

# Joy to the World

## Advent Reflections

ALL AGE FAMILY GUIDE  
FROM SCRIPTURE UNION



scriptureunion  
HELPING PEOPLE MEET GOD EVERY DAY

# Introduction

## What is Advent?

The word “Advent” is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming”. During the 4th and 5th centuries, Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians at the January feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God’s incarnation represented by the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:1), his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (John 1:29), and his first miracle at Cana (John 2:1).

By the 6th century, however, Roman Christians had tied Advent to the coming of Christ. But the “coming” they had in mind was not Christ’s first coming in the manger in Bethlehem, but his second coming. It was not until the Middle Ages that the Advent season was linked to Christ’s first coming at Christmas.

Today, the season of Advent lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas in celebration of Christ’s birth in Bethlehem. It is also a time when we eagerly anticipate his coming again in glory.

(adapted from Christianity.com)

Advent 2020 takes place Sunday Nov 29th - Friday Dec 25th.

## Weekly Advent Reflections

During this Advent season Scripture Union invites you to join us each Sunday and on Christmas Eve/Day to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

This year Rt Rev Colin Sinclair has prepared the weekly devotionals. Colin is a minister of the Church of Scotland and has had wide experience with SU, both as a child and as an adult working in SU Zambia and as a former General Director of SU Scotland. He also served for many years as Chair of SU International.

### 4 Sunday, **November 29th**

GENESIS 3:8-15

Hope in the midst of despair

### 8 Sunday, **December 6th**

ISAIAH 9:1-2, 6-7

Job description of the Messiah

### 12 Sunday, **December 13th**

MICAH 5:1-6

Little or large? Bethlehem

### 15 Sunday, **December 20th**

LUKE 1:26-38

The final countdown begins

### 18 Thursday, **December 24th** Friday **December 25th**

LUKE 2:1-21

The Birth & Naming of Jesus



## All Age Family Reflections

On the following pages you will find an all age family guide designed to be used in your home. Each weekly session includes an Introduction to the Bible passage, Exploring the Theme, Prayer, Music, and Building a Nativity Scene. You can do all of these in one day or spread them out over the week Monday through Friday.

You are encouraged to create an Advent wreath to use during your devotions. Building a nativity scene is also one of the activities. More information about both of these activities can be found on the next page.

Each week you will find a suggested Christmas Hymn, Song, or Carol to use in your reflection time. Feel free to use other songs and carols that may be more familiar to you. You will also find a link to a performance of the music on YouTube. Be aware that often these recordings on YouTube begin with advertisements.

## Nativity scene

Creating a nativity scene with different elements added each week is a great way to build anticipation in the weeks leading up to the celebration of the birth of Jesus. There are many nativity sets available on-line and in store. Or you may already have a nativity set that you could use.

## USING A NATIVITY SET

Take the various elements of the nativity set and put them in separate boxes labeled Week 1, Week 2, Week 3, Week 4, and Christmas Eve/Day. The following should be placed in the boxes:

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
Stable & animals (donkey, cows, chickens)	Mary, Joseph and the Manger	Shepherds & Sheep	Angels, Large star, and small stars Christmas Eve/Day Baby Jesus Wise men & camels

Each week you will open the appropriate box and set out the nativity pieces for that week during the Build a Nativity session. The last pieces, Baby Jesus, Wise Men and Camels will complete the set. (*Wise men have traditionally been included in the Nativity. Even though they were not present at the birth of Jesus, it is a reminder of the significance of their visit to see the 'child who has been born King of the Jews.'*)

## Advent Wreath

An Advent wreath is a very old tradition that symbolizes the observance of Advent in the four weeks leading up to Christmas. The Advent wreath has four candles around the wreath and some also have a candle in the center, the Christ candle, which is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas day. Each week a candle is lit at the beginning of the devotion time. If using the daily option, you may like to also add a tea light daily. It is suggested that battery operated LED lights be used to avoid any fire hazard. If using candles that are lit, ensure that you don't leave the wreath unattended.

On the first week of Advent, the first candle will be lit and will stay lit during your devotions. The second week, the first and second candle will be lit, and so on. The center candle will be lit on Christmas Eve/Day.

