

Evening Advent Devotions For Families



For the children

*"And now dear children, continue in him
so that when he appears we may be
confident and unashamed before him at his coming."
1 John 2:28*

Scripture Readings are taken from the
Contemporary English Version

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Family Leadership Network
NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

God With Us

Advent Evening Devotions

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.
Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Isaiah 7:14



Dear Families,

Soon, we can wish the children a “Blessed New Year” as the season of Advent begins. Advent is the first season in the Church Year.

It’s the season when we resist the temptation to jump into Christmas, and instead reverently wait and watch with the prophets and the familiar characters who are on the scene when the curtain opens in Israel during the Roman occupation, 5 or 6 B.C.: Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon, Anna... characters in the Story called by God to play a part at that electrifying moment in history. As they quietly tried, with wonder, to absorb the events that were being set in motion and be faithful to what was being shown to them, the rest of the world carried on with other things.

How will we take a step back in our families and our church for the next four weeks for our own sakes and for the sake of the children among us who, through no fault of their own, and without the adults in their lives choosing something else, are part of the mad rush through the holidays? How will we, with reverence and wonder be faithful to what has been revealed to us as a witness to a world that carries on with other things?

My prayer is that this simple guide will help us to gather each day for a time with those we love around the Light of Christ who has come into the world, the Holy One who was, and is, and is to come, and that by spending that time together in his Presence, we may also be bearers of the Light during this Advent season.

In Christ,

Rev. Elizabeth Stewart

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A Note on Reading and Retelling the Stories

Before you read the new story each evening, ask for a volunteer to retell the bible story from the previous evening. You can also retell the story together, encouraging young children to tell the parts they know, or in the case of very young children, simply letting them fill in missing words as you tell the story.

Children should never feel as though this is a test of some kind, or that they are *required* to participate in retelling. Let them observe you struggling to remember details or the right chronology! Help them to see that these are the stories of our faith which we treasure, and in telling and retelling them over and over we make them our own, participating not just in the telling, but in living in light of them.

When you read the new story, you could read it more than once, and ask children to imagine themselves close to a different character each time, noticing their reactions or imagining what their feelings might be.

You could encourage each person in the family to ask one question once you have finished reading. Those questions can be “I wonder questions” that may not have a clear answer. They might be very simple questions about content, or deeper questions about meaning. Being included in asking questions also helps young children to know that they are not being tested, but instead have a part to play too in the discovery of the meaning of a biblical text.

Invite the Spirit to be present and trust that he is as you come together around God's Word!

Advent 1

Hope

Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1)

Memory Verse: Isaiah 9:6a

Advent 2

Peace

An Angel Visits Mary (Luke 1)

Memory Verse: Isaiah 9:6

Advent 3

Joy

Angels and Shepherds (Luke 2)

Memory Verse: Isaiah 9:6-7a

Advent 4

Love

Wise Men from Far Away (Matthew 2)

Memory Verse: Isaiah 9:6-7

Christmas Eve or Day

The Christ Candle

John 1:1-14

Isaiah 9:2-7

Advent 1

Child: "The people walking in darkness..."

Family responds: "...have seen a great light!"

Child: Why do we gather tonight to sit in silence and light a candle for hope?

Adult: This is the season of Advent. It is a time for remembering and waiting with hope. We remember that the prophets long ago told about a Savior who would come to rescue people from their sins. He came, and His name is Jesus, the Christ. We wait and get ready to celebrate Jesus' coming into the world as a Baby that will come this year. That is Christmas! We also remember that we are waiting for Christ to come again- this time as a King in glory to set everything right forever.

Sing Together

"Light one Candle for hope, hope that the whole world needs.

Light one candle for hope, hope that the Savior will bring."

Light the First Purple Candle

Sit Together in silence for one minute. Listen for God.

Listen Together

Zechariah and Elizabeth (following page)

Before reading each evening, retell the story from the previous evening.

On Day 5, retell the whole story.

Wonder Together

Give each person an opportunity to ask one question about what you have read together.

Remember Together (*memory verse*)

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

Isaiah 9:6a

Pray Together

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away
the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light,
now in the time of this mortal life in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great
humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both
the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns
with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and forever.

1979 Book of Common Prayer

-other prayers may be added-

Say Together

“Come, Lord Jesus, Come!”

Extinguish the candle, or if it is bedtime, light another candle
from the advent candle and lead children to bed by candlelight.



