



Rescue

Advent Family Devotions

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The word **Advent** means **Coming** and these Advent Family Devotions celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God--his first Advent, his birth, his incarnation. For centuries before his birth, God's people waited with great hope, expectation, & anticipation. Today, we wait with the same hope for the second Advent of Jesus Christ who will come again one day. As we wait, we encourage our families with these bible stories of hope for Jesus Christ came to seek and save and to **RESCUE** us from our sins. Each Week of Advent includes Family Time in the Word of God, Family Discussion, & Family Prayer.



WEEK ONE: THE ANNOUNCEMENT

This week, your family will reflect on the promises leading up to the birth of Jesus Christ. Not only had God promised the Messiah throughout the Old Testament, beginning with His promise in Genesis 3:15, God also announced the birth of Jesus to many people in the months leading up to His birth. This week includes three devotions focused on the announcement of the birth of Jesus.

Family Time in the Word: Read Luke 1:5-25

Family Teaching: Luke begins his gospel with the story of a miraculous pregnancy, Elizabeth's, that would bring forth a son with an important ministry: John the Baptist preparing the way for the Messiah (v. 17; see Malachi 3:1). Gabriel the angel proclaimed this "Good News" (v. 19) to Zechariah the priest, Elizabeth's husband.

However, Zechariah's heart was not ready to receive this news and he did not believe. It was not until after the birth of John the Baptist that we see Zechariah filled with the Spirit, rejoicing over the coming redemption and rescue from sins that would come through Jesus Christ.

Family Discussion: Why do you think it was hard for Zechariah to believe what Gabriel said? Why did Gabriel call this announcement "Good News"?

Family Time in the Word: Read Luke 1:26-38

Family Teaching: This passage begins in the 6th month of Elizabeth's pregnancy as the angel Gabriel goes to the small village of Nazareth to deliver a message to Mary, a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph. Gabriel tells Mary that she will give birth to Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit (v. 35), for "Nothing is impossible for God" (v. 37).

Gabriel also tells us about the one to be born: the Son will be named Jesus. In the Hebrew, Jesus is translated as "Yeshua," meaning, "Yahweh Saves." Matthew 1:21 tells us that Jesus came to "save his people from their sins." He is our Savior. He came to Rescue us from our sins.

Family Discussion: What else did Gabriel tell Mary about the one to be born? How would you describe Jesus? How does He Rescue us?

Family Time in the Word: Read Matthew 1:18-25

Family Teaching: Joseph is a character who demonstrates bold faith and bold obedience. He trusted that Mary's pregnancy was a miracle from God and that her baby would be Immanuel, meaning, "God with us" (v. 23).

Family Prayer: Ask each member of your family to share a prayer request and then lead in prayer.

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The Advent story is filled with **characters** who were invited into the beautiful story of the birth of Jesus. As the Word of God took on flesh and dwelt among us, we read about a priest, a carpenter, wise men, and shepherds as just some of the characters who have become familiar parts of the Advent story.

Ask your family to name some of the other characters in the Advent story and describe their role in the birth of Jesus Christ. As you read about these characters, there is a prayer for you to pray together.

ELIZABETH AND THOSE WHO NEED A COVERING FOR THEIR SHAME

Elizabeth was barren and everyone knew it. This brought her shame and reproach until the Lord brought her a miracle. She would give birth to John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. She immediately praised the Lord for taking away her reproach, highlighting the very ministry of the coming Savior. For through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we may have our sins forgiven and our shame covered so that there is "now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1; **read Luke 1:24-25; 39-45; 57-66**).

We praise you Lord for coming to take away our sins and cover our shame with your righteousness.

MARY AND THOSE WHO CLING TO GOD'S PROMISES

Mary is, of course, one of the main characters of this miraculous story. She was the chosen one to give birth to the Son of God. And she, though a virgin, was the one who believed the promise of God. She believed Gabriel's announcement, she believed in the power of the Holy Spirit, and she believed that all of this would be fulfilled (see Luke 1:45). She magnified the Lord and rejoiced in her Savior (v. 46-47). Those who follow her example today are those who believe that God is able; that God works miracles; that God keeps his promises; and that nothing is impossible for God (v. 37; **read Luke 1:26-38; 46-56**).

We cling to your promises today, Lord, for you are always faithful and you are always able. Nothing is impossible for you.