*(The advent frame and materials are available from [Hobby Lobby](#))*

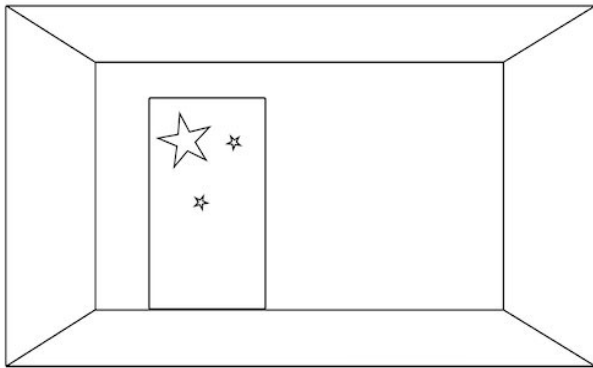


## MAKE YOUR OWN NATIVITY SET

Here are a couple of examples and the links to the instructions for making your own nativity set. Each week you will make the appropriate pieces (as above) and place them in the nativity scene.

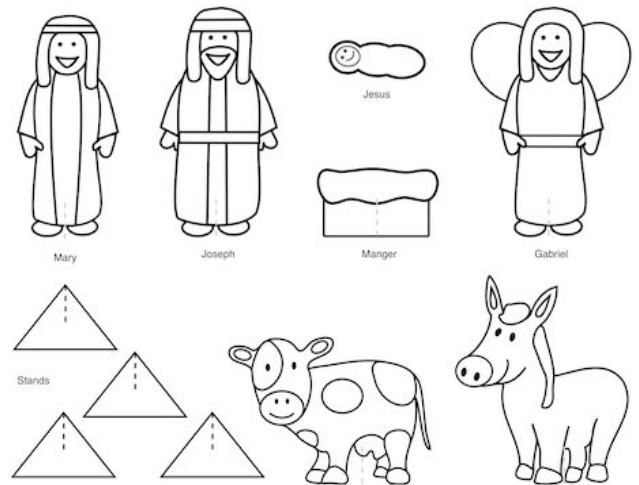
Downloadable free Color-in card Nativity Scene | [Click here](#)

Downloadable free Nativity craft prints for use on toilet paper tubes | [Click here](#)



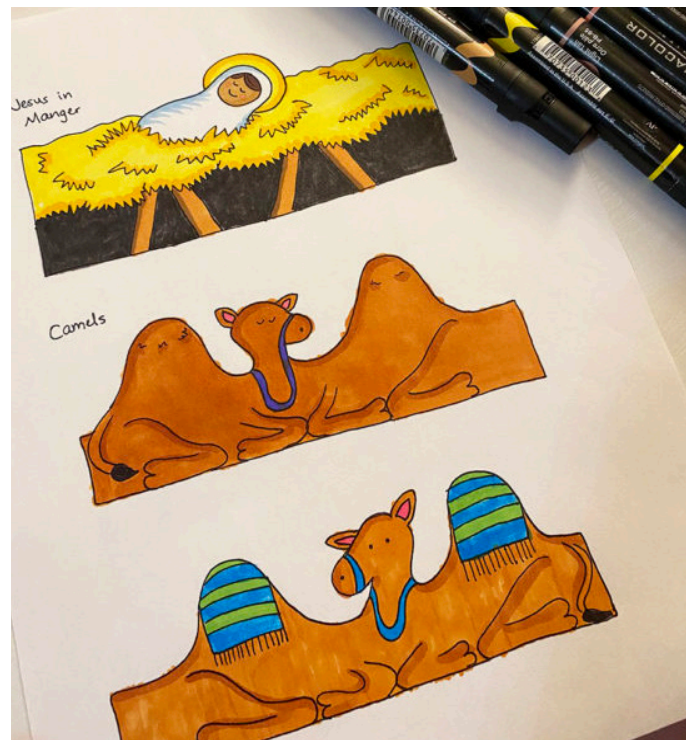
Make your own Nativity from <http://www.whychristmas.com/fun/nativity-coloring.shtml>

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Make your own Nativity from <http://www.whychristmas.com/fun/nativity-coloring.shtml>

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# Week 1

## What you need this week

## Sunday, November 29th

GENESIS 3:8-15

## Hope in the midst of despair

- Advent wreath
- Potato, or a stuffed animal, or ball
- Bubble solution and wand
- Nativity - Stable & animals

### Introduction to the Bible Passage and Week's Theme

(Monday)

Begin your time together by lighting one candle in your Advent wreath and praying that God would make fresh in our lives today what he has revealed in sending his own Son to save us.

