



Awaiting the Arrival



FAMILY TIME
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A FAMILY TIME TRAINING RESOURCE

AWAITING THE ARRIVAL



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“Awaiting the Arrival”

Activities written by Beth Meverden

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Published 2022 by Family Time Training

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First Printing, 2019

Printed in the United States of America

Paperback ISBN: 9798793343503

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WELCOME LETTER

Hello friends!

I am delighted that you've decided to spend this Advent season using this Family Time resource to draw your family closer to the Lord and closer to one another.

“Awaiting the Arrival” is all about creating space and time during what can become a rushed season, to slow down and focus on the true meaning of Christmas: celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. By making this time uniquely special, our children will learn how important it is not only to put Christ at the center of their own hearts and minds, but to anticipate His second coming. Not only that, you're laying a foundation for them to build on in their own homes someday. These are not small things – these are the most important things!

Our desire is that this would be a resource you can enjoy year after year. Our hope is that the design is inviting, the activities engaging, the traditions inspiring, and the results life-changing. In addition to the devotions, Bible activities and weekly suggestions, **you can find other free resources to enhance your Advent activities at: famtime.com/Advent.**

The mission of Family Time Training is to train and equip YOU to pass the faith to the next generation in the home. May the guide not only equip you, but bless you and your home. We've prayed for you. We're cheering for you. Keep up the great work – your honor God as you put Him at the center of your home this Christmas season.

Enjoy the Blessing of Advent,



Jenna Hallock
Executive Director



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WHAT IS ADVENT?

What Is Advent & Why Should Our Family Observe It? The word “advent” means “arrival.” Christians celebrate advent during the four Sundays leading up to Christmas Day. Advent has historically been observed in more liturgical Christian traditions, but there is value for all Christians in making intentional time to focus on Jesus’ birth during the weeks before Christmas Day.

Advent has double meaning for believers in that we celebrate the first coming of Jesus Christ at His incarnation. We also look forward to his second coming when He will return again and make all things new.

There are several versions of traditional focus during the weeks of Advent as well as the tradition of lighting an Advent candle each Sunday and on Christmas Eve (the Christ candle). We’ve chosen to use HOPE, FAITH, JOY and LOVE as the themes for each week. Some traditions use specific colors for the candles, but we are not making a recommendation except to make your Christ candle white.

Whether you’ve celebrated Advent for many years, this is your first time, or you are somewhere in between, your Christmas celebrations will be enhanced and brought deeper meaning through intentional time focused on Christ. It creates time to slow down as a family and allow both ourselves and our children to grow in our understanding of Jesus and remember His Advent.

If you want to know more about the history of Christians celebrating Advent, a quick online search will go a long way. You’ll find thoughtful and broad explanations at such sites as: gotquestions.org, christianity.com, and desiringgod.org. Just type in “what is advent” and explore!

Additionally, if you or your children find you have other questions about Christmas and Advent, ask your pastor. This is a great way to learn as a family through your local church leadership.

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SUPPLY LIST

Weekly You Will Use

- Matches or lighter
- Bible
- Set of 5 Advent candles

Activity 1: HOPE

- Cookie dough (homemade or store-bought)
- Cookie sheets
- Invisible ink materials: Lemon juice, white paper, Cotton swabs
- Christmas books
- Wrapping paper
- Scotch tape
- Scissors
- Ribbon
- Box for wrapping books
- Personalized coupon for each child

Activity 2: FAITH

- Plain paper
- Marker
- Option #1: piece of white paper per person, duct (or masking) tape
- Option #2: cell phone or electronic device with access to emojis

Activity 3: JOY

- Cotton balls
- Candy cane (one per person)
- Baby Jesus from a nativity set
- Optional supplies: Towels, Sheets, Bath robe, Full nativity set, Paper, Crayons

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Activity 4: LOVE

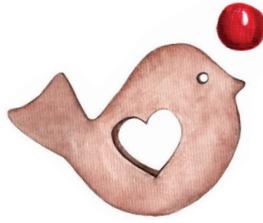
- Magic trick candles
- Cupcakes
- Flashlight for each person
- Matches or lighter

Bonus Activity: CELEBRATION

- 2 Cinnamon sticks
- 1 Orange
- Whole cloves
- Whole allspice
- Trash bags or boxes
- Canned food

Additional Supplies for Supplemental Activities

- Chocolate Embellishments: semisweet chocolate chips, coconut oil, wax paper, ziplock bags
- 2 Christmas books
- Salt Dough Ornaments: flour, salt
- Family Games: paper, pen, dice, candy canes, deck of cards, construction paper, crayons or markers, sidewalk chalk, posterboard
- Hot Drink Mixes: ground ginger, ground clove, ground cinnamon, ground allspice, ground cardamon, instant tea, orange flavored drink mix, lemonade powder, jam jars for gifting
- Family gift for Christmas: a puzzle, game, or building set of some kind (ex. Lego).



Parent Devotion Week One

HOPE

We're awaiting Jesus' second arrival. Have you thought about that lately? As Christians, our greatest hope is not only that Jesus Christ became a man and brought us salvation through His life, death and resurrection, but that He left us with the promise that He will come again to usher in His Kingdom forever.

And so we wait. Christmastime certainly is a season of waiting. We've waited all year to pull out our favorite decorations, holiday recipes, or ugly Christmas sweaters. Our children are waiting - with varied states of patience - for Christmas day and the presents they will enjoy. We wait for parties, special visits with friends and family, or year-end bonuses.

We might also find ourselves in a season of waiting for something that is much more heart-wrenching. We wait for the call we hope we never receive about an ailing parent. We wait for the promotion at work. We wait for the wayward child to return to the faith. We wait for the positive pregnancy test or the affirmative call from the adoption agency. We wait for a relationship to be restored. We wait for that feeling of joy to be returned.