Zechariah and Elizabeth from Luke 1

Days 1 and 2 (retell this part of the story together on Day 2)

An Angel Visits Zechariah in the Temple

5When Herod was king of Judea, there was a priest by the name of Zechariah from the priestly group of Abijah. His wife Elizabeth was from the family of Aaron. 6Both of them were good people and pleased the Lord God by obeying all that he had commanded. 7But they did not have children. Elizabeth could not have any, and both Zechariah and Elizabeth were already old. 8One day Zechariah's group of priests were on duty, and he was serving God as a priest.

9According to the custom of the priests, he had been chosen to go into the Lord's temple that day and to burn incense, 10while the people stood outside praying. 11All at once an angel from the Lord appeared to Zechariah at the right side of the altar. 12Zechariah was confused and afraid when he saw the angel.

13But the angel told him: Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayers. Your wife Elizabeth will have a son, and you must name him John. 14His birth will make you very happy, and many people will be glad. 15Your son will be a great servant of the Lord. He must never drink wine or beer, and the power of the Holy Spirit will be with him from the time he is born. 16John will lead many people in Israel to turn back to the Lord their God. 17He will go ahead of the Lord with the same power and spirit that Elijah had. And because of John, parents will be more thoughtful of their children. And people who now disobey God will begin to think as they ought to. That is how John will get people ready for the Lord. 18Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know this is going to happen? My wife and I are both very old." 19The angel answered, "I am Gabriel, God's servant, and I was sent to tell you this good news. 20You have not believed what I have said. So you will not be able to say a thing until all this happens. But everything will take place when it is supposed to."

21The crowd was waiting for Zechariah and kept wondering why he was staying so long in the temple. 22When he did come out, he could not speak, and they knew he had seen a vision. He motioned to them with his hands, but did not say a thing.

Days 3 and 4 (*retell this part of the story together on Day 4*)

The Birth of John the Baptist

²³When Zechariah's time of service in the temple was over, he went home. ²⁴Soon after that, his wife was expecting a baby, and for five months she did not leave the house. She said to herself, ²⁵"What the Lord has done for me will keep people from looking down on me."

⁵⁷When Elizabeth's son was born, ⁵⁸her neighbors and relatives heard how kind the Lord had been to her, and they too were glad. ⁵⁹Eight days later they did for the child what the Law of Moses commands. They were going to name him Zechariah, after his father. ⁶⁰But Elizabeth said, "No! His name is John." ⁶¹The people argued, "No one in your family has ever been named John." ⁶²So they motioned to Zechariah to find out what he wanted to name his son. ⁶³Zechariah asked for a writing tablet. Then he wrote, "His name is John." Everyone was amazed. ⁶⁴Right away, Zechariah started speaking and praising God. ⁶⁵All the neighbors were frightened because of what had happened, and everywhere in the hill country people kept talking about these things. ⁶⁶Everyone who heard about this wondered what this child would grow up to be. They knew that the Lord was with him.

Day 5 (*Retell the whole story from this week and then read Zechariah's song of praise!*)

Zechariah Praises the Lord

⁶⁷The Holy Spirit came upon Zechariah, and he began to speak: ⁶⁸Praise the Lord, the God of Israel! He has come to save his people. ⁶⁹Our God has given us a mighty Savior from the family of David his servant. ⁷⁰Long ago the Lord promised by the words of his holy prophets ⁷¹to save us from our enemies and from everyone who hates us. ⁷²God said he would be kind to our people and keep his sacred promise.

⁷³He told our ancestor Abraham ⁷⁴that he would rescue us from our enemies. Then we could serve him without fear, ⁷⁵by being holy and good as long as we live. ⁷⁶You, my son, will be called a prophet of God in heaven above. You will go ahead of the Lord to get everything ready for him. ⁷⁷You will tell his people that they can be saved when their sins are forgiven. ⁷⁸God's love and kindness will shine upon us like the sun that rises in the sky. ⁷⁹On us who live in the dark shadow of death this light will shine to guide us into a life of peace. ⁸⁰As John grew up, God's Spirit gave him great power. John lived in the desert until the time he was sent to the people of Israel.

Advent 2

Child: "The people walking in darkness..."

Family responds: "...have seen a great light!"

Adult: As the nights grow longer, and the days shorter, we look on these earthly signs—light and green branches— and we remember God's promise to our world: Christ our Light, and our Hope and will come.

Sing Together

"Light one candle for peace, peace that the whole world needs.

Light one candle for peace, peace that the Savior will bring."

Light 1st purple candle for Hope and the 2nd for Peace

Sit Together in silence for one minute. Listen for God.

