



Christmas is a season filled with anticipation. From the very beginning, the world was waiting for a promised Rescuer to come and make things right with God. At Christmas, we look forward to opening presents and being with family. Most of all, we can't wait to celebrate Jesus, the One who came to fulfill that promise.

Lighting the candles of Advent is a centuries-old tradition throughout the church. It's a chance to reflect on significance of the season and look forward to celebrating Jesus. Here's a simple way to create your own advent tradition. Over the next month, take time each Sunday and countdown to Christmas. Pause and remember the Christmas story. Celebrate how God sent Jesus to be our Savior.

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut along the dotted line.
2. Place a tea-light candle on each circle.
3. Gather as a family and follow the prompts from the Christmas Countdown:
 - Read the passage from the Bible and the short devotional.
 - Discuss the questions together.
 - Light a candle to mark the week.
 - Pray and thank God for each week of Advent and the anticipation of celebrating Jesus.

CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN

HOPE CANDLE

READ

Isaiah 9:6-7

As God's people were about to head into exile, God delivered hope through a promise. Someday, this will all be over—a King would come who would make all things new. Christmas celebrates the hope that God sent Jesus to fulfill that promise and rescue creation once and for all. Knowing that God has kept His promises in the past gives us hope that God will continue keeping His promises in the future.

ASK

- What is something you hope for?
- How can you stay hopeful even when you don't get what you want?
- When have you seen God take care of our family?

DO

Light the Hope candle.



PRAY

"Dear God, thank You for reminding us during this time of year that You keep Your promises—every single time! Thank You for the promise of Jesus. Thank You for the hope that we have in Him. Please help us to remember what You did for Your people—and for us—when You sent Jesus to be our Savior. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name, amen."

JOY CANDLE

READ

Luke 1:26-38, 46-47

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she would be Jesus' mother. This must have come as quite a surprise. After all, Mary wasn't married yet, and she had a different plan for her life. Gabriel reminded her that nothing is impossible with God. She could have been overwhelmed by this startling news, but she chose to respond with a song of joy. Nothing takes God by surprise. We can trust that God has an ultimate plan for our lives. Discover the joy that comes from believing in Jesus and God's plan for us.

ASK

- Who are we planning on seeing this Christmas?
- How do you feel when your plans don't happen like you want?
- How can we remember to have joy, even when our plans change?

DO

Light the Hope and Joy candles.



PRAY

"Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior. We can see how Mary trusted Your plan, and You filled her heart with joy. Thank You for reminding us that You have a good plan for our lives, too. Help us to find our joy in You, because Your plans are ALWAYS good. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name, amen."

LOVE CANDLE

READ

Luke 2:1-7

From a human perspective, this whole situation must have seemed crazy to Mary and Joseph. Not only was Mary expecting the baby who would save the world, but now she and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem for the census. When they arrive, there's no room for them to stay except for the place they keep the animals. As hectic as this might have seemed, this is exactly how God wanted Jesus to enter the world. Right from the start, God wanted to have a relationship with us. Even when we messed that up with our sin, God continued to love and make a way to rescue us. Jesus is proof that God loves us unconditionally.

ASK

- What are we giving others this Christmas?
- How does it make you feel knowing God loves you so much?
- How can we show God's love to others?

DO

Light the Hope, Joy, and Love candles.



PRAY

"Dear God, thank You for showing Your love by sending Jesus. You kept Your promise to send a Savior, and You sent Him at just the right time. Help us to always remember how much You love us—so much that You sent Your own Son to rescue us. And help us remember the true meaning of Christmas as we celebrate with our family and friends. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name, amen."

PEACE CANDLE

READ

Luke 2:8-20

After Jesus was born, the first people to find out are some unassuming shepherds in a field minding their own business. The angel announced Jesus' birth along with an angel choir that proclaimed God's peace for everyone on earth. They rushed to see the baby for themselves. They were so excited that they spent the rest of the night telling everyone they could about Jesus. We hope that this Christmas you would come to know God's love and believe that Jesus truly is the Savior of the world.

ASK

- What does it mean to have peace?
- Why is hard to find peace sometimes?
- How can have peace knowing God loves us and sent us Jesus?

DO

Light the Hope, Joy, Love, and Peace candles.



PRAY

"Dear God, thank You for this reminder that Your peace is for everyone. You love and care about each and every one of us. You love us so much that You sent Jesus to be our Savior! Thank You for the peace that comes when we put our faith in You. Please help us to trust You and live Your way every day. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name, amen."

CHRIST CANDLE

READ

John 1:1-5, 14

The "Word" John is talking about is Jesus. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He has been with God from the beginning, giving life and breath to all things. Christmas is the celebration that Jesus became like us. He lived and died and rose again, so that we could have life that lasts forever with God. This Christmas let's celebrate that Jesus came to rescue us and God is always with us.

ASK

- What's your favorite thing about Christmas? Why?
- How can we focus on Jesus this Christmas?
- How can we stay focused on Jesus throughout the whole year?

DO

Light all five candles with the Christ candle last.



PRAY

"Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior. Thank You for sending Jesus to be a light in this world that can seem so dark. This Christmas, keep us focused on Jesus, the true reason for why we celebrate. As we remember how much You love us, help us know how we can show Your love to others this Christmas. We love You. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen."

Advent 2020

Gather around every day this month to read the story of how God sent joy to the world with the gift of His Son, Jesus. While you're at it, spread some joy of your own as a family!

PARENT CUE

A young couple, Mary and Joseph, get engaged.

Kick off the month with hot chocolate for everyone. Take turns talking about your favorite Christmases of the past.

1

One day, God sends the angel, Gabriel, to Mary. Gabriel has some very special news!

Ask everyone to choose someone, and write a personalized Christmas card to them. Put each card in an envelope, address and stamp them, and mail them.

2

Mary is greatly troubled when she hears the angel's greeting.

Decorate your bedroom doors with wrapping paper, and put up a sign with a Christmas greeting.

3

Gabriel responds to Mary, saying: "Don't be afraid. God is very happy with you!"

Take a car ride or walk on foot to see Christmas lights and decorations in your neighborhood or community.

4

Gabriel tells Mary the special news: She will have a baby boy, and the baby will be named Jesus.

Clean out the toy bins, closets, and drawers. Donate items to a local shelter or thrift store.

5

Gabriel shares with Mary more details of God's plan: "Jesus will be great and will be called God's very own son!"

Have a family picnic in front of the Christmas tree.

6

Mary doesn't understand how she can have a baby without being married, but the angel, Gabriel, assures her of a great truth: Nothing is impossible with God.

Read a Christmas book or google a story online. Read it aloud together.

7

"I serve God with my life and want all that you have said to happen," Mary tells the angel, and he leaves.

Hide candy canes around your house. Have a family candy cane hunt, and see who can collect the most.

8

Mary visits her cousin, Elizabeth, and is so overwhelmed with God's goodness, she sings a song of praise.

Have a gift wrapping competition. Who can wrap the fastest?

9

Caesar Augustus wants to know how many people are in his empire, so he tells all the people to go back to their hometown to be registered and counted.

Google search Christmas traditions around the world, and ask your family to vote on a new tradition to adopt.

10

Joseph brings Mary, who is pregnant, to his hometown of Bethlehem to be counted.

Gather your extra towels and blankets, and wash and dry them. Then, as a family, go together to donate them to an animal shelter.

11

While Joseph and Mary are in Bethlehem, the time comes for the baby to be born.

Eat dinner together by candlelight or Christmas lights.

12

Mary gives birth to Jesus, wraps Him in swaddling cloths, and lays Him in a manger because there is no room for them anywhere else.

Grab some stuffed animals and towels or small blankets. Search how to swaddle a baby. Encourage everyone to try swaddling. Have a contest to see whose is best!

13

At night in a nearby field, shepherds are watching their flocks.

Bundle up and go outside after nightfall. Look at the stars—those are the same stars the shepherds saw in the sky the night Jesus was born.

14

The sky lights up—God has sent an angel to the shepherds to tell them the good news of Jesus' birth.

Ask everyone to sign a family "Thank You" card to your mail carrier. Feel free to add a bottle of water and a \$10 gift card for lunch!

15

When the shepherds see the angel, they're afraid!

Get those phones ready and have a silly, Christmas-themed photoshoot.

16

The angel tries to calm the shepherds, saying: "Don't be afraid. I bring wonderful news that will bring joy to all of the world!"

Create a playlist using everyone's favorite Christmas song. Then, crank up the volume, press play, and have a family dance party!

17

"A Savior, the Rescuer you have been waiting for, is born today!" the angel proclaims to the shepherds.

Grab blankets and popcorn, and have a Christmas movie marathon together.

18

The angel explains the shepherds will find the Savior, a baby, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

The big day is almost here! To prepare, turn up the Christmas music, assign chores, and clean the house from top to bottom.

19

More angels come to celebrate the good news—they arrive at the shepherd's field and begin praising God!

Declare today is Red and Green Day! Tell everyone to dress in all red and green—even if it doesn't match!

20

The shepherds leave their flocks and hurry to find Mary, Joseph, and the baby, who is lying in a manger.

Break out the cookie cutters, and bake Christmas cookies together.

21

After they see the baby, the shepherds excitedly go and tell the good news to everyone they see!

Call or FaceTime a family member, and sing them a Christmas carol.

22

The shepherds return to their flocks, praising God for all they have seen and heard.

Enjoy a family board game night in front of the Christmas tree.

23

Mary names the baby Jesus, just as the angel told her to do.

Choose a scene from the Christmas story, assign roles, and act it out.

24

God has sent Jesus to rescue us because God loves us so very much!

Read the story of Jesus' birth from Luke 1:26–2:21. Remember the greatest gift of all—the hope we have in our Savior, Jesus!

25