All this waiting requires a great deal of hope, because without it, waiting can be discouraging and disheartening, even leading to despair. And that's when I'm reminded of the 400

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years since God's prophets had spoken. It was 400 years of silence. 400 years of oppression. 400 years is such...a...long...time. Generations had come and gone since there was a word from the Lord. The current believers were leaning on the hope of Israelites they had only heard about. I wonder if Isaiah's prophecies were beginning to be forgotten altogether. Undoubtedly so. The promises of God coming through a virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14) and the government being on his shoulders (Isaiah 9:6) must have felt more like folklore than real hope. Can you relate? Has God's Word lost its power as you struggle to wait through this Christmas season or in your personal struggles?

I almost hate to mention it, but the words of Revelation 19 are not just a few hundred years old now, but thousands. Verses 11-16 describe the second coming of Christ and the power and majesty as His reign is ushered in. Does this renew your hope? Can you imagine the day?

Yes, it is a gift to remember the arrival of Christ Jesus as a baby and the wonderful promise of hope this confirmed. But as you begin this Advent season, take time to anticipate this second arrival. Jesus is coming again in power to make all things right and all things new. He will destroy the temporary power of Satan and bring His eternal Kingdom to earth. No more sin, no more pain. Only joy in His beautiful presence. He is now and will be forever our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Amen and Amen.

Read: Revelation 19:11-16 and Luke 2:1-21

Jenna Hallock
Executive Director of Family Time Training
Wife to Mark. Mother to Zoe & Eli.



Activity Week One

Hope and Anticipation



TEACHING GOAL

To understand that anticipating the celebration of Jesus' birth is the reason we observe Advent.



SCRIPTURES

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

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.

Micah 5:2

1 Peter 1:10-12

Revelation 19:11-16

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MATERIALS

- Cookie dough (homemade or store-bought dough)
- Cookie sheets
- Invisible ink materials: lemon juice, white paper, cotton swabs
- Christmas books
- Wrapping paper
- Scotch tape
- Scissors
- Ribbon
- Box for wrapping books
- Personalized coupon for each child from Option #2



IN ADVANCE

1. Activity #2: Use the included coupons (at famtime.com/Advent) to fill out a coupon for each of your older children.
2. Make or purchase cookie dough.
3. Print and personalize a coupon each of your children can cash in later in the week.
4. Make your Invisible Ink hidden code with these instructions:
 - Pour some lemon juice in a small bowl.
 - Use the cotton swab to write “Call Him Immanuel” from Isaiah 7:14 on the piece of paper by dipping the cotton swab into the lemon juice.
 - Let the lemon juice dry completely on the piece of paper. If the lemon juice is wet, the heat will not make it visible.
5. Preheat the oven to bake your cookies.
 - NOTE: Each week you’ll be lighting a candle as part of your Family Time. Please remember to be cautious of little hands! This week you’re combining paper and fire -this should be done by a parent or older child and always closely supervised.

Words written in **bold** are when the leader is speaking.
Feel free to use your own words.

Take everyone to the kitchen and take turns scooping the cookie dough onto cookie sheets.

What do you think it means that we are putting this cookie dough onto these cookie sheets? *We get to eat cookies!*

When you get to put cookie dough onto cookie sheets to be baked, it probably means you'll get to eat some of those cookies. How do you feel when you smell the cookies baking? *Excited. Hungry. Happy.* This is something to look forward to. We call that anticipation.

While the cookies are baking...



Light the first Advent candle for HOPE. As appropriate, let children light the candle.

We are going to celebrate Advent this year. Advent is the hope and anticipation (or looking forward to) the celebration of Jesus' birth. We will be lighting a candle as we do our Family Time Activities each week to remind us what we are looking forward to celebrating.

Today's Advent focus is HOPE.

Invite someone to read Isaiah 9:6.

This passage was written hundreds of years before Jesus was born on earth. These truths about the coming Messiah gave God's people HOPE about who their Messiah would be. It gives us HOPE because we know those things continue to be true about Him and He will come back and fulfill all that was said about Him long ago.

PRAY: Lord Jesus, Thank You for being our HOPE. Thank You that You are faithful and we can trust in You. We celebrate You this Christmas season. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

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What things do you hope for or anticipate during our Christmas season together? Let everyone share their ideas.

Before Jesus was even born, people were hoping for and anticipating His coming to earth. There were people called prophets who God told that the Messiah was coming and those prophets told God's people. For hundreds of years, people were hoping for and anticipating their Messiah coming and saving them.

Who is the Messiah? *Jesus.* **What did Jesus need to save the people from?** *Sin – wrong things we think, say, and do.* **We all need a Savior to bring us salvation from our sin.**

Invite someone to read 1 Peter 1:10-12.

Take out the piece of paper with the invisible ink on it.

It was revealed that the messages about the Messiah were not just for the prophets but were for all people for all time. The hidden messages about Jesus being the Messiah and Savior have been revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. We are going to use our Advent candle to help us see one of those revealed messages about our hope.

Slowly move the paper above the candle until the writing appears, then invite someone to read Isaiah 7:14.

God told the prophets things about the Messiah hundreds of years before Jesus came and began His ministry on earth. Jesus' birth fulfilled those prophecies. Let's read another of these revealed messages.

Invite someone to read Micah 5:2.

These prophecies are just a few of the things God told the prophets to tell the people about His Son coming to earth. People were excited, but for some of those people, the Savior's coming took a long time. They started to

forget all the things God told them to expect and they got confused. The people thought the Messiah would arrive like a soldier and fight against the Romans who ruled over God's people at that time.

