

# Family Advent Candle Guide

We celebrate Christmas, the birth of King Jesus, on December 25. As Christmas gets nearer and nearer, we see more bright decorations, wrapped presents, special foods, and we get more and more excited.

The church lights candles during this season of Advent to show this growing excitement as Jesus's birthday gets closer. Jesus is God's greatest gift, given to us at Christmas.

**“God loved the world so much that he gave His one and only Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life.”**

— John 3:16 —

We light the Advent candles, adding one light each week, to help us see that the light of life that Jesus brings is growing brighter and brighter. Jesus is coming!

These are weekly reflections for your family to follow together, however works best for your family. That might mean Sunday, or some other time in the week.

**Light the candles.** An adult should probably take care of this, if you have very young children, but certainly invite your kids to light the candles if they are able. As you light the candles, name together the people they represent.

You will need a set of candles for your family. If you are willing, you can manage it for about \$30. Note that these links do NOT include a white Christ candle. Any white pillar candle will work in the center of the holder.

- [Advent Candles](#) (\$7)
- [Candle holder](#) (\$20)

**Alternative: Add to the Nativity scene.** If you do not want to use candles, or are not able to get them in time, you can also use this same guide to add the different figures to a Nativity scene, assuming you have the figures already. Or, use the Nativity figures and candles together.

**Read the passage.** Mom or dad might read, or if you have older kids or teenagers, they can read. You are welcome to read the Scripture passages as they are printed here (readings are from the *New Century Version*, for its more contemporary language), or from your own Bible. Or, if you have [the Jesus Storybook Bible, by Sally Lloyd-Jones](#), page numbers for readings are listed for most days.

Or, if your kids are very young, and these readings are just not level-appropriate, you might read the passage ahead of time and tell it simply in your own words, maybe using the Nativity figures for more illustration.

**Sing to close.** Each weekly devotion ends with a brief, familiar carol. Sing together.

# Mary

## **Pray:**

King Jesus, You are the light of the world.  
Come and be with us.  
Light our home and our hearts,  
that we might see you, and welcome you in.  
In Your name we pray: Amen.

## **Light the first Advent candle.**

We light this candle for Mary, the mother of Jesus.

*Note: The candles are purple, because traditionally the church has used the color purple during Advent. Purple reminds us to prepare our hearts for Jesus by repenting of our sins. We are sorry for our sin in the hope and expectation that Jesus will save us by His grace. Our prayers and reflection during this season are celebration, but always with repentance and humility in mind.*

## **Read:**

### **Luke 1:26-38**

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During Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, "Greetings! The Lord has blessed you and is with you."

But Mary was very startled by what the angel said and wondered what this greeting might mean.

The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary; God has shown you His grace. Listen! You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name 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 King David, his ancestor. He will rule over the people of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end."

Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I am a virgin?"

The angel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you. For this reason the baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God. Now Elizabeth, your relative, is also pregnant with a son though she is very old. Everyone thought she could not have a baby, but she has been pregnant for six months. God can do anything!”

Mary said, “I am the servant of the Lord. Let this happen to me as you say!” Then the angel went away.

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(or, you can read pages 178-179 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*)

**Optional: Discuss the passage.**

God used Mary, a young girl, to bring into the world His perfect gift of love. She believed, and trusted God completely, even though she didn’t understand.

Is there something happening right now that you don’t quite understand? How can you start to trust God in this, like Mary did?

God did the impossible, using angels and unlikely people to bring about His plan to save us. How do you respond to the angel’s good news: “God can do anything!” (Luke 1:37)?

**Sing to close:**

“What Child Is This?”

What Child is this, who, laid to rest,  
on Mary’s lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,  
While shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

The Second Sunday of Advent | December 6, 2020

# Joseph

## **Pray:**

"O come to my heart, Lord Jesus—  
There is room in my heart for Thee!"

— from the hymn "Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne" —

**Light the first Advent candle, for Mary.**

## **Light the second Advent candle:**

We light this candle for Joseph, Mary's husband and Jesus's earthly father.

## **Read:**

### **Matthew 1:18-24**

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This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was engaged to marry Joseph, but before they married, she learned she was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. Because Mary's husband, Joseph, was a good man, he did not want to disgrace her in public, so he planned to divorce her secretly.

While Joseph thought about these things, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, descendant of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the baby in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this happened to bring about what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and they will name him Immanuel," which means "God is with us."

When Joseph woke up, he did what the Lord's angel had told him to do. Joseph took Mary as his wife.

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**Optional: Discuss the passage.**

Joseph was a good man. That's why God chose him to be the earthly father for His only, beloved Son Jesus. In the very important and confusing situation of Mary's impossible pregnancy, Joseph wanted to do the right thing, for both himself and for Mary.

When have you had a difficult decision to make? How did you choose what to do?

Is it hard, or easy for you to know what is right? When you do know what is right, is it hard, or easy for you to *do* what is right?

How do you respond to the good news that in Jesus, "God is with us" (Matthew 1:23)?

**Sing:**

**"Away in a Manger"**

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head;  
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

# Shepherds

## Pray:

King Jesus,  
Even though You had all power and all glory with God,  
You emptied Yourself and humbled Yourself,  
Becoming human like us.  
You did all this for us, to die in our place.  
We bow our knees in humble worship,  
And confess with our tongues that You are Lord.  
In Your name above all names we pray. Amen.

