

# PAPER CHAIN

## CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN

### KIDS ADVENT READING PLAN: COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS DAY

Advent is a time devoted to waiting. In the church calendar, Advent starts four Sundays before Christmas and goes through Christmas Day. It's a special time for us to anticipate the arrival and hope that comes through Jesus, the Savior of the world.

This Advent season, we invite you to spend December preparing your hearts as you countdown to Christmas Day with this interactive reading plan and paper chain to discover how God's big story unfolds and points to Jesus from beginning to end. Each day contains a verse, and most days include a prompt for your family to think through together. Once your family has completed that day's reading, cut the day's strip of paper, bend it into a loop (words on the inside), loop it through the prior day's loop, and secure the ends with the number sticker for that day. As the season of Advent unfolds, look for the next number that fits in the chain and repeat the process as written above.

Within your paper chain reading plan, there are four days that have an asterisk (\*) in the title. That represents one of the Sundays of Advent. On each of these Sundays, we invite you to focus on:

1. **WORD** – Together we will focus on a special word that is represented in the advent wreath.
2. **VERSE** – Challenge your family to memorize the verse each week. It's included on that day's paper chain link and that week's activity card.
3. **FUN** – Match the special word to the card in your packet so that your family can discover optional activities that tie into that week's reading. Pick and choose what fits with your family's weekly rhythms.

May this year's Advent season draw your family into God's story and closer to His son, Jesus. He is worth celebrating all year long!

## \* december 1 | Our HOPE is in Jesus! \*

It's the first Sunday of Advent and the focus this week is **HOPE**. Together as a family, memorize John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." For younger children, memorize, "God gave us Jesus."

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## december 4 | It's No Longer Perfect

All people choose to do things their own way instead of God's way which separates us from God who is perfect. Don't worry, God already had a plan. Read Genesis 3:1-7, 21-24 so you can start to see how His plan is taking shape.

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## december 7 | No One is Perfect

God loves us and knows what is best for us, that is why He wants us to do things His way. We aren't perfect and sometimes we do things our own way instead of God's way. Only one person followed God's way perfectly. Do you know who? Read Deuteronomy 6:1-12

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## december 10 | We Have a Good Shepherd

David was a shepherd. A shepherd takes care of his sheep. God sent Jesus to be our Shepherd. Read Psalm 23 and John 10:11 to discover more details about the Good Shepherd.

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## december 13 | A Light in the Darkness

Jesus came to be the light of the world. Read Isaiah 9:2-3. What does light do? How is Jesus like the light?

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## december 16 | Jesus is Almost Here

Hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, the Bible told us where Jesus would be born. Read Micah 5:2-5. What city was Jesus born in? (Hint: Read Luke 2:4-7) Can you find other things in the verses that point to Jesus?

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## december 19 | God With Us

God's promise came true! The God who created the universe has come to live with us. Jesus, the Savior of the world, is here! Read Luke 2:1-7 and Matthew 1:23. What does the name Immanuel mean?

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## \* december 22 | Jesus Brings LOVE to the World \*

Today is the fourth Sunday in Advent and the focus is **LOVE**. Together, as a family, memorize 1 John 4:9: "This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him." For younger children, memorize, "God loves us!"

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## december 25 | CHRISTMAS DAY!!

Read Luke 2 and then, as a family, retell the Christmas story in your own words.

## **december 2 | The Bible is a Love Story**

Jesus was called the Word of God because God sent Him to us to teach us who He is. The Bible says Jesus is God. Read John 1:1-5 to see why. Who is God's Son? Was God's Son part of the creation of the universe?

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## **december 5 | God Made a Promise**

God promised Abraham a large family that would have more people than stars in the sky. Jesus, the promised rescuer, is part of Abraham's family. Read Genesis 15:1-6 to find out more about God's special promise.

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## **\* december 8 | Jesus Will Bring PEACE \***

Today is the second Sunday of Advent and the focus this week is **PEACE**. Together as a family, memorize Isaiah 9:6: "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." For younger children, memorize, "Jesus was born for us."

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## **december 11 | Stop Running From God**

God sent Jonah with a message to stop running away from Him and ask for forgiveness. Jesus' life is that message. He forgives us and brings us back to God. Read Jonah 3:1-10. How did God protect Jonah?

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## **december 14 | A Light That Never Goes Out**

Jesus came to this world as a baby to save us. Someday, He will come again, and we will be with Him forever. Read Isaiah 40:1-11. How can we prepare for Jesus? How does knowing that Jesus will return someday give us hope?

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## **december 17 | Prepare the Way**

John the Baptist told people to get ready for Jesus. For centuries people had been waiting for their Messiah, the long-awaited King to come. It was almost time for Jesus to be born. Read Mark 1:1-8. How can you prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth?

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## **december 20 | Good News For All People**

The angels announced the good news of Jesus' birth to shepherds to show that Jesus came for everyone. Read Luke 2:8-12 to discover why Jesus coming is Good News. Why is it so important that Jesus was born?

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## **december 23 | See For Yourself**

The shepherds were the first people to meet Jesus. They shared the good news and all who heard it were amazed. We celebrate Christmas to share that same message. Read Luke 2:16-20 to see how the shepherds responded. How would you have responded?

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### **december 3 | The Story Begins**

God made everything, including people, and it was all perfect. It wasn't going to stay that way. Read Genesis 1:1-3 and 1:26-27 to discover more about whose image God says we are made in? How does this affect how we should treat others?

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### **december 6 | A Time to Forgive**

Joseph's brothers asked him for forgiveness. We need to ask God to forgive us when we choose to do things our own way instead of God's way. This is called sin. God forgives us through Jesus. Read Genesis 50:15-21 to catch another story about forgiveness.