Did God say Jesus would come as an adult or as a child according to what we read in Isaiah 9:6? *A child.*

Just like the smell of cookies baking tells us we can anticipate eating cookies, the prophecies about the Messiah were meant to give God's people hope and anticipation for His coming.

What happens when the cookies cool down from sitting out for awhile? *The smell becomes weaker.*

Even though you know they are there, sometimes you stop thinking about the cookies when you can't smell them anymore.

God's people started to forget what they were anticipating and started trying to do things their own way instead of living in a way that would honor their coming Messiah.

NOTE: If the cookies are ready, this would be a great time to serve them. You may want to save some for your "Share" activity later this week.

We know Jesus is the Messiah who came to save us from our sins. We have the Bible to tell us everything that happened at His birth. We celebrate His birth and life when we celebrate Christmas every year.

Though we can't see Him in person right now (like we can see, smell, and taste these cookies), we know He is still here. The Bible also says that Jesus is coming back (Acts 1:6-11).

Just like God's people were waiting for the Savior to come save them before He was born, we are waiting for Him to come back again. This is another reason we celebrate Advent.

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The Bible says that Jesus will come as a warrior at His second coming. In John 1:1-5, Jesus is called “the Word.” Let’s read what the Bible says about the Word at the end of time.

Invite someone to read Revelation 19:11-16.

What is the rider called? *Faithful and True, the Word of God, King of kings and Lord of lords.*

These are all names of Jesus.

As we celebrate the hope we have in Jesus’ first coming, we can also anticipate His second coming to save and rescue us. We have so much to celebrate and anticipate this Advent season as we wait for Jesus, our Gift from God!



ACTIVITY

Option #1: Younger Children - Christmas Book Gift Box

1. Set out the Christmas book(s), box, wrapping paper, scotch tape, scissors and bow/ribbons.
2. **Christmas books are fun to read together, and we are going to do something to remind us about the anticipation of Jesus’ coming.**
3. **We are going to wrap these books in a box and later this week we will open the box and start reading our Christmas books. We won’t read them right now so we can anticipate reading together later.**
4. Help your children wrap the book box and then place it somewhere everyone can see it throughout the week.

Option #2: Older Children - Coupons

1. Hand each of your older children a personalized coupon.
2. **Sometime this week, you will be able to redeem this coupon. You will not know WHEN it will happen, only that it WILL happen. This coupon is a reminder of the anticipation we have in Jesus’ return.**



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.”

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank you for coming to earth as our Savior and that we can anticipate You coming again to make everything right. You are our only HOPE and the HOPE for all the world. We are looking forward to celebrating You this Advent season. In Your Name, Amen.

Carefully extinguish your Advent candle.



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Supplemental Activities

Create

Make Chocolate embellishments together.

Step One: Put wax paper on a cookie sheet.

Step Two: Melt 1 cup chocolate chips and 2 1/2 teaspoons coconut oil in the microwave for 30 seconds at a time.

Step Three: Spoon the melted chocolate into a zip-lock bag. Seal after releasing all the air.

Step Four: Cut a very small hole in one corner of the zip-lock bag.

Step Five: Take turns squeezing the chocolate onto the cookie sheet into Christmas symbols. Don't worry if the shapes get messy; even the most abstract shapes look great as a garnish.

Step Six: Talk about the what the different Christmas symbols mean.

Step Seven: Put the cookie sheet in the refrigerator to allow the chocolate to harden.

Step Eight: After they have hardened (about 10 minutes), put them in a container with a lid and store in the refrigerator. You can enjoy them whenever you want to garnish a hot drink or dessert.

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Share

Donate a Christmas book to your local children's hospital. Pick one of your family favorites! (Include some of your cookies for the nurses and doctors.)

Invite

Invite another family to join your adventure next week. You will need to make the necessary arrangements ahead of time for caroling at an assisted living center.

Adventure

Go grocery shopping for your local food bank. Research in advance what they need most.

Family

Unwrap and read your Christmas book(s) together.

Serve

Deliver the groceries to your local food bank.



Parent Devotion Week Two

Faith

Christmas rolls around once a year, and if we are not careful it can turn into mere nostalgic tradition. However, when we pause amidst the holiday season, we remember that Christmas is for celebrating the incarnation of Christ! We rejoice that God came wrapped in flesh, born in a manger and in joyful anticipation of the empty tomb! Because we were not there, we are called to respond to God's Word in faith. In doing so, we are taking part in a rich Christmas tradition.

In Luke 1:28-38, young Mary had an encounter with an angel. While the angel must have been an awe-inspiring and fearful sight, the news she received would likely leave any of us with our jaws on the floor! Mary had a choice. She could believe the messenger of God or reason it away. Her response was simple, "I am the Lord's servant...May your word to me be fulfilled." We see in Matthew 1:20-25, Joseph had a dream that featured an angel of the Lord with news of the prophesied coming Messiah to be born of Mary. Joseph had plenty to lose culturally and hardly any of us would blame him for a little skepticism. However, his heart was on display when the dream ended, "When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him..."

In Luke 2:8-20, unnamed shepherds experienced a spectacle that we will not see the equivalent of until the return of Christ! The news they heard prompted quick action, "When the

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angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

James, one of the brothers of Jesus, once said, “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:17). The practice of celebrating Christmas without faith is a dead cultural tradition. However, when we follow in Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds’ footsteps of faith-fueled action, the holiday returns to its rightful place in God’s advancing kingdom. Each one of these examples has given us full view of what it means to hear the direction of God and act upon it in faith.

When we read the Christmas story with our kids, and sing songs like “Away in a Manger,” we do so praising God the Father for sending His Son to be born and to die on our behalf in order to set us free from sin and death. Each gift we open has the potential to remind us of the gift of grace made possible by what happened on that silent night. May our faith-filled Christmas be on display to a lost world, revealing the Gospel message: that Jesus came, died, rose again, and will one day return!