— based on Philippians 2:6-11 —

**Light the first candle, for Mary, and the second candle, for Joseph.**

## Light the third candle:

We light this candle for the shepherds, the first witnesses to Jesus's birth.

***Note:** the third Advent candle is pink because of a medieval church tradition: the church historically celebrated this Sunday of Advent by focusing on the joy of anticipation, lightening the usually somber mood of Advent's repentance purple.*

## Read:

### Luke 2:8-20

That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them. The glory of the Lord was shining around them, and they became very frightened. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I am bringing you good news that will be a great joy to all the people. Today your Savior was born in the town of David. He is Christ, the Lord. This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in pieces of cloth and lying in a feeding box."

Then a very large group of angels from heaven joined the first angel, praising God and saying:

“Give glory to God in heaven,  
and on earth let there be peace among the people who please  
God.”

When the angels left them and went back to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem. Let’s see this thing that has happened which the Lord has told us about.”

So the shepherds went quickly and found Mary and Joseph and the baby, who was lying in a feeding trough. When they had seen him, they told what the angels had said about this child. Everyone was amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured these things and continued to think about them. Then the shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God and thanking him for everything they had seen and heard. It had been just as the angel had told them.

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(or, you can read pages 184-190 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*)

**Optional: Discuss the passage.**

The shepherds were the least of the least in their community. No one normally would have listened to them about anything. But God chooses these outcasts to see Jesus first, and to tell others about His miraculous birth.

When have you felt like no one pays attention to you, like no one cares what you think?

Is it hard for you to talk about Jesus in ordinary conversations? If yes, why?

God saw the shepherds, and invited them to see the poor and tiny Jesus where no one would have found him. How has God seen you, and invited you to find Jesus?

**Sing to close:**

“Go Tell it on the Mountain”

Go tell it on the mountain,  
Over the hills and everywhere!  
Go tell it on the mountain  
That Jesus Christ is born!

# The Wise Men

## Pray:

"O holy Child of Bethlehem! Descend to us, we pray:  
Cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today."

— from the hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem" —

**Light the first three Advent candles: for Mary, and Joseph, and the Shepherds.**

## Light the fourth candle.

We light this candle for the Wise Men, who saw the star and searched for Jesus.

## Read:

### Matthew 2:1-12

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Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea during the time when Herod was king. When Jesus was born, some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, "Where is the baby who was born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, as were all the people in Jerusalem. Herod called a meeting of all the leading priests and teachers of the law and asked them where the Christ would be born. They answered, "In the town of Bethlehem in Judea. The prophet wrote about this in the Scriptures:

‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are not just an insignificant village in Judah.

A ruler will come from you  
who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel.’ ”

Then Herod had a secret meeting with the wise men and learned from them the exact time they first saw the star. He sent the wise men to Bethlehem, saying, "Look carefully for the child. When you find him, come tell me so I can worship him too."



After the wise men heard the king, they left. The star that they had seen in the east went before them until it stopped above the place where the child was. When the wise men saw the star, they were filled with joy. They came to the house where the child was and saw him with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. They opened their gifts and gave him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod, so they returned to their own country by a different way.

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(or, you can read pages 192-198 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*)

**Optional: Discuss the passage.**

The Wise Men left their places of honor to kneel before a baby, who they knew to be the true king. They traveled many miles, possibly for months, bringing expensive and precious gifts to honor this king.

What do you think is your best ability or trait? How can you offer this “gift” back to Jesus in worship?

King Herod holds his power through deception and violence. King Jesus shows his power through love and vulnerability. How do you respond to the good news that King Jesus leads us and rules, not as a tyrant, but as a shepherd (Matthew 2:6)?

**Sing:**

**“O Come, Let Us Adore Him”**

O come, let us adore Him,  
O come let us adore Him,  
O come let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord!

# King Jesus

## Pray:

"Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay  
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,  
And fit us for heaven, to live with Thee there."

— from "Away in a Manger" —

**Light the four Advent candles: Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds, and the Wise Men.**

**Light the Christ candle, a white pillar candle in the center.**

We light this candle for King Jesus, born in the manger.

## Read:

**Luke 2:1-7**

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At that time, Augustus Caesar sent an order that all people in the countries under Roman rule must list their names in a register. This was the first registration; it was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to their own towns to be registered.

So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee, and went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David. Joseph registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was now pregnant. While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have the baby, and she gave birth to her first son. Because there were no rooms left in the inn, she wrapped the baby with pieces of cloth and laid him in a feeding trough.

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(or, you can read pages 180-182 in *The Jesus Storybook Bible*)

**Optional: Discuss the passage.**

It's hard to imagine a more humble birth: two peasants sent from their home to a small far-away town, turned away at every door, until they find shelter in an animal stall, where their baby is born, wrapped in rags, and laid in a trough.

And this is how King Jesus, the Son of God, and the one who created all things (Colossians 1:16), entered the world. King Jesus was born to poor peasants, in tiny Bethlehem, in a dark stable.

All this He did for you, out of His incredible love for you.

How will you respond to this "good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10)?

**Sing together:**

**"Joy to the World"**

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.