

Light OF LIFE

AN ADVENT GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

Foreward to Parents

From the beginning of creation until the new creation, God had a plan. God's plan included a glorious display of light. After creating light, God proclaimed, 'It is good.' But God's gift of light extends beyond creating sunshine and allowing us to see light with our eyes. God had a plan from the very beginning to give us an everlasting light, Jesus. As the dark nights of winter grow longer and Advent begins, we often look to the lights of Christmas to fill us with feelings of happiness and to offer us hope in God's plan for redemption. We add lights to our Christmas tree, venture out to view Christmas light displays, light candles on an Advent wreath, and often sing "Silent Night" holding a lit candle on Christmas Eve.

As we prepare to celebrate Jesus as our Light this Advent season, we are reminded that this season is a time of waiting and anticipation. We see that something good is going to happen and look forward to Christmas day when we get to celebrate the birth of our Savior, the light of the world. Advent is often the season when the themes of hope, peace, joy and love are celebrated. For some of us, this Advent season brings much anticipation and excitement. For others of us, we might find ourselves entering this Advent season feeling tired, overly committed, sad or worried. No matter where this finds you, we pray this Family Resource offers an opportunity to pause with your family and notice the Presence of Jesus as our Light who brings hope, peace, joy and love.

-Youthfront Staff

Before you begin...

WHAT TO EXPECT

As you walk through this guide as a family, we invite you into a posture of presence. Being presence-centered is being present to God and the world around us. It is sharing life alongside each other and noticing God at work. It is not about being perfect. Each week there will be an opportunity to read Scripture with a reflection, discuss questions, say a prayer and play together. We invite you to print the verse on page 4 (John 8:12) and display it on your refrigerator to memorize throughout Advent. For each week, you might pick a set time to participate in all of the elements or you might choose to do a little bit each day. There is no right way to engage with this resource. We also encourage you to bring a form of light into your time together. This could be the traditional [Advent Wreath](#), a special Christmas light, a single candle or even a flashlight. Make it your own special way to physically remember Jesus is our Light. Our hope is that your family will connect to God's story as you enter into this Advent season.

*FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOLERS

At Youthfront, we believe that learning about God and the world begins before we take our first steps. As a part of this belief, we are committed to supporting families with children of varying ages. Throughout this guide, you will find ways to engage your preschoolers through play. Part of the beauty of young children is their imagination. Our hope for parents of littles is that you would facilitate wonder in your child this Advent and help them imagine the things possible when God shows up! We all need to experience the wonder of a child this season.

*FOR PARENTS WITH TEENS

We encourage you to include your teenagers in this Family Advent Resource. Ask them to help lead the discussion questions or set up the activities. Encourage your teens to share their own experiences about each concept.



I am the light of the world

whoever follows me

will never walk in darkness

but will have the

Light of Life

JOHN 8:12

Week 1 WAITING FOR THE LIGHT

Week 1 (December 3): Waiting for the Light

Main Idea: We can wait for Jesus with hope

Materials: Bible, baked good, an amaryllis or paperwhite bulb, potting soil (see Family Activity Ideas)

Scripture: Luke 1:26-33

REFLECTION

Waiting for your birthday. Waiting for school to start. Waiting for Christmas break.

Waiting for snow. Waiting for dessert. We do a lot of waiting. We wait for little things everyday and we wait for big things over the years. Waiting can be hard!

God gave Mary a promise of a son who would be the Savior of the world. That's a really big promise! That promise required Mary to trust and wait on God. Mary waited for 9 months to welcome the promise of a baby boy and Mary had to wait over 30 years to see her son become the Savior of the world! Can you imagine waiting for a promise so significant and so big for over 30 years? The Bible says that "Mary pondered all of these things in her heart." (Luke 2:19)

Mary was able to wait with hope because she remembered why she was waiting. God had given Mary a promise that her son, the light of life, would save God's people. God promised that Mary's son would be called Immanuel, which means "God with us." Because God made a promise to send a Savior and that the Savior would be with us, Mary could wait with hope.

God promised that He would bring a Savior in the form of a baby boy and God did! God promised that Jesus would be with us and Jesus is with us! God also promised that one day Jesus will return and there will be no more sin, there will be no more darkness. God always keeps His promises! We can wait with hope, just like Mary did because the light of the world is with us and is making all things right.

FAMILY QUESTIONS

1. Share about a time when it was hard to wait. How did you feel?
2. What are you waiting for this week? How can you wait with Jesus?

FAMILY PRAYER

Have each person think of one word they would like to tell Jesus. Now take turns saying their word to Jesus one at a time. All: Thank you Jesus for being present with us. Help us to see signs of you and your goodness this week as we wait for You.

Week 1 WAITING FOR THE LIGHT

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Idea 1: Waiting on something good

Share a fun family treat! Think of something you only have around this time of year, like a cookie or pie. Take some time to prepare the item. While it is in the oven, you can continue discussion and even use it as a talking point with your family as you wait to enjoy the tasty treat together.

Idea 2: Watch a Plant Grow

Plant an amaryllis or paperwhite bulbs on the first week. Observe its growth over the next few weeks.

***For preschoolers:** Play a game of red light, green light. After a few rounds, ask your child how it felt to wait for the light to change? How does it feel to really want something and not be able to have it until later? How did it feel when it finally happened? Just like we learned to wait until it was time to go in our game, God often asks us to wait.

Week 2 SURPRISED BY LIGHT

Week 2 (December 10): Surprised By Light

Main Idea: God's surprising plan brings us peace

Materials: Christmas stocking and 5-7 objects, card with the word "surprise" on it, Christmas items to make an obstacle course (see Family Activity Ideas)

Scripture Verses: Luke 1:29-38

REFLECTION

What do you feel inside when you are surprised?

Mary was surprised when God sent the Angel Gabriel to tell her the promise that she would give birth to a baby boy. This baby boy was not just going to be any baby boy, but the light of life, our Savior. Mary's first response to Gabriel was to be afraid but that didn't stop her from asking a question. "How, since I am a virgin?" Mary's conversation with Gabriel helped her accept the hard unknown circumstances ahead for her. Instead of running away from the surprising news Gabriel had shared, Mary reminded herself who she belonged to - "I am the Lord's servant." Mary remembered that she belonged to God and that brought her peace.

God's plan to send His Son was never a surprise to God and God's plan to save us has never been a surprise either. Often we too are surprised or fearful when we have a hard and challenging experience, but God is not. We can find peace and comfort when we remind ourselves that we belong to God. We can stay curious about God's work, knowing that God is with us and loves us no matter what. We have the promise of God's light living in us and the promise that one day Jesus will come back and make all things right. Until that day comes, we can find peace remembering God's Word and God's ways.

FAMILY QUESTIONS

1. What is the best surprise you've ever had happen to you? What has been the hardest surprise? How did you feel?
2. What did you learn about God today? What did you notice in the Bible passage? How does that encourage you?

FAMILY PRAYER

Imagine Jesus sitting at the table next to you. Silently whisper to Jesus one fear that you have. As a family read Psalm 16:8, "I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken."

All: God, remind us that You bring peace.

Week 2 SURPRISED BY LIGHT

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Idea 1: Play a game of SURPRISE!

Fill a Christmas stocking with 5-7 small objects making one of the objects a card with the word “Surprise Treat” on it (ex. Jingle bell, tinsel, small ornament, etc). Close the end of the stocking by tying it shut or placing a tight rubber band around the end. Have family members try to guess the objects in the stocking by feeling their way around the stocking and writing their answers on a piece of paper. Once everyone has had a chance to write their answers, open the stocking up and reveal the answers. Reveal the card with the word “Surprise Treat” on it at the very end. Take your family out for an ice cream or special treat and talk about belonging to God. Ask: What brings you peace about belonging to God?

Idea 2: Obstacle Course Challenge

Ask- What is an obstacle?

Practice your skills of moving around obstacles.

Create an obstacle course using Christmas themed items (ex. hang jingle bells from a table to crawl under, lay shatterproof ornaments on the floor in a unique pattern to hop over or glide around, string tinsel or Christmas lights in the hallway or across stairs to climb through, etc). Time your family members to see who can get through the obstacle course the quickest. Talk about something that was an obstacle or a challenge you had to navigate in your life. Ask: When you face a challenge or obstacle, what do you do? Do you remember God wants to help you? Do you ask Him for help? How can you trust God?

*For pre-K: Bubble Prayer

Say: When we are sad or afraid it is helpful to tell Jesus. Jesus is always with us and Jesus can give us peace. Let's blow some bubbles together and pretend the bubbles are things that make us sad or afraid. Then let's try to pop them. Every time we pop a bubble, we can remember that Jesus is always with us and is the one who takes away our fear and gives us peace.

Week 3 CELEBRATING THE LIGHT

Week 3 (December 17): Celebrating the Light

Main Idea: Celebrating God's plan brings us joy

Materials: printable Joy coloring page, colors or markers, music (see Family Activity Ideas)

Scripture Verses: Luke 1:39-55

REFLECTION

Mary meets Elizabeth and God uses that moment to encourage Mary. Through the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth celebrates God's good plan to bring light into our dark world by announcing, "Blessed is the child you will bear." Elizabeth celebrates what Mary has already been told- Mary will give birth to the Savior of the world. This encouragement from God through Elizabeth fills Mary with joy and Mary starts to sing and praise God. Mary rejoices in God her Savior, she recognizes that God is at work, and she declares the goodness and power of God. Even though Mary didn't know what the next day or year would bring, she found joy in remembering who God is and God's power. When we are faced with a big problem or don't know what will happen next, we can find joy by remembering and celebrating God's power and God's plan to give us the Light of life.

FAMILY QUESTIONS

1. What song describes your life right now?
2. Who does God use in your life to help encourage you like Elizabeth encouraged Mary?
3. How could remembering God's power and plan help you face a big problem?

FAMILY PRAYER

Sing your prayer as a family. Some ideas are "[Joy to the World](#)," "[Joyful, Joyful](#)," or "[Doxology](#)." You can sing your prayer acapella or find a version to sing along with on the Internet.

Week 3 CELEBRATING THE LIGHT

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Idea 1: Joyful coloring

Joy comes from being with God and noticing God at work. Print out copies of the [Joy coloring page](#) at the end of this guide and color together. As you color alongside your child, talk about the ways your family has noticed God at work and celebrate God's plan for sending Jesus to earth as a baby born to Mary.

Idea 2: Listen to the Magnificat

Listen to the [Magnificat](#) together. Afterwards, share about your own favorite songs, ones that help you remember God is at work. Listen to these songs as you go about your activities the rest of the day. In the coming week, take some time to find a new song that helps you express the joy you have in God or in God's plan to send His Son Jesus to earth.

*For preschoolers: Dance and sing a song of praise together.

Take turns making up the actions. Read Psalm 126:2 "Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.'"

Week 4 WELCOMING THE LIGHT

Week 4 (December 24): Welcoming the Light

Main Idea: The Light of Life shows us Love

Materials: graham crackers, candy, icing, sprinkles, a variety of Christmas themed items, glow in the dark stars or paper stars (see Family Activity Ideas)

Scripture Verse: Luke 2:1-20

REFLECTION

Suddenly we are at Christmas Eve. Christmas Eve moves us from a season of waiting and anticipation toward a season of wonder and celebration. We wonder at the mystery of Jesus, the son of God, coming into the world as a human baby. We celebrate the gift of Jesus bringing love and light to all people. Just as a lamp lights the way on a dark path, Jesus as Light of life shows us the way of love- the way of God. As we wait, we can find hope. When we are surprised with fear, we can find peace. In the midst of uncertain next steps, we can choose joy. Jesus came to earth to teach us how to have hope, how to have peace, how to be joyful and how to love. In each of these God invites us to the present moment, to trust that God will continue to be who God always has been. God always shows up and is present with us. God is our Light of life who guides our steps in love.

FAMILY QUESTIONS

1. What has surprised you this Advent/Christmas season?
2. How can you be more present with your family and others close to you?
3. What have you noticed about Jesus /God this December? Where have you felt or seen God's love in action?

FAMILY PRAYER

Give each family member a paper star or glow in the dark star. Encourage everyone to think of one word that reminds them of God's light and love. Have them write the word on the star.

All: "God, thank you for teaching us how to slow down and see your light and love. Teach us how to notice the things and people around us so that we might share your love with others.

Family members can hang their star on a mirror or in their room to remind them that God's light and love are always with them.

Week 4 WELCOMING THE LIGHT

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Idea 1: Create a Nativity Scene

Using graham crackers, icing, and a variety of candy, work together to create a Nativity Scene with the items. Add Jesus on Christmas morning.

Idea 2: Play a Christmas version of [this memory game](#).

Practice noticing. Consider including something that represents light and love.

*For preschoolers:

Children can participate in the above family activities with assistance and modifications. Parents and teens might need to help with putting the nativity scene together and the memory game can be modified to include only 3-4 items.

Christmas Day WALKING IN THE LIGHT

Christmas Day: Walking in the Light

Main Idea: Jesus, the Light of life shows us how to love

Materials: flashlight, a present or Christmas themed item, paper stars (see Family Activity Ideas)

Scripture: John 8:12

REFLECTION

Today we celebrate the greatest gift of all, the Light of life!

Walking in Jesus' Light shows us how to live. Walking in Jesus' Light shows us how to love others. On this Christmas day as you celebrate the birth of Jesus with family and friends, take a moment to be present with God and ask God to show you God's love today. Then take a moment to ask God who in your life you can practically love this week.

FAMILY PRAYER

As a family, share what you are thankful for today.

Take time to name a person who you'd like to share God's love and the Light with in the days ahead. Pray for them. Write down their names on a STAR and pray for them in the days ahead.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Flashlight Scavenger Hunt

Hide one of the Christmas gifts or a Christmas themed object. Turn off the lights and use a flashlight to encourage your child to find the item.

Just like the flashlight helped you locate what you were looking for, Jesus, our Light of life will help lead us to truth. Jesus, our Light, will help show us how to love.

Final Thoughts

KEEP IT GOING...

The season of Christmas goes until January 6, which is the Feast of Epiphany.

That's when we celebrate the visit of the Wise Men to see Jesus. In the next week when it's convenient for your family, read Matthew 2:1-11. The Wise Men followed a star which led them to Jesus. Ask: How can you follow the star and shine the Light of Jesus to the world in the days ahead?

As a family, continue to watch for the Light and keep lighting candles. If you want, you can print out a map of the world and use star stickers to identify places around the world you can pray for as a family in the weeks ahead.

BLESSINGS FROM YOUTHFRONT

We hope that this Advent Guide has been a blessing to you and your family. May you have a joyous Christmas celebrating the amazing gift of our Saviour!

At Youthfront, our mission is "bringing youth into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ," and our YF Family ministry was borne out of a desire to come alongside parents and families, providing tools and resources to help them raise healthy children with strong spiritual foundations.

We're pleased to introduce this resource as a product of Youthfront's Presence-Centered Parenting and Caregiving initiative. Funded by a Lilly Endowment Inc. grant through its Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative, this effort is focused on helping parents and families actively engage in the Christian formation of their children.

To learn more about Youthfront and the programs we offer, visit youthfront.com.

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