Read: Luke 1:28-38 and Matthew 1:20-25

Frank Trimble
Director of Training and Consulting at Family Time Training
in Littleton, CO
Husband to Kristin. Father to Ava & Olivia.



Activity Week Two

Faith and Revelation



TEACHING GOAL

To understand the angels revealed Jesus to people and so can we



SCRIPTURES

Matthew 1:18-25

Luke 1:26-45

Luke 2:8-20

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.



MATERIALS

- Plain paper
- Marker
- Option #1: piece of white paper per person, duct (or masking) tape
- Option #2: cell phone or electronic device with access to emojis

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Words that are in **bold** are when the leader is speaking. Feel free to use your own words.



CANDLE LIGHTING

Light the first and second Advent candles.

As we celebrate the Advent of our Savior, we light these Advent candles to remind us that Jesus has come and He is coming again.

Today's Advent focus is FAITH.

Invite someone to read Hebrews 11:1.

Celebrating Advent is all about hope and anticipation. It is also about our FAITH that what we hope for will happen. We didn't see Jesus' birth with our own eyes, but we have FAITH in God that everything He says in His Word is true. That's why we have FAITH that He will come again just as He said.

PRAY: Jesus, Thank You that you came to earth and that we can have FAITH in You, even though we don't see you now. We celebrate You, the source of our FAITH, this Christmas season. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DISCUSSION

One of the symbols we see a lot at Christmas is an angel. Angels appeared to a few people to reveal the truth about the coming Messiah. We are going to read through these stories and imagine we are hearing them for the first time. Consider what kind of FAITH they must have had to believe the revelation they were given by the angels.



Option #1: Younger Children - Revealing the Truth like the Angels

1. You choose: Read through the entire Scripture (references provided) or read the summary and ask the follow-up questions depending on your children's ages and attention spans.
2. Write these names on pieces of paper: Mary, Joseph, and Shepherds; Place them around the house.
3. Fold one of the pieces of paper into an accordion and place a piece of scotch tape in the middle of the folded paper. Spread out the accordion paper to look like angel wings.

We are going to act out the conversations people had with the angel who proclaimed Jesus' birth to them.

One person is going to be the angel. That person gets to wear these wings. Tape the wings on the back of the child's shirt. (Take turns being the angel, if you prefer.)

The people (Mary, Joseph and the Shepherds) can be played by different family members or one person can play different people depending on the size of your family.

Have each family member find their Bible names spread out around the room. Use tape for a name tag and label each with the name of the person they represent or travel as a family around the room from name to name to tell the story.

The angel is now going to go from person to person revealing the truth about the coming birth of Jesus.

First, the angel goes to "Mary."

Mary was a young woman and was living her life to honor God. She was engaged to be married to a good man

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named Joseph. When the angel told her, she would be the mother of the Son of God, she was humble and respectfully asked the question of “how” this would happen. Then, she honored God and obeyed Him. (Luke 1:26-45)

What can we learn from Mary’s response to the news about her being chosen to be Jesus’ mom? Listen to answers. *We need to be humble and obey God.*

Next, the angel goes to “Joseph.”

When he found out that Mary was pregnant, Mary’s fiancé, Joseph, intended to break off their engagement, which would be like a divorce. He was going to do it quietly to protect Mary from disgrace. Then, the angel appeared to him in a dream and said he should take Mary as his wife and name the baby Jesus. When he woke up, he did what the angel told him to do. (Matthew 1:18-25)

What can we learn from the way Joseph responded to the message from the angel in his dream? Listen to answers. *We can trust God even when it’s hard. We can obey like Joseph.*

Now the angel goes to the “shepherd.”

An angel appeared to the shepherds and told them the Savior had been born and where to find Him. They decided to go see Him for themselves. After they saw Him, they told everyone about what they had seen. (Luke 2:8-20)

What can we learn from what the shepherds did after the angels appeared to them? Listen to answers. *We should be ready to hear God’s messages and obedient when we hear from the Lord.*

What can we learn from what the shepherds did after they saw baby Jesus? Listen to answers. *We should tell everyone else about Jesus, too.*

Each person’s faith guided how they reacted to the angel’s message. It is the same for people today. Different people

react in different ways when they hear the truth about Jesus. Some people ask clarifying questions, then accept the truth with a humble heart like Mary. Some people get right up and immediately do the right thing like Joseph. Some people are awed by the truth, take action, and share what they've been told like the shepherds.

No matter how people react to us revealing the truth about Jesus, we need to be obedient and share our faith in Jesus.

Option #2: Older Children - Emoji Response

We have stations around the house for Mary, Joseph and the Shepherds. When we get to the person's name, we will read the Scripture passage about them and their interaction with the angel. As you are reading the passage, think of which emoji best describes the reaction of the person and pull that emoji up on your device to show everyone.

NOTE: You can have different family members read the Scriptures or listen to a dramatized audio version of the passages on an online Bible app.

Scriptures to read at each name:

- a. Mary - Luke 1:26-45
- b. Joseph - Matthew 1:18-25
- c. Shepherds - Luke 2:8-20

Same application as Option #1. **Each person's faith guided how they reacted to the angel's message. It is the same for people today. Different people react in different ways when they hear the truth about Jesus. Some people ask clarifying questions, then accept the truth with a humble heart like Mary. Some people get right up and immediately do the right thing like Joseph. Some people are awed by the truth, take action, and share what they've been told like the shepherds.**

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No matter how people react to us revealing the truth about Jesus, we need to be obedient and share our faith in Jesus.



MEMORIZE

Luke 1:19 The angel said to him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.”