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THOSE WHOSE LIVES ARE OVERSHADOWED BY JESUS

Throughout the Advent story, there is one main character, Jesus Christ, and many supporting characters, including John the Baptist. While John's birth was miraculous in nature, his mother's pregnancy and his birth were secondary to Mary's pregnancy and Jesus' birth. From the moment John leapt in the womb because he was in the presence of the unborn Messiah to the time he told his own disciples, "He (Jesus) must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30), John's entire life was overshadowed by the life and ministry of Jesus. And this gave John great joy, just as Christ followers today find great joy in denying themselves in order to live for the glory of Christ. (**John 1:6-34**)

Lord, let our lives be for your will & your glory and not our own.

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JOSEPH AND THOSE WITH BOLD FAITH

Joseph is a character in the story who demonstrates bold faith and bold obedience. Although no one would understand his situation and although he could not explain it himself, Joseph boldly put his faith in the word of the Lord and married pregnant Mary, for he trusted “that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:20). His faith led to obedience and he received the blessing of seeing the Son of God enter the world. Faithful obedience today continues to bring the blessing of the Lord’s presence and the joy of living within his perfect will. **(read Matthew 1:18-25)**

We pray you will strengthen our faith, forgive our disobedience, and move us into a new season of bold faith and bold obedience so that we might enjoy your will for our lives.

GABRIEL AND THOSE WITH A MESSAGE TO SHARE

Another character throughout the Advent story is the angel, Gabriel. He is God’s messenger, sent by God, with Good News from God. He tells Zechariah about John’s birth and he tells Mary that she would give birth to Jesus, the Son of the Most High. Gabriel is one of the first in a long line of Gospel proclaimers as the church today continues to tell this story so that the world may know Jesus and the life he gives. What a beautiful ministry, for “as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Rom. 10:15; **read Luke 1:26-38**)

Open our hearts, Lord, to believe in you, and open our mouths to boldly share this story with others this Advent season, so that they may know you too.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THOSE WHO NEED NEW LIFE

Far too often, the Holy Spirit is one of the unsung characters of the first Advent. When you read the Scriptures, though, the Holy Spirit is active throughout the story. Mary was found to be with child “from the Holy Spirit,” (Matt. 1:18), for the Holy Spirit came upon her (Luke 1:35); Joseph is told that the baby Mary is carrying is “from the Holy Spirit,” (Matt. 1:20), John the Baptist is filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb (Luke 1:15), Elizabeth is filled with the Spirit when Mary enters her home (Luke 1:41), & Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit after John’s birth as he rejoices at the coming redemption (Luke 1:67). The Spirit gives life & continues to give life today to those who put their faith in Jesus (John 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6; Titus 3:5; **read Matthew 1:18-25**)

Lord, give us renewed, revived, life in you and fill us with your Spirit so we may produce the fruit of the Spirit for your glory.

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Jesus came to **Rescue** us from our sins. At the birth of Christ, light came into darkness (John 1:9-10), grace and truth came to the world in a mighty way (John 1:16-17), and hope came to all nations (Gen. 12:3 and Matthew 12:21). The birth of Jesus is the birth that changed the world. Jesus was born, lived a perfect, sinless life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. The Bible teaches that anyone who believes in Jesus will be saved by grace through faith. Salvation is a free gift (Acts 16:30-31; Romans 10:9; Ephesians 2:8-9). This message is called the **Gospel**, Good News of Great Joy.



WEEK TWO: THE BIRTH

This week, your family will reflect on the birth of Jesus Christ. God kept His promises and He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to Rescue us from our sins. Since the word 'Advent' means 'Coming,' the birth of Jesus is His first Advent. His birth is also referred to as 'The Incarnation,' meaning, 'Infleshment,' for the eternal Son of God took on flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14).

Family Time in the Word: Read Luke 2:1-7

Family Teaching: The national census brought Joseph to his hometown of Bethlehem to be registered with Mary. God's people had been waiting for a ruler and a shepherd who would be born in Bethlehem. They had been waiting for more than 700 years, ever since God promised to send a ruler and shepherd who would be born in Bethlehem (see Micah 5:2-4; Matthew 2:1-6).

The Son of God was born as a man in a stable in a small village and wrapped in strips of cloths by his young mother. He rested in a manger, an animal's feeding trough. We see here the overwhelming humility of Jesus Christ and the overwhelming love of the Father (John 3:16).

Family Discussion: In what ways do we see God's love for us in the birth of Jesus? What was the purpose for His birth? Why is it good news?