Listen Together

An Angel Visits Mary (following page)

Before reading each evening, retell the part of the story from the previous evening.

On Day 5, retell the whole story together.

Wonder Together

Give each person an opportunity to ask a question about what you have read together. If questions are not forthcoming, you could begin by asking each person, "What is your favorite part of this story?" and "What do you think is the most important part of this story?"

Remember Together

"For 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."

Isaiah

9:6

Pray Together

O God, rejoicing, we remember the promise of your Son.

As the light from this candle, may the blessing of Christ come upon us, brightening our way and guiding us by his truth. May Christ our Savior bring life into the darkness of our world, and to us, as we wait for his coming. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

-other prayers may be added-

Say Together

"Come, Lord Jesus, Come!" *Extinguish the candle, or if it is bedtime, light another candle from the advent candle and lead children to bed by candlelight.*



An Angel Visits Mary from Luke 1

Day 1

An Angel Visits Mary

²⁶

One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee ²⁷with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David.

²⁸The angel greeted Mary and said, "You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you."

²⁹

Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. ³⁰Then the angel told Mary, "Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, ³¹and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. ³³He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end."

³⁴

Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen? I am not married!"

³⁵

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God. ³⁶Your relative Elizabeth is also going to have a son, even though she is old. No one thought she could ever have a baby, but in three months she will have a son. ³⁷Nothing is impossible for God!"

³⁸Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant! Let it happen as you have said." And the angel left her.

Day 2

Mary Visits Elizabeth

³⁹A short time later Mary hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea. ⁴⁰She went into Zechariah's home, where she greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, her baby moved within her.

The Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth. ⁴²Then in a loud voice she said to Mary: God has blessed you more than any other woman! He has also blessed the child you will have.

⁴³

Why should the mother of my Lord come to me? ⁴⁴As soon as I heard your greeting, my baby became happy and moved within me. ⁴⁵The Lord has blessed you because you believed that he will keep his promise.

Day 3

Mary's Song of Praise

46Mary said: With all my heart I praise the Lord,⁴⁷and I am glad because of God my Savior.

48He cares for me, his humble servant. From now on, all people will say God has blessed me.

⁴⁹God All-Powerful has done great things for me, and his name is holy.

50He always shows mercy to everyone who worships him.

51The Lord has used his powerful arm to scatter those who are proud.

52He drags strong rulers from their thrones and puts humble people in places of power.

53God gives the hungry good things to eat, and sends the rich away with nothing.

54He helps his servant Israel and is always merciful to his people.

55The Lord made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his family forever!

56Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months. Then she went back home.

Day 4

Hear the Words of the Prophet Isaiah about the coming of the Messiah

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light;
on those who lived in a land as dark as death a light has dawned.

You have increased their joy and given them gladness;

They rejoice in your presence as those who rejoice at harvest, as warriors exult when dividing spoil.

Day 5

Retell the Story of Mary and Elizabeth in your own words.

Advent 3

Child: “The people walking in darkness...

Family responds: ...have seen a great light!”

Adult: As the nights grow longer, and the days shorter, we look on these earthly signs—light and green branches—and we remember God’s promise to our world: Christ our Light, our Hope and our Peace will come to show us his great love.

Sing Together

“Light one candle for joy, joy that the whole world needs,
Light one candle for joy, joy that the Savior will bring.”

Light Two Purple Candles and The Rose Candle

Sit Together in silence for one minute. Listen for God.

Listen Together

Angels and Shepherds (following page)

Before reading each evening, retell the part of the story from the previous evening.

On Day 5, retell the whole story together.

Wonder Together

Give each person an opportunity to ask a question about what you have read together. If questions are not forthcoming, you could begin by asking each person, "What is your favorite part of this story?" and "What do you think is the most important part of this story?"

Remember Together

"For 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. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end." *Isaiah 9:6-7a*

Pray Together

O God, rejoicing, we remember the promise of your Son.
As the light from this candle, may the blessing of Christ come upon us, brightening our way and guiding us by his truth. May Christ our Savior bring life into the darkness of our world, and to us, as we wait for his coming. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen
-other prayers may be added-

Say Together

"Come, Lord Jesus, Come!"

Extinguish the candle, or if it is bedtime, light another candle from the advent candle and lead children to bed by candlelight.



Angels and Shepherds *from Luke 2*

Day 1

A Prophecy from the Book of Micah

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.”

3 Therefore Israel will be abandoned
until the time when she who is in labor bears a son,
and the rest of his brothers return
to join the Israelites.