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank You for sending Your angels to reveal the truth about Jesus. Thank You for sending us to reveal the truth about Jesus to the people in our lives, too. Give us faith that grows as we learn more about more about who You are this Christmas season. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Carefully extinguish your Advent candles.





Supplemental Activities

Create

Make Christmas ornaments. You can make salt dough ornaments by following the recipe included, or use felt, paper, or foam. Use supplies you have on hand, or purchase kits at the local craft store.

Salt Dough recipe:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup cold water
- 1 cup salt
- Preheat oven to 250 F.

Directions:

1. Mix flour and salt together in a bowl. Slowly mix in water, a few tablespoons at a time until dough is smooth and easy to handle.
2. Knead dough for 10 minutes and let rest for 20 minutes.
3. Roll dough 1/2 in. thick and use cookie cutters to shape. Use a straw to make a hole where you can insert an ornament hook or ribbon once cooked and cooled.
4. Arrange on a parchment lined baking sheet.
5. Bake in the preheated oven until dry and hard, about 2 hours. Allow to cool completely.

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Share

Do a chore for someone else in the family. This is a great way to share your time and love for each other.

Invite

Give your newly created ornaments along with an invitation to your Christmas Eve Service to a friend or neighbor.

Adventure

Go caroling at an assisted living center along with the other family you invited last week.

Family

It's family game night! Here are some suggestions of games you can play together.

Christmas charades: Write down different Christmas songs, books, and movies and put them into a bowl. Have each family member take turns acting out one for the others to guess.

Christmas version of “Spoons:”

You will need:

A standard deck of cards (no Jokers)

Candy canes (instead of spoons), one less than the number of players (For example, if you have 5 players, you would need 4 candy canes.)

For 3 to 13 players

Object of the Game: To be the last person having four-of-a-kind, and the last candy cane, in the final round.

Start the game by arranging all the candy canes in the middle of the table. Then the dealer deals four cards to each player. The dealer should keep the remaining cards in a pile on the table face down.

At the beginning of each round, the dealer takes a card off the top of the deck (to have five cards in his hand). He or she then removes one card from their hand and passes it face down to the player on their left. This continues around the circle of players with each player taking a card from the person on their right, chooses whether to keep it, and passes one card on to the next player. Each player discards to the person on their left.

The last player places his discarded card into a discard pile and the next round begins when the dealer picks up a new card. If at any time the draw cards run out, pause to reshuffle the discard pile and keep going.

Play continues quickly until someone gets four-of-a-kind. At that time, the player takes a candy cane from the center. Once the player with four-of-a-kind takes a candy cane, anyone can take a candy cane. The player left without a candy cane is “out.”

NOTE: The player who reaches four-of-a-kind first has a variety of ways he can take the first candy cane. A sneaky pull exposes those paying too close attention to their cards. A demonstrative grab leads to a wild free-for-all. Either way, it's hilarious.

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Christmas Chaos:

You will need: a sheet of paper for each player, one pencil or pen for the group (a holiday pencil or pen would be fun) and one dice.

Someone starts by rolling the dice, trying to roll a one or six. If they do not get either of these, it is the next persons turn and play continues around the table. When someone does roll a one or a six, they grab the pencil or pen and start writing 1 to 100 on their piece of paper, as the dice continues around the table. They keep writing until the next person rolls a one or a six. Then, that person has to grab the pencil or pen out of the other person's hand and begin writing 1 to 100. No abbreviations. When a one or six is rolled again, the person picks up where they left off (example: if the player ended at 52, they would begin writing again at 53), and the first player to reach 100 wins.

There are a lot of other ideas that you can find doing a simple search online, or choose some of your family's favorite games. The point is to have fun laughing together and making memories.

Serve

Make and give encouraging notes to someone who lives alone. You could create your own cards or you can even use sidewalk chalk and leave loving notes on their driveway.



Parent Devotion Week Three

Joy

When I think of joy at Christmastime, I can't help but remember the old hymn, "Go Tell It On The Mountain." We sang this hymn as part of our Christmas celebrations in the church I grew up attending. It's an anthem of the incredible joy we have in Jesus coming to earth as our Savior and King. We just can't keep it to ourselves.

When we sing this hymn, we are proclaiming our great joy that God chose to save and redeem us. We are sharing the joy this can bring to others as well. It would be easy for our joy to become inward focused at Christmas. We get wrapped up in our celebrations, forgetting the awesome opportunity we get this time of year. Christmastime does something to open hearts and minds of individuals that might otherwise be uninterested. People are in the "spirit of the season" and we should take full advantage. Joy is meant to be proclaimed!

If you wonder how to do this, just invite someone to attend church with you (it's already been worked into your optional calendar in this Advent Guide). Naturally Christmas Eve is a wonderful service to invite a non-believer to attend, but January will be here quickly and there is another Sunday each and every week of the year.

Jesus Christ is born. God became flesh. He walked in the dirt of the same earth we are walking on today. He experienced love

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and pain, sorrow and joy. He laughed and he cried. And yet He was fully God: all-knowing, all-powerful, in control of all things. Go tell it on your mountain: in your neighborhood and workplace; to the barista or clerk who serves you daily; to the parent of your child's friend, teacher, or coach. The amazing gift of joy through Jesus Christ is meant to be shared. No one else has the same "mountain" that God has given you. Go share the Good News.

Go share the joy of Christmas today and every day.

Read: 1 Peter 1:8 and Matthew 2:10-12

Mark Hallock
Lead Pastor at Calvary Church Englewood in Englewood, CO
Husband to Jenna. Father to Zoe & Eli.



Activity Week Three

Joy and Proclamation



TEACHING GOAL

To understand the shepherds chose to tell others about The Gift and we should too.



SCRIPTURES

Luke 2:1-20

1 Peter 1:8

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.



MATERIALS

- Cotton balls
- Candy cane for each person
- Baby Jesus from a nativity set.

Words that are in **bold** are when the leader is speaking. Feel free to use your own words.

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CANDLE LIGHTING

Light the first, second, and the third Advent candles.

As we celebrate the advent of our Savior, we light these Advent candles to remind us that Jesus has come and He is coming again.

Today's Advent focus is JOY.

Invite someone to read 1 Peter 1:8.

This passage encourages us that we have the JOY of our salvation because we have faith in One we have not yet seen. Advent is all about anticipating what is to come through Jesus and that gives us so much JOY!

PRAY: Jesus, we rejoice in our salvation that comes from You! We celebrate You with JOY this Christmas Season! In Your Name, Amen.



DISCUSSION

Today we are going to learn about the word "proclamation." What do you think proclamation means? Listen to answers.

Merriam-Webster defines proclamation as "an official or formal public announcement; sharing or spreading important information."

When are times in our lives we experience a formal public announcement? Listen to answers. *When someone gets married, when someone is born, when there is a new president or governor, at high school graduation, etc.*
Let's read the traditional Christmas story from Luke 2:1-20 to learn about the joyful proclamation of Jesus' birth.

Story Presentation Options:

- A. Act out the Christmas story as a family. One person is the narrator and the others play various characters in the story. You can even dress the parts putting together make-shift costumes (towels, bathrobes, baby doll, etc.)
- B. Give each child different pieces of a Nativity scene and move them as you read the story aloud.
- C. Provide each child with a blank piece of paper and have them color what comes to mind while you read the story aloud. Display these pictures in your home to remind them of the story of Christmas.
- D. Take turns reading different verses of the passage to help everyone stay involved. Different voices help children understand in a new way.

Who proclaimed the joy of Jesus' birth after going to visit Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus? *The shepherds*



ACTIVITY

Activity for all ages: Candy Cane Shepherds

- 1. Give each family member a candy cane. NOTE: Keep the plastic wrap on.
- 2. Scatter the bag of cotton balls around the room.
- 3. Place baby Jesus in the center of the room.
- 4. **Just like shepherds collect their flocks using a staff, we are going to play a game symbolizing us bringing people to Jesus using these candy canes!**

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5. Place the long end of the candy cane in your mouth and bring all the sheep to baby Jesus by using the hook to drag them like a shepherd would.
6. Ready, set, go!
7. Allow the game to continue as long as everyone would like.
8. Remember it's our job to be like the shepherds and proclaim Jesus to everyone we can, so they can share the joy of having Jesus as their Good Shepherd!



MEMORIZE

1 Peter 1:8 “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving us Your joy to proclaim this Christmas season! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Carefully extinguish your Advent candles.





Supplemental Activities

Create

Make posters of thanks and Christmas wishes for your local heroes (firemen, police, EMS, etc.).

Share

Deliver the posters you made to your local heroes.

Invite

Email invitations to join your family at the Christmas Eve Service. Use an online tool such as Evite or Paperless Post.

Adventure

Find the extravagant Christmas light displays in your area (many towns now make a list for the newspaper or online). Take an evening driving around enjoying the lights. Remind your children that Christmas lights can remind us that Jesus is the light of the world.

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Family

There are a variety of Christmas movies and specials, both new and “classic” available to watch together as a family during the Christmas season. As the adults, you will choose what is appropriate for the age and maturity of your children. We suggest building in Biblical worldview teaching by adding some discussion questions.

Here are some suggested questions for any media you engage as a family:

1. What is the main idea of this story?
2. Are there redeeming themes? If so, identify them.
3. Are the characters living God’s way or their own way? What difference does living God’s or our own way mean in this story?
4. What does the Bible say about the main actions and attitudes of the characters?
5. How would Jesus have interacted with the different characters?
6. What would you have done when...
7. What has God taught us through this story?
8. How can we apply this lesson in our lives?

Serve

Do a random act of kindness as a family. Together, brainstorm a list of people who could use a little help and what would be most helpful to them. Then, surprise that person/family by serving them (do it anonymously, if possible).



Parent Devotion Week Four

Love

Christmas is the demonstration of God's love. It is only because of God's great love that Jesus was born. It is only because of God's great love that Jesus died in our place. How do we even begin to understand this great love?

The first step to even trying is we have to differentiate it from our perception of love. We love how someone makes us feel, because they bring out the best in us. Or we love someone because they are a part of us, like our parents, siblings, or our children. We even love sacrificially. I would do anything for my family. Obviously, God loves sacrificially too. The evidence is in John 3:16, His sacrifice was great. Well, God's love is also perfect. It is perfect in that it is not selfish. Sacrificial and selfless are very different things. God doesn't love us because of the way we make Him feel, or because we make Him better or He needs us in any way. He loves us because we belong to Him. But He loves us selflessly, in that He loves us in ways that make us better. That is not how we instinctively love.

When my friends or family (especially my children) are suffering, whether it be a medical, emotional, or financial issue, I just want their suffering to end. I am not thinking of what spiritual growth they may be experiencing, or whether this may be the event that draws them close to God, or if this event is preparing them for something grand

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in their future. I just love my friends, family, and my kids in a way that I feel their pain, and I want it to end. To share in suffering is uncomfortable, and as humans we don't like to be uncomfortable.

How did God love His own Son? We see in Matthew 3:17 that He loved His son. Then in Matthew 26:39 we see Jesus begged His father to spare Him, but He is still willing to trust and obey God, because Jesus knows how His father loves. God allowed His son to suffer and die. Then this event takes Jesus from being the son of God to the fulfilled prophecy and exalted above all!

