

ADVENT FAMILY DEVOTIONS (A BRIEF GUIDE)

Suggested Template/Outline for Family Devotions (can be done individually or with children of any age)

1. Choose a consistent time to gather for the 4 weeks of Advent
2. Light the candle/s on the Advent wreath for the week and read the corresponding reading below
3. Read a Bible verse or favorite Christmas story (you might experiment with memorizing a verse or two together as a family over the 4 weeks of Advent)
4. Say a brief prayer (example: "Dear God, thank you for your peace. Help us to share peace with others")
5. Say a blessing for those around you (examples: "I am glad you are in my family" or "I hope you feel God's love today")
6. Extinguish the candle/s safely

Lighting the Advent Candles & Readingsⁱ

Week 1: The Candle of Hope

Read:

Light one candle for hope. Because the world is broken and the wait is long, but hope just won't let go.

Hope holds space for all our longings, lingers on the edge of harsh reality like the dawn gently awakening the sky.

"Keep awake," she whispers, "for the world is being made new."

So we light one candle, because it only takes one: Christ with us.

Read (choose one or more):

Isaiah 64:8 "Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand."

Psalms 80:4 "Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved."

1 Corinthians 1:8-9 "He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Mark 13:33 "Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come."

Week 2: The Candle of Peace

Read:

Light one candle for peace. Because the world is broken and the wait is long, but we refuse to be frozen by fear.

Peace comes in fits and starts- a deep breath, a courageous truth a humble heart.
"Prepare the way," she whispers, "for the Lord comes to make the broken whole."
So we light one candle, because it only takes one: Christ with us.

Read (choose one or more):

Isaiah 40:8 "The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever."

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance."

2 Peter 3:14-15a "Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him."

Week 3: The candle of Joy

Read:

Light one candle for joy. Because the world is broken and the wait is long, but our joy cannot be contained.

Like a toddler, toppling the thrones of power with a gleeful swipe, Joy pierces our silence with song, interrupts our sighing with laughter, unshackles our fumbling feet to dance.

"My soul magnifies the Lord," she whispers, "and my Spirit rejoices in God my savior."

So we light one candle, because it only takes one: Christ with us.

Read (choose one or more):

Isaiah 61: 1-2 "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn..."

Psalms 126: 2 "Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

Luke 1:46b-49 "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

Week 4: The Candle of Love

Read:

Light one candle for love. Because the world is broken and the wait is long, but love never ends.

Love faithfully goes about the work of casting out fear, speaking truth, healing the deepest wounds, crossing the divide from this world to the next and back again.

"Here I am," she whispers, "the servant of the Lord."

So we light one candle, because it only takes one: Christ with us.

Read (choose one or more):

2 Samuel 7:8-9 "Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth."

Psalms 89:1 "I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations."

Luke 1:46b-49 "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

Week 5 (Christmas Eve and/or Christmas Day)

Read:

Light one candle for Christ. Because the world is broken and the wait is long, but Christ is with us through it all.

In humble manger in a back water town - a baby. On a convict's cross - a king. in every heart and every home where hope, peace, joy, and love endure-Christ with us.

"Glory to God in the Highest heaven," she whispers, "and peace to all on earth."

So we light one candle, because it only takes one: Christ with us.

Read (choose one or more):

Isaiah 9:2 "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined."

Isaiah 9:6 "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Psalms 96:2-3 "Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples."

Titus 2:14 "He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds."

Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

Additional Reflection

If you want to engage in additional reflection together, consider these questions as you listen/read the verses (appropriate for any age):

- What stands out to me/you about this verse? What do you notice?
- What do I learn about God?

- What do I learn about myself?
- What questions does this reading bring up for me? (don't try to answer the questions...just name them and say "hmmm...that's an interesting question," or something like it)
- What else do I wonder as I read/hear this reading?

You might also choose these additional activities for those who learn/process information in other ways:

- Draw a picture: what do these words look like?
- Move your body: how do these verses feel in your body?
- Write a song: How might these verses sound set to music?
- Sit in silence: read the verse, and then sit in silence. What thoughts, feelings, or ideas come to mind for you?

ⁱ Advent Candle readings from: <https://www.prcli.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/One-Candle-Liturgy.pdf>.
Scripture passages from the New Revised Standard Version. Feel free to use a translation that is familiar to you. These readings come from the weekly lectionary readings, and are offered as a suggestion or a place to start.