4 He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.

Day 2

Jesus is Born in Bethlehem

1 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[a] 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.

Day 3

Angels and 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.”

Day 4

Shepherds Tell the Good News

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.

Day 5

Retell the story of the Birth of Jesus.

When we retell a story, we sometimes use a simple object to pass to the person speaking. A Christmas ornament, especially an angel or the baby Jesus would work well for this retelling.

Advent 4

Child: “The people walking in darkness...

Family responds: ...have seen a great light!”

Adult: As our days grow longer, and our nights shorter, we look on these earthly signs—light and green branches—and we remember God’s promise to our world: Christ our Light, our Hope and our Peace and our Joy will come!

Sing Together

“Light one candle for love, love that the whole world needs.
Light one candle for love, love that the Savior will bring.”

Light Three Purple Candles and The Rose Candle

Sit Together in silence for one minute. Listen for God.

Listen Together

Wise Men From Far Away *(following page)*

*Before reading each evening, retell the part of the story from the previous evening.
On Day 5, retell the whole story together.*

Wonder Together

Give each person an opportunity to ask a question about what you have read together. If questions are not forthcoming, you could begin by asking each person, "What is your favorite part of this story?" and "What do you think is the most important part of this story?"

Remember Together:

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given and the government will be on is shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of 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." *Isaiah 9:6-7*

Pray Together

O God, rejoicing, we remember the promise of your Son.

As the light from this candle, may the blessing of Christ come upon us, brightening our way and guiding us by his truth. May Christ our Savior bring life into the darkness of our world, and to us, as we wait for his coming. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

-other prayers may be added-

Say Together

"Come, Lord Jesus, Come!"

*Extinguish the candle, or if it is bedtime, light another candle from the
advent candle
and lead children to bed by candlelight.*



Wise Men From Far Away ***from Matthew 2***

Day 1

A Prophecy from the Book of Isaiah, chapter 49

⁵ Even before I was born, the LORD God chose me to serve him and to lead back the people of Israel.

So the LORD has honored me and made me strong.

⁶ Now the LORD says to me, "It isn't enough for you to be merely my servant. You must do more than lead back survivors from the tribes of Israel. I have placed you here as a light for other nations; you must take my saving power to everyone on earth."

Days 2 and 3

The Wise Men Search for a King in Israel

¹When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem ²and said, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." ³When King Herod heard about this, he was worried, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. ⁴Herod brought together the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?"

⁵They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote,

⁶Bethlehem in the land of Judea,
you are very important among the towns of Judea.
From your town will come a leader,
who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel.' "

⁷ Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star.
⁸ He told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know. I want to go and worship him too."

Day 4

The Wise Men find Jesus

⁹ The wise men listened to what the king said and then left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰They were thrilled and excited to see the star.

¹¹ When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshiped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and gave them to him. ¹²Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.

¹³ After the wise men had gone, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Hurry and take the child and his mother to Egypt! Stay there until I tell you to return, because Herod is looking for the child and wants to kill him."

¹⁴ That night, Joseph got up and took his wife and the child to Egypt, ¹⁵where they stayed until Herod died. So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "I called my son out of Egypt."

Day 5

Retell the Story of the Wise Men

Christmas Eve or Christmas Day

Child: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light!"

Reader:

On those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. *Isaiah 9:2-5*

Together (with great joy!):

"For 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. Of 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." *Isaiah 9:6-7*

Lighting of the Candles

1st candle:

Candle Lighter: What the prophet foretold has come to pass. *Candle lighter:* Christ has brought us hope.

Family: The Light of Christ has come into the world.

2nd candle:

Candle lighter: Christ has brought us peace.

Family: The Light of Christ has come into the world.

3rd candle:

Candle Lighter: Christ has brought us joy.

Family: The Light of Christ has come into the world.

4th Candle

Candle Lighter: Christ has brought us love.

Family: The Light of Christ has come into the world.

The Christ Candle:

Candle Lighter: Christ our Light, our Hope, our Peace and our Joy, has come!

Together: Thanks be to God!



A Reading from the Gospel of John

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Sing Together

~a verse of Joy to the World, or a favorite carol of your choosing.

Pray Together

~remembering those who are dear to Christ's heart and in need of the hope he brings-- the poor and the needy, the widow and the orphan, those who are in need of his healing.

A Christmas Collect

O God, who makes us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that as we joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come again to be our Judge who lies and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and ever. *Amen.*



Family Leadership Network

NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE