** stay green all winter. They remind us of the forever life Jesus gives.
- **The four outer candles** stand for Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. You light one more each Sunday. Many wreaths use three purple candles and one pink. The pink candle is for Joy in Week 3. Any colors work.
- **The center candle** is the Christ candle. It’s usually white, and you light it on Christmas.
- **The light grows** a little brighter each week, reminding us that Jesus is the light coming into the world (John 8:12).

How to use this devotional

1. **Set up your wreath** before Sunday, November 29. A real wreath, a plate with five candles or battery tea lights all work. If you use real candles, keep them away from little hands and blow them out before you leave the room.
2. **Pick a time and place.** After dinner at the table or on the couch before bed both work well. Plan on 10 to 15 minutes.
3. **On Sundays,** light the new candle for that week, plus the candles from earlier weeks. Then do Sunday's devotion.
4. **Monday through Thursday,** light the candles for the weeks so far and do that day's devotion.
5. **Friday and Saturday** are catch-up days if you missed one.
6. **On Christmas Day,** light all five candles, including the Christ candle in the middle.

Each devotion has four parts

READ
A parent or older child reads the Bible passage out loud.

WHAT IT MEANS
Read the short explanation together.

TALK
Ask the question and let everyone answer. There are no wrong answers.

PRAY
Pray the short prayer together. Little ones can repeat it after you, one line at a time.

Each week also has a **memory verse.** Try saying it together every night that week.

Missed a day? No problem. Just pick up where you are.

New to this? You don't need all the answers. If your kids ask something you don't know, say, "Let's find out together," and ask a pastor on Sunday.

WEEK 1

More Hope. Less Fear.

The story of Mary · November 29 – December 5



Mary was young and probably scared, but she trusted God. Hope means trusting God to keep his promises.

MEMORY VERSE

“For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Luke 1:37 ESV

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29

Light the Hope candle

READ **Luke 1:26–33**

WHAT IT MEANS

For centuries, God's people had waited without a new word from him. Then God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a small town people looked down on (John 1:46). He went to a young woman named Mary, who was engaged to Joseph, a man from King David's family (Luke 1:27). Gabriel brought amazing news. Mary would have a son and name him Jesus. He would be the Son of God and the forever King God had promised to David (2 Samuel 7:12–13). After all that waiting, God was coming to visit his people (Luke 1:68). And he chose an ordinary person in an ordinary place for the most important job in history. He still loves to work through ordinary people.

TALK

An angel told Mary she would be the mother of God's Son. How do you think she felt?

PRAY

"God, thank you for keeping your promises. Help us trust you. Amen."

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Light in the dark

READ **Isaiah 9:2, 6**

WHAT IT MEANS

About 700 years before Jesus was born, God's people were living through a dark and scary time (Isaiah 8:22). God gave the prophet Isaiah a promise: a great light is coming. A child will be born who will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. That child is Jesus. Matthew tells us Jesus is the light Isaiah was talking about (Matthew 4:13–16), and Jesus himself said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). Darkness can feel big. But even one small candle changes a dark room, and Jesus is a far greater light than that.

TALK

Long before Jesus was born, God promised to send a light. What helps you when it's dark?

PRAY

"Jesus, you are our light. Thank you for being with us. Amen."

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

Don’t be afraid

READ **Luke 1:28–30**

WHAT IT MEANS

When Gabriel appeared, Mary was “greatly troubled” (Luke 1:29). Who wouldn’t be? But the angel’s first words were kind: “The Lord is with you!” Then he said, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.” Favor means God’s kindness, a gift Mary didn’t earn. All through the Christmas story, God’s messengers say “Do not be afraid”: to Zechariah (Luke 1:13), to Joseph (Matthew 1:20), to Mary and to the shepherds (Luke 2:10). God says it because he is with us. In fact, Jesus came to free us from the biggest fear of all, the fear of death. He became human so he could die for us and rise again, breaking death’s power (Hebrews 2:14–15). Our fears are real, but Jesus is bigger than all of them.