God loves His son selflessly. He allowed His son to go through this unimaginably painful event. God did it not only to save us, but so now Jesus is The Son of God AND The Deliverer, Good Shepherd, Great High Priest, Immanuel, Indescribable Gift, Lamb of God, Light of The World, Messiah, Our Hope, Our Prince of Peace, The Prophet, The Redeemer, The Savior, The Son of Man, The Resurrection and The Life, The Word, The Truth, The Victorious One, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, The King of Kings!

This is how great God's love is for His Son. God's great love elevates Christ and glorifies Himself. This is the love He has for His son. This is the love He has for you.

Read: Philippians 2:8-11 and Isaiah 9:2-7

Stacy Ludwig
Director of Operations at Family Time Training
Wife to Steve. Mother to Laina, Leon, and Lowan.



Activity Week Four

Love and Adoration



TEACHING GOAL

Jesus is the Light that shines in the darkness, He is Immanuel and worthy of our love and adoration.



SCRIPTURES

Matthew 1:22-23

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us').

Matthew 22:37-40

John 1:1-5

John 1:9-14

1 John 4:19

We love because He first loved us.

1 John 5:3-4

Revelation 21:23

The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

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MATERIALS

- Magic trick candles
- Cupcakes
- Flashlights for each person
- Matches/lighter

Words that are in **bold** are when the leader is speaking.
Feel free to use your own words.



CANDLE LIGHTING

Light all four of the Advent candles.

As we celebrate the advent of our Savior, we light these Advent candles to remind us that Jesus has come and He is coming again.

Today's Advent focus is **LOVE**.

Invite someone to read 1 John 4:19.

God loved us so much that He sent His very Own Son to save us. That is the LOVE we celebrate this Christmas. We show others LOVE because of God's LOVE for and in us.

PRAY: Father, Thank You for sending Your Son to save us. Thank You for Your love. Please love others through us this Christmas season. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DISCUSSION

The angels revealed the truth about Jesus' birth and now it was time for Him to come. It was almost Jesus' birthday. It's a little early, but let's sing to Him because we love Him!

Light the trick candle. Sing "Happy Birthday." At the end of the song, have one of your children try to blow out the candle. Then allow everyone to take a turn.

What is going on with this candle? *It won't blow out!*

Invite someone to read John 1:1-5.

These verses talk about Jesus being the life and light of all mankind and that the darkness has not overcome His light. Nothing the enemy ever does to try to destroy Jesus and His light will ever work. This candle will eventually blow out, but Jesus' light never will (Revelation 21:23).

Invite someone to read John 1:9-14.

Verse 14 says that Jesus was The Word and He became flesh and made His dwelling among us.

In Matthew 1:22-23, we are reminded of what the prophet Isaiah says about the Messiah.

Invite someone to read Mathew 1:22-23.

Jesus would be called Immanuel which means "God with us" ... the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.

What does it mean that Jesus "made His dwelling among us?" Listen to answers. *He came to earth as a man and lived with people.*

The Father loved us so much that He sent that which He loved and adored most, His own Son, to live among us and never leave us (Matthew 28:20). God wants us to love and adore His Son, too.

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Invite someone to read 1 John 5:3-4.

The great thing is that God doesn't have hundreds of laws for us to obey in order for us to show Him our LOVE. Jesus tells us the two greatest commandments God wants us to obey.

Invite someone to read Matthew 22:37-40.

What are God's two greatest commandments? *Love God and love our neighbors as ourselves.*

What are some ways we can love God as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birthday? Listen to answers. *Obey His commands, worship Him, spend time with Him, remember this holiday is about Him and not us.*

What are some ways we can love our neighbors as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birthday? Listen to answers. *Take their family a simple gift, pray for them, invite them to join us at our church.*

When we show Jesus our love and adoration by obeying Him and loving others, we are shining Jesus' light in the world, too. It's like Jesus is the star on the top of a Christmas tree and we are the Christmas lights all over the tree shining His love for everyone to see.



ACTIVITY

Activity for all ages: Light of the World Tag

1. Give each family member a flashlight (a cell phone flashlight works well).
2. **In this game, we are going to turn all the lights off in the house. You are going to hide somewhere in the house holding your flashlight (turned off). I am going to be “it” and come find you with my flashlight.**
3. **The light represents sharing God’s LOVE with others.**
4. **When I tag you with the light from my flashlight, you are going to come with me, turn on your flashlight, and tag the other people in the family with our lights.**

NOTE: The first person who is tagged in this game will be “it” in the next game.

Play continues until everyone has a chance to be “it.”



MEMORIZE

1 John 4:19

We love because He first loved us.



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Dear Jesus, we love and adore You. We celebrate YOU on Your birthday. Thank You that Your light cannot be blown out and You are always with us! In Your Name, Amen.

Carefully extinguish your Advent candles.



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Supplemental Activities

Create

Make hot drink mix to share. Be sure and make an extra batch for your family to enjoy. Here are a few timeless suggestions. Use the labels found at famtime.com/Advent to attach to your jars.

Mix all these ingredients together and store in a small jar or shaker.



Chai Spice Mix

- 2 Tbsp Ground Ginger
- 2 tsp Ground Clove
- 1 1/2 Tbsp Ground Cinnamon
- 2 tsp Ground Allspice
- 2 tsp Ground Cardamom



Use as needed to spice tea, coffee, and even hot chocolate.
Merry Christmas!

Mix all these ingredients together and put in a jar.



Traditional Friendship Tea

- 1/2 cup Instant Tea Powder
- 1 tsp Ground Cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp Ground Cloves
- 1 cup Orange Flavored Drink Mix (like Tang)
- 1 cup Lemonade Powder



Add 2 teaspoons of the mix to 8 ounces warm water.
Merry Christmas!