#### QUICK SHARE TIME

What do you think joy is and do you think our world needs it?

**Read Genesis 3:8-15** from the Bible or use the dramatized version below. There are 5 roles: LORD God, Adam, Eve, Snake, and Narrator.

**NARRATOR:** Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman,

**SNAKE:** Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?

**NARRATOR:** The woman said to the serpent,

**EVE:** We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."

**SNAKE:** You will not certainly die, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

**Eve:** (Softly, thinking to herself.) Just look at the fruit on that tree. I bet that fruit will really taste delicious. And I need food to live, and that fruit is really good food. And you know what, look how beautiful that fruit is. Maybe it is more beautiful than any fruit in this garden.

Oh, but what I really want is the wisdom and knowledge this tree will give me. After all, the snake said that I could know things like God does.

**NARRATOR:** So Eve took some of the fruit, and she ate it. Then, she also gave some fruit to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened. They realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to Adam,

LORD GOD: Adam, where are you?

ADAM: I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.

LORD GOD: Who told you that you were naked, Adam? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?

ADAM: The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.

NARRATOR: Then the LORD God said to the woman, What is this you have done?

EVE: The serpent deceived me, and I ate.

NARRATOR: So the LORD God said to the serpent,

LORD GOD: Because you have done this,

Cursed are you above all livestock  
and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly  
and you will eat dust  
all the days of your life.

And I will put enmity  
between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and hers;

he will crush your head,  
and you will strike his heel.

### Discussion Starters

- Eve and Adam had a choice about whom to believe? What did God and what did Satan promise?
- Eve and Adam's decision affected them and all humans. Invite each person to name something that sin has ruined.
- What event is God talking about when he says, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers, he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (verse 15)?
- Satan may have thought he had won. What does this verse tell us?
- Reflect on God's plan for our rescue and use that as a basis for your closing prayer.

## Exploring the Theme (Tuesday)

### Activity: HOT POTATO

For this activity, you can use an actual potato, or a stuffed animal, ball, or another object of your choice. Have everyone in the family sit in a circle, assigning one person to be the Announcer. The object of the game is to pass the potato around and around the circle, without getting caught holding it when the Announcer calls "Stop!"

Play several rounds of Hot Potato. Were there any family members who managed to escape getting caught with the potato?

Recall from Tuesday's scripture reading how Adam and Eve tried to pass off the blame for breaking God's command, just as if they were passing along a hot potato. They didn't want to be the one left holding the blame! Adam blamed Eve for giving him the fruit he wasn't supposed to eat, and Eve blamed the serpent for deceiving her.

Instead of passing off blame like a hot potato, what do you think we should do when we do something wrong?

Rather than blame others, it is better to confess what we have done wrong, seek forgiveness, and, when possible, make amends to correct or heal the situation.

## Prayer (Wednesday)

### Pray together:

Dear God,

We are sorry for the times we have sinned against you. We are sorry for the times we have blamed others instead of taking responsibility for what we have done wrong. We ask for your forgiveness, and we pray for your help in finding ways to correct or heal the trouble we have caused. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

### Prayer Activity: BUBBLE PRAYERS

Using bubble solution and a bubble wand, have fun blowing bubbles into the air and watching them drift away and pop. After a while, invite each person to tell God something he/she is sorry for. Then each person can blow a bubble and watch it float away and pop, imagining that it is the thing he/she has said "I'm sorry" for. When we tell God that we are sorry and ask for His forgiveness, He will forgive us!