TALK

The angel told Mary, “Do not be afraid.” What makes you afraid?

PRAY

Each person names one fear. Then pray, “God, we give you our fears. Thank you for being with us. Amen.”

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2

Nothing is impossible

READ **Luke 1:34–37**

WHAT IT MEANS

Mary asked an honest question: “How will this be?” She wasn’t married yet, and what the angel said sounded impossible. Gabriel explained that the Holy Spirit would do this miracle, so her baby would be holy, the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Then he gave her some encouraging news. Her relative Elizabeth, who was old and had never been able to have children, was going to have a baby too. That baby grew up to be John the Baptist. Then came the big promise: “Nothing will be impossible with God.” It’s okay to bring God our questions. Mary did, and God answered by reminding her who he is.

TALK

What is something only God can do?

PRAY

“God, nothing is impossible for you. Help us trust you. Amen.”

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

Mary says yes

READ **Luke 1:38, 46–49**

WHAT IT MEANS

Mary didn't know everything that would happen next. People might not understand. Her plans would change. But she said, "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." That is faith: trusting God enough to say yes before you see how it all works out. A little later, Mary sang a song of praise. Christians call it the Magnificat (mag-NIF-ih-cat), from the Latin word for "magnifies," because it begins, "My soul magnifies the Lord." To magnify means to make something look bigger. Notice that Mary sings about her own "humble estate," her lowly place in life (Luke 1:48). People who know they are small are the ones who make God look big. Saying yes to God led Mary to joy.

TALK

Mary said yes to God and sang a song of thanks. What good things has God done for our family?

PRAY

"God, we say yes to you. Thank you for all you've done. Amen."

FRIDAY & SATURDAY

Catch-up days. Pick up any day you missed, and keep practicing this week's memory verse.

WEEK 2

More Peace. Less Hurry.

The story of Bethlehem · December 6 – 12



Jesus came quietly, in a small town, with no room for him. This week we slow down and make room for Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28 ESV

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6

Light the Peace candle

READ **Luke 2:1–7**

WHAT IT MEANS

Luke tells us Jesus was born when Caesar Augustus ruled the Roman Empire, the most powerful ruler in the world at that time. Augustus ordered everyone to register in their family's hometown, so Joseph took Mary to Bethlehem. While they were there, Jesus was born. Mary wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger, a feeding box for animals. Think about that. The King of the universe spent his first night where animals ate. Jesus didn't come with a parade or a palace. He came quietly and humbly. The Bible says that though Jesus was rich, he became poor for our sake (2 Corinthians 8:9).

TALK

Jesus was laid in a manger, a feeding box for animals. Why do you think God chose such a simple place?

PRAY

"Jesus, slow our hearts down. Help us find peace in you. Amen."

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7

A long trip

READ **Luke 2:1–5 and Micah 5:2**

WHAT IT MEANS

Caesar thought he was in charge when he gave his order. But God was in charge. About 700 years earlier, the prophet Micah said the promised King would come from Bethlehem, a town "too little to be among the clans of Judah." Micah also said this King's "coming forth is from of old, from ancient days" (Micah 5:2). Jesus didn't begin in Bethlehem. As God the Son, he has always existed (John 1:1–2). Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, and their trip was about as far as driving from Chico to Sacramento. God used an emperor's order to bring two ordinary people to the exact town he had promised. If you ever feel small, remember this: God is big enough to move whole nations for the good of his people.

TALK

God used even the emperor to keep his promise. What does that tell us about God?

PRAY

"God, you are in charge. We trust you. Amen."

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8

No room

READ **Luke 2:6–7**

WHAT IT MEANS

Bethlehem was probably crowded with people who had come to register, and Luke says there was "no place for them in the inn." So Jesus was laid in a manger. That "no room" sign was only the beginning. Jesus' whole life was a path of humility that led all the way to the cross (Philippians 2:7–8). Years later he said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). Here's the amazing part: Jesus went without a room so that we could have a room with God forever. He promised, "In my Father's house are many rooms" (John 14:2). The question for us is whether there is room for Jesus in our hearts and our busy days.

TALK

There was no room for Jesus. What fills up our days so much that we forget about him?

PRAY

"Jesus, we want to make room for you. Amen."

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9

Jesus gives rest

READ **Matthew 11:28–30**

WHAT IT MEANS

When Jesus was grown, he gave an invitation to tired people: "Come to me." Then he talked about a yoke. A yoke is a wooden bar that fits across the necks of two animals, like oxen, so they can pull a plow together. Jesus says his yoke is easy and his burden is light. He isn't promising a life with no work or trouble. He's promising that we don't have to carry everything alone. He pulls alongside us, and he is "gentle and lowly in heart." When we feel rushed and worn out, Jesus doesn't tell us to try harder. He tells us to come to him and rest.

TALK

Jesus says, "Come to me, and I will give you rest." What makes you tired or worried?

PRAY

"Jesus, thank you that we can rest in you. Amen."

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10

The Prince of Peace

READ **Isaiah 9:6–7**

WHAT IT MEANS

Isaiah gave Jesus four names. *Wonderful Counselor:* he is wise and always knows what's best. *Mighty God:* he is God himself, strong enough to save us. *Everlasting Father:* he cares for his people forever, like a loving father. *Prince of Peace:* he brings peace. Our sin broke our peace with God, but Jesus came to make it right. "Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Once we have peace with God, he helps us make peace with each other (Ephesians 4:32). Isaiah says there will be no end to his peace. Everything else about Christmas ends. Jesus' peace doesn't.

TALK

Jesus makes peace between us and God. Is there anyone you need to make peace with?

PRAY

"Jesus, help us forgive each other. Amen."

FRIDAY & SATURDAY

Catch-up days. Pick up any day you missed, and keep practicing this week's memory verse.

WEEK 3

More Joy. Less Distraction.

The story of the shepherds · December 13 – 19



God told the good news about Jesus to shepherds first, ordinary workers out in a field. They dropped everything and went to see him. This week we put down distractions and look for Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE

"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

Luke 2:10 ESV

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13

Light the Joy candle

READ **Luke 2:8–14**

WHAT IT MEANS

In the fields near Bethlehem, shepherds were watching their sheep at night. Shepherding was hard, ordinary work, and nobody expected big news to come to shepherds. But an angel appeared, and God's glory shone all around them. The angel said, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." *Savior* means he came to rescue us. *Christ* means the Messiah, the chosen King God had promised. *Lord* means he is God. Then a huge crowd of angels filled the sky, praising God. Heaven was celebrating, and the first guests invited were workers on the night shift.

TALK

Why do you think God told shepherds first instead of kings?

PRAY

"God, thank you that the good news is for everyone. Fill us with joy. Amen."

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14

Good news for everyone

READ **Luke 2:10–12**

WHAT IT MEANS

The angel called this "good news of great joy that will be for all the people." Not just for rich people, or religious people, or people who have it all together. For everyone. The sign was surprising: a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Kings aren't usually found in feeding troughs! That's how God showed that Jesus came for ordinary people. It fits that shepherds heard first. King David was a shepherd boy from Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16:11), and Jesus later called himself "the good shepherd" who lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11).

TALK

The angel said the good news is "for all the people." Who might feel left out this Christmas?

PRAY

"Jesus, help us see people who feel left out. Amen."

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15

“Let’s go!”

READ **Luke 2:13–15**

WHAT IT MEANS

Suddenly the sky was full of angels saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” Notice who receives this peace: people God is pleased with. That doesn’t mean perfect people. It means people who trust him, because “without faith it is impossible to please him” (Hebrews 11:6). When the angels left, the shepherds didn’t say, “Well, that was interesting,” and go back to sleep. They said, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see.” They believed what God told them, and they acted right away. It’s easy to hear about Jesus and then get busy with games, phones, shows and chores. The shepherds show us a better way. When God speaks, go and see.

TALK

The shepherds said, “Let’s go and see!” What distracts us from Jesus?

PRAY

“Jesus, help us put down what distracts us. Amen.”

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16

Share the joy

READ **Luke 2:16–18**

WHAT IT MEANS

The shepherds “went with haste,” which means they hurried. They found Mary, Joseph and the baby, exactly as the angel said. Then they couldn’t keep quiet. They told people what the angels had said about this child, and everyone who heard was amazed. Joy is like that. When something wonderful happens, you want to tell someone. The shepherds didn’t have special training. They just told what they had seen and heard (see Acts 4:20). Christmas is the story of God sending his Son to us. Now Jesus sends us to others, just as the Father sent him (John 17:18). You don’t need all the answers to tell someone Jesus is good news.

TALK

The shepherds told everyone about Jesus. Who could we invite to church on Christmas Eve?

PRAY

“God, help us share the good news. Amen.”

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17

Back to work, but changed

READ **Luke 2:19–20**

WHAT IT MEANS

Here are two responses to the same amazing night. Mary "treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart." She kept thinking about them, like holding something precious. The shepherds "returned, glorifying and praising God." They went back to the same fields and the same sheep. Their jobs didn't change, but they did. It's easy for the Christmas story to feel ordinary because we've heard it so many times. Mary shows us how to slow down and let it amaze us again: God himself became a baby. The shepherds show us how to praise him in the middle of a normal day. Meeting Jesus doesn't always change where we are, but it changes who we are.

TALK

The shepherds went back to work praising God. How can we praise God on a normal day?

PRAY

"Jesus, help us praise you every day. Amen."

FRIDAY & SATURDAY

Catch-up days. Pick up any day you missed, and keep practicing this week's memory verse.

WEEK 4

More Love. Less Wanting.

The story of the wise men · December 20 – 24



The wise men traveled a long way to find Jesus and gave him their best gifts. Christmas can make us want more and more. This week we remember that Jesus is the best gift, and we practice giving.

MEMORY VERSE

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

John 3:16 ESV

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

Light the Love candle

READ **Matthew 2:1–2, 9–11**

WHAT IT MEANS

Some time after Jesus was born, wise men came from a faraway country in the east. They saw a special star that told them a new king had been born, so they made a long journey to find him. People have guessed for centuries how the star worked, but the Bible doesn't say. What matters is that God himself guided these travelers to his Son. The star led them to the house where Jesus was (Matthew 2:11). When they saw it, they "rejoiced exceedingly with great joy" and fell down and worshiped him. These men weren't Jewish. They came from other nations. Their visit shows that Jesus came to be King for people from every nation (Isaiah 60:3; Revelation 7:9). That includes us.

TALK

The wise men traveled a long way to find Jesus. Why was he worth it?

PRAY

"Jesus, you are worth more than anything. Help us love you most. Amen."

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21

Two kinds of kings

READ **Matthew 2:1–8**

WHAT IT MEANS

When King Herod heard that a new "king of the Jews" had been born, he was troubled (Matthew 2:3). Herod wanted to keep his throne, so he saw baby Jesus as a threat. He said he wanted to worship Jesus too, but he was lying (Matthew 2:16). The religious leaders knew exactly where the Messiah would be born, and they quoted Micah 5:2. But they didn't go to see him, even though Bethlehem was only a few miles away. Look at the three responses. Herod fought against Jesus. The leaders ignored him. The wise men went to worship him. People still respond to Jesus in these same three ways today.

TALK

King Herod was afraid of losing his power. The wise men just wanted to worship Jesus. What do we hold on to too tightly?

PRAY

"Jesus, you are the true King. Amen."