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### **december 9 | God Looks at the Heart**

God wants us to have a heart like His. That's not possible without Jesus. Read Samuel 16:1-13 to meet King David before he was a king. What about David was important to God?

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### **december 12 | God to the Rescue**

Jesus had many special names. He came to be all of them for us. Read Isaiah 9:6-7. How can each of Jesus' names bring us peace?

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### **\* december 15 | Jesus Brings JOY to the World \***

Today is the third Sunday in Advent and the focus this week is **JOY**. Together as a family, memorize Luke 2:10: "But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." For younger children, memorize, "Jesus is the good news."

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### **december 18 | A Special Message From God**

God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus, God's own Son. Mary trusted God's message and learned who Jesus would be. Read Luke 1:26-28 to learn more about this very special baby boy.

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### **december 21 | Angels Sing For Joy**

Even the angels were so excited to share the news that they filled the sky with joyful singing. Read Luke 2:13-15. What were the angels doing? How do you think the shepherds felt about what they saw?

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### **december 24 | A New King**

Even kings from faraway lands traveled to worship Jesus because they knew He was the King that everyone had been waiting for. That includes you! Read Matthew 2:1-12. Why did kings from faraway lands bow down to baby Jesus?

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8 9 10 11 12 13 14  
15 16 17 18 19 20 21  
22 23 24 25

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8 9 10 11 12 13 14  
15 16 17 18 19 20 21  
22 23 24 25

# HOPE

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. JOHN 3:16

As a family, consider celebrating **HOPE** this week by doing any of the following activities together.

## — FAMILY FUN IDEAS —

- Share your favorite Christmas tradition that you want to do together this year.
- Set up your manger scene. Or create a manger scene using play dough, dolls, snow, Lego bricks, action figures, stuffed animals...whatever you can find. Be creative!! Since the wisemen did not arrive until after Jesus was born, consider placing them away from the manger, moving them closer to the scene throughout the month.
- God made you in His image! Trace your hand on a piece of paper. For each finger, write in a word that describes a special way that God made you: kind, creative, thoughtful, funny, etc.
- God created a perfect world, but it did not stay that way. Advent is a time to look forward to Jesus' birth, but it is also a time to look forward to the day when Jesus will come back and make the world perfect once again. As a family brainstorm what you think a perfect world would look like.
- God created family. Spend a fun evening together. Pop some popcorn or make another snack and enjoy a family movie, play a game, make a puzzle, etc.

# PEACE

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

As a family, consider celebrating **PEACE** this week by doing any of the following activities together.

## — FAMILY FUN IDEAS —

- God's people spent their whole lives looking for Jesus until He was born. Have a treasure hunt using items in your home. When all the items are found, talk about what it's like to find treasure. How is Jesus the best treasure of all?
- Build a special fort that the entire family can fit into, then have everyone get into their pajamas and gather on the inside of the fort to read or share your family's favorite Christmas stories.
- There are many names for Jesus: Prince of Peace, Messiah, Lord, Son of God, Immanuel, Light of the World, Bread of Life, Holy One, Christ, Good Shepherd, King of Kings, Savior and many more. What is one of your favorites? Why? Write your favorite name on a piece of paper, decorate it, and find a place to display it for all to see.
- Jesus was called the Light of the World. Take a walk or drive to find Christmas lights. Or turn on a light in a darkened room. Notice how the lights shine in the darkness. Take time to slow down and enjoy how beautiful the lights are. As a family, create a top 10 list of things you are thankful for.

# JOY

BUT THE ANGEL SAID TO THEM, "DO NOT BE AFRAID. I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS THAT WILL CAUSE GREAT JOY FOR ALL THE PEOPLE." LUKE 2:10

As a family, consider celebrating **JOY** this week by doing any of the following activities together.

## — FAMILY FUN IDEAS —

- What's keeping you from feeling joy right now? Share with each other. Then together, pray that God would give you His joy for the season.
- Using Google maps, look at the modern-day streets of Bethlehem. What do you think Bethlehem was like when Jesus was born? Talk with your family about each of the cities you were born in. Look up those places too. How many places are a part of your family's story?
- God's plan for Christmas surprised everyone. If you could plan Christmas this year exactly the way you wanted, what would it look like?
- Listen to the song "Angels We Have Heard on High." Spend time talking about the lyrics of the song, especially the following verse: "Come to Bethlehem and see, Him whose birth the angels sing; Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King."
- Have fun dressing up like shepherds. Use bathrobes or large towels. Take a photo! Talk about the shepherds and how amazed they must have been when the angel came to tell them about the birth of a King.

# LOVE

THIS IS HOW GOD SHOWED HIS LOVE AMONG US: HE SENT HIS ONE AND ONLY SON INTO THE WORLD THAT WE MIGHT LIVE THROUGH HIM. 1 JOHN 4:9

As a family, consider celebrating **LOVE** this week by doing any of the following activities together.

## — FAMILY FUN IDEAS —

- How can you tell others about Jesus? Pray and ask God to help your family share the story of Jesus with someone else. Perhaps you could give someone a special card or invite them to come sit with you at a Christmas service.
- Create a playlist of everyone's favorite Christmas carols and worship songs. Play it while on the go all week and don't be afraid to sing along.
- Grab a hot cup of cocoa and gather around for family story time. Adults, share about a particularly special or unique Christmas that you experienced as a child.
- God loves everyone and sent Jesus for all. As you prepare to receive new gifts for Christmas, think about what you already have. Are there a few things you can donate to show love to someone else? This is a great time to share our blessings with others to help us focus on people, not things.
- Choose 1-3 relatives or family friends. Record a short selfie Christmas greeting as a family and text it to them.