## Music (Thursday)

*English traditional*

*God rest you, merry Gentlemen is one of the oldest existing carols, thought to be written in the 15th century. Some of the words and concepts may be difficult for younger children to grasp. It is suggested you talk about the lyrics before you sing the song together. You may also like to take turns singing the verses and then sing the chorus together.*

### God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

*English traditional*

God rest you merry, gentlemen,

Let nothing you dismay,

For Jesus Christ our Saviour

Was born upon this day,

To save us all from Satan's power

When we were gone astray:

*O tidings of comfort and joy,*

*comfort and joy,*

*O tidings of comfort and joy.*

2. From God our heavenly Father  
A blessed angel came,  
And unto certain shepherds  
Brought tidings of the same,  
How that in Bethlehem was born  
The Son of God by name:

*O tidings ...*

3. The shepherds at those tidings  
Rejoiced much in mind,  
And left their flocks a-feeding  
In tempest, storm and wind,  
And went to Bethlehem straightway,  
This blessed Babe to find:

*O tidings ...*

4. But when to Bethlehem they came,  
Whereat this Infant lay,  
They found Him in a manger,  
Where oxen feed on hay;  
His mother Mary kneeling,  
Unto the Lord did pray:

*O tidings ...*

5. Now to the Lord sing praises,  
All you within this place,  
And with true love and brotherhood  
Each other now embrace;  
This holy tide of Christmas  
All other doth deface

*O tidings ...*

**Choral version** | [Click here](#)

**Karaoke version with lyrics** | [Click here](#)

## **Build a Nativity Scene** (Friday)

Start by reading Genesis 3:8-15 to remind everyone of the reading this week.

Open Box 1 or bring out the materials for making the first elements of the Nativity scene - Stable & animals. Explain to everyone that, over the next few weeks, you will be adding pieces to the nativity scene with the best and last piece on Christmas day.

Finish your time together praying and thanking God for His mercy and grace.



# Week 2

## What you need this week

## Sunday, December 6th

ISAIAH 9:1-2, 6-7

## Job description of the Messiah

- Advent wreath
- Paper
- Light switch cover for templates
- Materials such as crayons, markers, paint, collage, sequins etc.
- A flashlight
- Nativity - Mary, Joseph, manger

### Introduction to the Bible Passage and Week's Theme

(Monday)

Begin your time together by lighting one candle in your Advent wreath and praying that God would make fresh in our lives today what he has revealed in sending his own Son to save us.

#### QUICK SHARE TIME

How do people feel when the clouds are thick and dark or when the clouds, and maybe rain, linger for days or weeks? What is it like when the sun comes out after those cloudy days?

**Read Isaiah 9:1-2 & 7-8** from the Bible or use the responsive reading below. For responsive reading one person or group will read the bold print, then the other person or group will read the regular print.

**<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress.**

In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,

**but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations,**

by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—

**<sup>2</sup> The people walking in darkness**

have seen a great light;

**on those living in the land of deep darkness**

a light has dawned.

**<sup>6</sup> 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.

**<sup>7</sup> 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.**

### **Discussion Starters**

- Here are some phrases from the beginning of the passage: gloom, distress, humbled, darkness, deep darkness. What event is now bringing great light, a dawning light?
- This baby who is born will be the ruler of the people, and he will rule from David's throne. Great people are often given lots of names or titles. Look at the 4 titles in verse 6. They describe Jesus. Which of these titles means the most to you?
- Reflect on the promises God makes in these verses. Use them to close your time in prayer.

## **Exploring the Theme** (Tuesday)

### **Activity: "JESUS IS OUR LIGHT" SWITCH COVERS**

In our scripture reading, we learned that God told us about Jesus long before he was born. God's prophet Isaiah shared the news that a Savior was going to be born. (A prophet is someone who delivers messages from God.) Isaiah said that this Savior would be a great light for people walking in darkness.

When you walk into a hallway or a room that is dark, what do you usually do? You usually turn on a light, so you can see where you are going! That is the kind of light Jesus is for us: he shows us how to live well, how to love God, and how to love other people. Let's make special, decorated light switch covers to remind us that Jesus is our light!

#### **DIRECTIONS:**

1. Draw a light switch cover onto a piece of white paper, using a light switch cover in your home as a guide. You will trace around the outside of the cover, as well as tracing the rectangle in the center where the switch is located.
2. Give one paper template to each family member to decorate as they choose. You may decide to use crayons, markers, paint, collage, sequins... the materials are up to you. You may wish to include a phrase such as, "Jesus is our light," or "Jesus is coming!"
3. When finished, cut out each paper light switch cover, and tape them over the light switch covers in your home to remind you that Jesus is our light in the darkness.

## **Prayer** (Wednesday)

### **Pray together**

Dear God,

Thank you for loving us so much that you sent Jesus to bring us light and life. Each time we see lights this Christmas season—whether stars, streetlights, or holiday decorations—help us to remember that Jesus is our light in the darkness. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## Prayer Activity: FLASHLIGHT TAG

You need at least three players and a flashlight for this game. Find a spot indoors or outside that is not well lit but is safe to run around. Choose one person to be “It.” The person chosen to be “It” holds the flashlight, closes his eyes, and counts to 50 (or any designated number), while the other players hide. At this time, “It” runs around using the light of the flashlight to look for the other players. If he spots someone, he shines the light on that player and says his name. The tagged player must go to a designated spot and wait until all of the other players are tagged. When everyone has been tagged, it’s time for a second round of the game, and the first person who was tagged in round 1 becomes “It.”

If you would like, you can share Jeremiah 23:24 at the end of the game, where God tells us: “Who can hide in secret places so that I can’t see them. Don’t I fill heaven and earth?”

## Music (Thursday)

### O Come Emmanuel

*This hymn dates back to the 8th or 9th century and was translated to English in the 19th century. It expresses the longing of God’s people for the coming of Messiah and the anticipation of what His coming means for them; what He will be and what He will do.*

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,  
Who orderest all things mightily;  
To us the path of knowledge show,  
And teach us in her ways to go.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free Thine  
own from Satan’s tyranny; From depths  
of hell Thy people save, And give them  
victory over the grave.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, And  
death’s dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, great Lord of might,  
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai’s height  
In ancient times once gave the law  
In cloud and majesty and awe.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Root of Jesse’s tree,  
An ensign of Thy people be;  
Before Thee rulers silent fall;  
All peoples on Thy mercy call.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Desire of nations, bind  
In one the hearts of all mankind;  
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,  
And be Thyself our King of Peace.  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

**Traditional version with lyrics** | [Click here](#)

**Contemporary version performed by Pentatonix** | [Click here](#)

## **Build a Nativity Scene** (Friday)

Start by reading Isaiah 9:1-2, 6-7 to remind everyone of the reading this week.

Open Box 2 or bring out the materials for making week 2 elements of the Nativity scene – Mary, Joseph, and the manger. Talk about how God’s people had been waiting for the birth of the Savior over many years. Talk about what it feels like to ‘wait’ for something you want or for things that you want to be different.

Finish your time together praying and asking God to give you strength in the midst of uncertainty.

# Week 3

## Sunday, December 13th

MICAH 5:1-6

Little or large? - Bethlehem

### What you need this week

- Advent wreath
- Clothespins
- Paper Cups
- Cotton balls
- A bag of large marshmallows
- A bag of small marshmallows
- Nativity shepherds & sheep

### Introduction to the Bible Passage and Week's Theme

(Monday)

Begin your time together by lighting one candle in your Advent wreath and praying that God would make fresh in our lives today what he has revealed in sending his own Son to save us.

#### QUICK SHARE TIME

What would you want in a good leader?

**Read Micah 5:1-6** or you may use the responsive reading below. For responsive reading one person or group will read the bold print, then the other person or group will read the regular print.

**<sup>1</sup> Marshal your troops now, city of troops,**

for a siege is laid against us.

**They will strike Israel's ruler**

on the cheek with a rod.

**<sup>2</sup> "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."

**<sup>3</sup> 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.

**<sup>4</sup> 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.**

<sup>5</sup> And he will be our peace.

### **Optional Discussion Starters**

- What is happening to God's people at this point (v. 1)?
- Most Israelites thought that if God planned to send a new king to rescue them, the king would be great and glorious like the good kings in the past. Where would that king have his throne? What else they have expected in a rescuing king? What is surprising about where the king comes from?
- Re-read verse 4. Who is this describing? Let each person share the phrases that they like best and why.
- Use the phrases you chose as a basis for your closing prayer.

## **Exploring the Theme (Tuesday)**

### **Activity: "JESUS IS OUR SHEPHERD" SHEEP ROUND-UP**

In our scripture reading, when the prophet Micah tells of a future king who will be born in the town of Bethlehem, he says that this leader will be a "shepherd for his flock" and that "his people will live safely."

The job of a shepherd is to care for his sheep and to keep them safe. The shepherd makes sure that the sheep are in a place where they have enough to eat. He also protects them from attacks by wolves and other animals, and makes sure that they do not wander off into danger. The shepherd is a guide and a protector.

Here's a game to playfully explore the role of the shepherd, trying to keep his flock together. All you need are a couple of clothespins, a couple of cups, and a whole lot of cotton balls!

Divide your family into teams; you are the shepherds. Scatter the cotton balls all around the room; these are your sheep. Your team's job is to round up more sheep than the other team. But there's a catch: each "shepherd" has to use a clothespin to grab at the cotton ball "sheep" and return them to your team's designated cup, or "sheep pen." Shepherds are not allowed to gather sheep with their hands, but only by catching them in the clothespins. The team that returns the most cotton ball "sheep" to their cup "sheep pens" in a designated amount of time is declared the winner.

Feel free to play this as a non-competitive game, where everyone works together to return all of the sheep to one sheep pen.

## **Prayer (Wednesday)**

### **Pray together**

Dear God,

Thank you for sending Jesus to be our good shepherd. He loves us, guides us, and protects us, just like a shepherd with his sheep. Help us to trust him and follow him so that we may live in safety and peace. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

### **Prayer Activity: MARSHMALLOW SHEEP SNACK**

Put the following snack items on a large counter or table: a bag of large marshmallows, a bag of small marshmallows, and a bag of pretzel sticks. Challenge each family member to create their own "flock of sheep" using just items from these three bags. Show each other your sheep creations before enjoying them as a treat!

If you would like, you can share John 10:11 after your snack: Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep."

## Music (Thursday)

Sing along and link to recording

### O Little Town of Bethlehem

*Phillips Brooks*

*The words to this Christmas Carol were written around 1865 by Phillip Brooks, an Episcopal Priest. It emphasizes the significance of the miracle that took place in this humble setting and town.*

O little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light.  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary  
And gathered all above  
While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
Their watch of wond'ring love.  
O morning stars, together  
Proclaim the holy birth,  
And praises sing to God the King,  
And peace to all on earth!

How silently, how silently  
The wondrous gift is giv'n!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of his heav'n.  
No ear may hear his coming,  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him, still  
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin and enter in,  
Be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels  
The great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us,  
Our Lord Immanuel!

**Children's version with lyrics** | [Click here](#)

## Build a Nativity Scene (Friday)

Start by reading Micah 5:1-6 to remind everyone of the reading this week.

Open Box 3 or bring out the materials for making week 3 elements of the Nativity scene - Shepherds and sheep. Talk about how shepherds look after and 'lead' their sheep. Talk about ways that God looks after and leads us.

Finish your time together praying and thanking God for His love and care.

# Week 4

## What you need this week

## Sunday, December 20th

LUKE 1:26-38

## The final countdown begins

- Advent wreath
- Blindfold
- Nativity – Angels, large star, small stars

### Introduction to the Bible Passage and Week's Theme

(Monday)

Begin your time together by lighting one candle in your Advent wreath and praying that God would make fresh in your lives today what he has revealed in sending his own Son to save us.

#### QUICK SHARE TIME

Imagine someone has given you an extremely difficult challenge. Share ideas on things that might help you succeed.

**Read Luke 1:26-38** from the Bible or read the drama below. There are three roles: a narrator, Angel, and Mary. If more people want a speaking part, you can take turns going around to each person or you can do a choral reading, which means that a group reads its part together.

**NARRATOR:** In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said:

**ANGEL:** Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.

**NARRATOR:** Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her:

**ANGEL:** Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.

**MARY:** How will this be, since I am a virgin?

**ANGEL:** The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.

**MARY:** I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.

**NARRATOR:** Then the angel left her.



### **Optional Discussion Starters**

- What actions is God taking in this passage?
- How does God encourage Mary so that she accepts the role that no other woman had ever had or would ever have?
- Reflect on Mary's attitude and the promises of God and use these as a basis for your closing prayer.