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22

Gifts for Jesus

READ **Matthew 2:9–12**

WHAT IT MEANS

The wise men brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. These were expensive gifts, the kind you would bring to a king. Christians have long seen meaning in each one. Gold is a gift for a king. Frankincense is a sweet-smelling incense used in worshiping God (Exodus 30:34–35). Myrrh is a spice that was used when people were buried (John 19:39), so it points ahead to Jesus' death for us. Jesus didn't need their gifts. They gave because he was worth it to them. Then God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod, so they "departed to their own country by another way." When you truly meet Jesus, you don't go home the same.

TALK

Jesus didn't need gold. Why do you think the wise men gave him gifts?

PRAY

"Jesus, you are our treasure. Teach us to give. Amen."

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23

The greatest gift

READ **John 3:16–17**

WHAT IT MEANS

This may be the most famous verse in the Bible, and it tells us why Christmas happened. God loved the world, every one of us, so much that he gave his only Son. The first Christmas gift wasn't wrapped in paper. It was wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. God didn't send Jesus to condemn us, but so that "the world might be saved through him." "Whoever believes" means anyone. "Eternal life" means a forever life with God that starts the moment we trust Jesus (John 5:24). And the best part of the gift isn't just what Jesus gives us. It's Jesus himself. Through him we get to know God and enjoy him forever (Romans 5:11). No wonder Paul wrote, "Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

TALK

God gave us Jesus because he loves us. How can we show love to someone this week?

PRAY

"God, thank you for loving us so much. Amen."

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24

Christmas Eve

READ **Matthew 1:20–23**

WHAT IT MEANS

Before Jesus was born, Joseph didn't understand how Mary could be having a baby, and he didn't know what to do. Then an angel spoke to him in a dream: "Do not fear." The angel told Joseph to name the baby Jesus, "for he will save his people from their sins." The name Jesus means "the Lord saves." Matthew says this fulfills Isaiah's promise that a virgin would have a son called Immanuel, which means "God with us" (Isaiah 7:14). Jesus isn't just a good teacher or a nice part of a holiday. He is God, who came close to rescue us.

TALK

What does it mean that God came to be with us?

PRAY

Anyone who is ready can pray: "Jesus, thank you for coming. I believe you died for my sins and rose again. I want to trust you and follow you. Amen."

THE GOOD NEWS

We have all done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin, and sin separates us from God. Jesus came to rescue us. He died on the cross for our sins and rose again. When we trust him, God forgives us and makes us part of his family. And he doesn't stop there. Jesus forgives us when we fail, and he helps us fight sin every day (1 John 2:1–2; 3:8).

> **If anyone prayed to trust Jesus for the first time, please tell a pastor at our Christmas Eve service so we can celebrate with you!**

CHRISTMAS DAY · FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25

Jesus > Christmas

Light the Christ candle



READ **Luke 2:10–11**

WHAT IT MEANS

Listen to the angel's words one more time: "Unto you is born this day … a Savior." Not just for the world in general. For you. Everything we've read this month points to one person. Mary said yes to him. He was born in little Bethlehem. The shepherds ran to him. The wise men bowed to him. Christmas is God keeping his promise. The presents will be opened and the decorations put away, but Jesus stays. And the story isn't over. Jesus promised to come back and make all things new (John 14:3; Revelation 21:5). That's why Jesus is greater than Christmas. Today, let's do what the shepherds and the wise men did: worship him.

TALK

Which part of the Christmas story meant the most to you this Advent? How did God take care of us this month?

PRAY

"Jesus, you are better than Christmas. Thank you for coming! Amen."

Keep going

You just built a great habit. Keep it up after Christmas by reading the Gospel of Luke together, one chapter at a time, a few nights a week.



Bible verses are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

Sources: Advent wreath history and meaning, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advent_wreath · Nazareth to Bethlehem distance, gordon.edu · Chico to Sacramento distance, distancefrom.co

Grace Community Church

We are a community of Christ followers on mission to grow in faith and love as we show and share the Gospel for the glory of God and the good of the city.

2346 FLORAL AVENUE · CHICO, CALIFORNIA