Family Time in the Word: Read Luke 2:8-21

Family Teaching: Shepherds are introduced here. We are so used to them being a part of the Advent story that we sort of just take it for granted...they're always right there in every Nativity scene. But it seems like it could have been anyone...fishermen, farmers, priests...but God chose shepherds, perhaps underscoring that this One who is born is the one prophesied about in Micah 5, the one to be

born in Bethlehem who will "stand and SHEPHERD his flock"...and that the One who is born is the "Good SHEPHERD who lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). The angel proclaimed "Good News of Great Joy" to these shepherds. The word used for "Good News" is "Gospel." This birth is Good News because the one who is born is the Savior (v. 11) who will Rescue us from our sins.

Family Prayer: Close in a time of prayer together.

Family Time in the Word: Read Luke 2:22-33

Family Teaching: Simeon was a righteous man who had spent his life waiting for the Advent of the Messiah. Upon seeing Jesus, he rejoiced that his eyes had seen the salvation of God for all peoples.

Family Discussion: Should we rejoice like Simeon over the birth of Jesus? How does His birth bring Salvation & Rescue? Do you believe Jesus saves?

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Throughout your times of Family Worship this Advent season, you have already enjoyed Family Time in the Word of God, Family Teaching of the Word, Family Discussion, and Family Prayer. We also encourage you to cultivate moments of **Family Praise** through Worship Music. Whether you have someone in your home that can play a hymn on an instrument or lead in the singing or if you take advantage of a worship playlist on Spotify, Pandora, Apple Music, or YouTube music, these are a few songs that focus on the birth of Jesus Christ. Add these to your **Family Worship playlist** this Advent.

Come Thou Long
Expected Jesus

CHRIS TOMLIN

The First
Noel

LESLIE ODOM JR.

The Weary
World Rejoices

THE JOURNEY COLLECTIVE

O Come All
Ye Faithful

REND COLLECTIVE

O Holy
Night

LAUREN DAIGLE

Joy To
The World

SHANE & SHANE

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Everyone who encounters Jesus **responds** to Jesus one way or another. Some respond in faith while others reject Him. The Puritans of the 16th and 17th centuries had a saying: "The same sun that hardens the clay melts the ice." The Gospel will either penetrate your heart or harden your heart. At the birth of Jesus Christ, we see many different responses. The Shepherds ran to Jesus and glorified God for all they had seen (Luke 2:16-20). Simeon rejoiced (Luke 2:26-32) and Anna gave thanks (Luke 2:38). As you lead your family in devotions this week, pray for their response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



WEEK THREE: THE RESPONSE

This week, your family will read the story of the wise men who visited Jesus after His birth. We will take special note of the different responses to Jesus. Herod was troubled and aimed to destroy Jesus (Matt. 2:13). The wise men, on the other hand, "rejoiced exceedingly with great joy" & fell down to worship Jesus. They gave Him gifts & gave us an example to follow as we respond too.

Family Time in the Word: Read Matthew 2:1-6

Family Teaching: This passage introduces us to Herod the king, or Herod the Great, the King of the Jews who ruled Israel and Judah ruthlessly. We also meet wise men from the east in search of Jesus. This fulfilled a prophecy from the Old Testament (see Isaiah 60:3, 6). When the wise men refer to Jesus as the "King of the Jews," Herod is troubled.

Family Discussion: How can we search for Jesus today? Why are some people today still troubled by the idea of Jesus being their King? In verse two, what did the wise men say they were going to do when they found Jesus? How can we worship Jesus today?

Family Prayer: As we follow the example of the wise men and seek to worship Jesus, ask your family to share praises and lift these up in prayer.

Family Time in the Word: Read Matthew 2:7-12

Family Teaching: It is likely that Jesus was about two years old by the time the wise men arrived at his home. When the wise men reached his home, they "rejoiced exceedingly with great joy." What an example for us today! Oh that our family would find our greatest joy in Jesus! The wise men gave gifts to Jesus and they fell down and worshiped him. The Bible is clear that we are to only worship God

alone (Luke 4:8) and yet it was appropriate for the wise men to worship Jesus. Why? This is the appropriate response because Jesus is fully God and fully man. We see many people worship Jesus in the Bible (Matt. 14:33; 28:9, 17; Luke 24:52; John 9:38).

Family Discussion: Why should we worship Jesus? What gifts can we give to Jesus? What keeps us from rejoicing over His birth?

Family Time in the Word: Read Matthew 2:13-23

Family Teaching: This passage shows God the Father protecting His Son while fulfilling many Old Testament prophecies, for God is faithful.

Family Discussion: What prophecies did God fulfill in this passage? What promises has God kept in our lives? Do people today reject Jesus like Herod did?

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THE WISE MEN AND THOSE SEEKING THE KING

Isaiah had prophesied, “nations shall come to your light, & kings to the brightness of your rising...They shall bring gold & frankincense...” (Is. 60:3,6). In Matthew 2, we read about the wise men from the east who saw Jesus’ star & were seeking the King. Perhaps they were familiar with Balaam’s prophecy: “A star shall come out of Jacob...” (Num. 24:17). They saw the star & spent about 40 days traveling nearly 800 miles in order to find the new King who had been born. Once in the presence of young Jesus, these wise men rejoiced, worshipped, and gave gifts: gold, for Jesus is King; frankincense, for Jesus is our High Priest; and myrrh, for Jesus would die for our sins. Following their example, believers today rejoice in Jesus, worship Jesus, and seek (Is. 55:6), search (Jer. 29:13), & draw near to Him (James 4:8).

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We have already seen the Who, What, When, Where & How of the birth of Christ: Who (Jesus, Immanuel, the Son of God); What (birth of the Messiah, the Incarnation, the First Advent); When (about 2000 years ago); Where (Bethlehem, City of David); How (Virgin birth, miracle of God).

For this final week of Advent, our Family Devotions will focus on the "Why." Why did God send His Son? What was the **Purpose** of the birth of Jesus Christ, the First Advent of our Rescuer.



WEEK FOUR: THE PURPOSE

These last three weeks of Family Devotions have led your family through the story of the Advent of Jesus Christ: The Announcement, The Birth, and The Response. This final week will highlight a few different passages that remind us of The Purpose of His birth. Encourage your family with these verses and spend time in worship together, praising Jesus for all He has done in your lives.

Family Time in the Word: Read Luke 19:1-10

Family Teaching: Jesus entered Jericho, the last major city He visited before He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Luke introduces us to a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector. It's a beautiful thing that this tax collector wanted to see Jesus, but in verse 5, we see the beauty of the Gospel as Jesus sought Zacchaeus and called him to come down. Just as we need Jesus in our

homes today, Jesus said, "I must stay at your house today." Once Jesus was in his home, Zacchaeus repented and Jesus proclaimed, "Salvation has come to this house." Then, Jesus reveals the purpose of His Advent: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Family Discussion: How can we bring Jesus into our hearts and homes? How does Jesus rescue the lost? Has salvation come to our house?

Family Time in the Word: Read 1 Tim. 1:12-15

Family Discussion: What was Paul's life like before he was saved? What was your life like before you were saved? Why did Jesus come into the world? How did Jesus change Paul's life? How has He changed your life? Paul often shared his testimony as he does here. When was the last time you shared your testimony? Take some time and share your testimony with your family.

Family Time in the Word: Read John 3:16-17

Family Discussion: Why did God send His Son into the world? According to verse 18, what do we need to do in order to be saved?

Family Prayer: Ask your family to share any sins they need to confess. Remind them that Jesus came to Save them from their sins. Pray a prayer of confession together.

Family Time in the Word: Read Luke 4:16-21

Family Teaching: Jesus read from Isaiah 61 and said that this Scripture was fulfilled in His coming. This passage teaches us about the purpose of His Advent: to proclaim good news and liberty.

Family Discussion: If Jesus came to set us free, how can we enjoy that freedom in our lives? What do we need to be set free from today?

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JESUS & THOSE IN NEED OF A SAVIOR

Jesus Christ is the main character of the Advent story, for it is the story of Jesus' Advent, *His* coming, *His* incarnation. And it is the story of *His* salvation of the nations. Jesus, the eternal Son of God (John 1:1), took on flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). We celebrate, with great joy, that day He lay in the manger, for we believe, with great faith, that He grew up, lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. When Jesus spoke of His Advent, He spoke of salvation, saying, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Paul also writes, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). This is the mission of the first Advent, & sinners everywhere today continue to find this salvation when they repent of their sin and believe in Jesus. (**read John 1:1-18; 1 John 1:9**)

Forgive me of my sins, Jesus, and save me so I might live in freedom of sin and enjoy new life in You.



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