## **Exploring the Theme** (Tuesday)

### **Activity: TELEPHONE, or WHISPER DOWN THE LANE**

In our scripture reading, the angel Gabriel comes to Mary to tell her the news that she will be giving birth to Jesus. He says, "The Lord has blessed you in a special way. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God." The angel Gabriel was very clear in his very important message to Mary.

You can play a fun game where the message isn't quite so clear. Have everyone sit in a row or in a circle. The first person quietly whispers a message in the ear of the person sitting next to him. That person whispers what he has heard to the next person, and so on down the line. The last person in the line or circle says the message out loud, to see how much the message has changed during its transmission. Sometimes the results are downright silly!

## **Prayer** (Wednesday)

### **Pray Together**

Dear God,

When the angel Gabriel visited Mary with the news that she would give birth to baby Jesus, she responded with complete trust in Your plan for her life. Help us to trust you as completely as Mary did. Thank you for being such a good guide. Help us to follow Your will for our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

### **Prayer Activity: TRUST WALK**

In our scripture reading, Mary is given unexpected news by the angel Gabriel: she is told that she will have a baby by the power of the Holy Spirit, that she should name her baby Jesus, and that he will be a king. It's a lot to take in, but Mary responds with complete trust in God. She says, "I serve the Lord. May it happen to me just as you said it would."

To explore the idea of "trust," try a family Trust Walk. Choose an indoor or outdoor location where the grown-ups involved in the activity can keep the children safe at all times.

Form pairs. One member of the pair is the leader, or navigator. The second member of the pair is blindfolded. The partners never touch. Rather, the leader directs the steps of the blindfolded partner with verbal instructions (for example, "Step to the left to avoid the dog toy on the floor," or "In about three steps, there is a big rock you will want to step over"), being careful to help the blindfolded partner avoid any obstacles.

Have partners switch, so that the blindfolded partner is now the leader, and the leader is now blindfolded. This way, both people have the experience of trusting and relying on another person for their safety and progress.

## Music (Thursday)

### Mary Did You Know

*Lyrics: Mark Lowry and Music: Buddy Greene*

*The lyrics of this more recent Christmas song were written by Mark Lowry in 1984 and the music by Buddy Green in 1991. The questions posed to Mary in the song can be seen as rhetorical and tell us a great deal about the true nature of this baby born in Bethlehem and His life to come.*

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?

This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm the storm with his hand?

Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?

When you kiss your little baby, you kiss the face of God

Mary, did you know? (Did you know?)

Mary, did you know?

Mary, did you know? (Mary, did you know?)

Mary, did you know? (Mary, did you know?)

Mary, did you know?

The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again

The lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the lamb!

Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day rule the nations?

Did you know that your baby boy is Heaven's perfect Lamb?

That sleeping child you're holding is the great I am

Mary, did you know? (Mary, did you know?)

Mary, did you know? (Mary, did you know?)

Mary, did you know? (Mary, did you know?)

**Contemporary version by Pentatonix | [Click here](#)**

## Nativity (Friday - if you have chosen the daily option)

Start by reading Luke 1:26-38 to remind everyone of the reading this week.

Open Box 4 or bring out the materials for making week 4 elements of the Nativity scene - Angels, large star, and small stars. Talk about the anticipation and excitement surrounding the birth of a baby. Talk about how Mary and Joseph must have felt as they awaited the birth of this very special baby.

Finish your time together praying that people who don't know Jesus will put their trust in Him.

# Christmas Eve Christmas Day

**Thursday December 24th**  
**Friday December 25th**

LUKE 2:1-21

## The Birth & Naming of Jesus

### What you need

- Advent wreath
- Nativity – Baby Jesus, Wise Men & camels

Begin your time together by lighting the center candle in your Advent wreath and thanking God for sending his Son, Jesus.

**Read Luke 2:1-21**

### Build a Nativity Scene

Open the last box or bring out the materials for making the last pieces of the Nativity scene – Baby Jesus, Wise Men (Magi) and camels. Talk about the significance of Jesus birth and the fulfillment of all that God had promised.

Pray together and thank God that he sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

### Music

#### Joy to the World

*This popular Christmas carol was written by Isaac Watts and was first published in 1719.*

Joy to the world! the Lord is come;  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the world! the Saviour reigns;  
Let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, Nor  
thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders of His love,  
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

**Children's version with lyrics** | [Click here](#)