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Share

Give a jar of the Hot Drink Mix to someone working a late shift at a hospital.

Invite

Follow up with any invitations you give to people for Christmas Eve service at your church.

Adventure

Take your hot drink to savor while you hunt for the biggest lit tree in town.

Family

Spend time praying for each of the families you received Christmas cards from this year.

Serve

Do something special for someone in your family (do a chore on their list, make them a hot drink or cookies and milk, spend some time with them making a puzzle or playing a game).



Christmas Eve



SCRIPTURE

John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.



MATERIALS

- Advent candles

Words that are in **bold** are when the leader is speaking.
Feel free to use your own words.



CANDLE LIGHTING

Light the 4 advent candles, then the Christ candle.

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As we celebrate the advent of our Savior, we light these Advent candles to remind us that Jesus has come and He is coming again.

Today's Advent focus is CHRIST.

Read John 1:14.

Jesus came to earth to save us from life and eternity without God. He chose to be a human and live among us, love us, and give His life for us. We don't deserve this priceless Gift from God of His Son for us, but we receive it with joyful and grateful hearts.

Pass a candle around (using the Christ candle would be particularly meaningful) and tell each family member what you love about them while they hold the candle.



Jesus, we celebrate YOU today. We praise you for who you are and we thank you for what you have done and are continuing to do in the world because you love us. Thank you for the love we share as a family. Thank you for Christmas and the joy and fun it brings. Please help us live our lives in a way that shines the light of Jesus and gives those around us hope, faith, joy and love. In Your Name, Amen.





Christmas Week



Christmas Day

By thinking of others on this special day, we keep the focus on showing the love of Christ rather than the gifts under the tree. Consider delivering the hot drink mix you made to people you have been praying for this month — maybe to someone who has to work today.

Day After Christmas

Today is a good day for a play day! Enjoy the gifts you have given each other and just relax. Consider starting a new tradition! If you purchased a family gift (suggested in the materials list at the beginning of this guide), enjoy that together today and remind children of the gift of family.

Family Night

Enjoy a picnic as a family under the Christmas tree. Turn off all the lights except for the tree, and enjoy one of the best gifts of all - family.

Bonus Activity

Enjoy the bonus Family Time Training Activity: Giving together.

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Bonus Activity

Giving



TEACHING GOAL

To understand we celebrate Jesus through our giving



SCRIPTURES

Matthew 2:9-12

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.



MATERIALS

- Incense ingredients
- Trash bags or boxes
- Canned food

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IN ADVANCE

1. Decide on a convenient or optimal time to do the “January 6th Challenge.” (It doesn’t need to be on January 6.)
2. Get out trash bags, boxes or bins for your family to fill up and donate items to a charity and/or cans of food to a food bank.

Words that are in **bold** are when the leader is speaking. Feel free to use your own words.



DISCUSSION

Today’s focus is GIVING.

Invite someone to read Matthew 2:10.

We rejoice and celebrate the gift of Jesus’ life as we start this New Year.

PRAY: Father, thank You for Your Son and for sharing Him with the world. We celebrate the Gift of Your Son as we start this New Year together. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Can you think of people in the Biblical Christmas story who we haven’t talked about, yet? Listen to answers. *Wisemen.*

Some people think the wisemen came to see Jesus right away and some people think it took them a little longer to see Jesus and bring Him gifts.

Many people in Latin America celebrate January 6th, “Three Kings Day” or “Epiphany”. They exchange gifts on this day instead of on Christmas Day.

Let’s continue to celebrate Jesus by reading the part of the story that includes the wisemen celebrating Jesus.

Invite someone to read Matthew 2:9-12.

At Christmastime, we celebrate Jesus by giving gifts. Some people say that the gift giving tradition started with the wisemen bringing Jesus gifts.

What are the gifts the wisemen brought to celebrate Jesus?
Listen to answers. *Gold, frankincense and myrrh*

We are going to make our own incense today to remind us of these gifts.



ACTIVITY #1: Make Stovetop Potpourri

Option 1: Place 2 cinnamon sticks, the rind of one orange, 1 T. whole cloves and 1 T. whole allspice in a saucepan. Add 2 C. of water. Simmer on the stovetop until water begins to evaporate.

As you make the incense, ask your children these questions:

What are a few of your favorite gifts from this Christmas?
Listen to answers.

What is at least one of the gifts you enjoyed giving this season? Listen to answers.

Since we all love to give gifts, you'll be happy to know there are still some gifts that we can give this Christmas season!

ACTIVITY #2: January 6th Challenge

We all have so much STUFF! We have a lot of things we no longer use. We have clothes that are too small for us, toys we no longer play with and other items around the house we just don't need. And there are people who can use them.

There are people who donate to charities, food banks and other places who take care of people in need before

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Christmas, but what happens after Christmas? There are still people who need help after Christmas, too.

We are going to take the January 6th challenge today. I want EVERYONE to look at the things we own and find at least 6 items you can give as a gift in Jesus' name. We will collect all those things and take them to (Goodwill) as a family. Please don't bring things that are broken, ripped or unusable. Bring things that people can still use. We can throw those other things away.

We will also collect some canned food for us to take to a food bank to share out of our abundance (the extra God's given us).

We give to others because of how Jesus has given everything to us. We celebrate Him by giving His love and compassion to others.



MEMORIZE

Matthew 2:10

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Dear Jesus, thank You that we can celebrate You by giving gifts to others out of the abundance You have given us. We love You! In Jesus' Name, Amen.



Savor a Season of Waiting

Creation is waiting for Jesus to return as the conquering King who will restore all things. Christmas is a reminder that God's people were waiting for their Savior to arrive thousands of years ago. As we celebrate His first coming as a baby in a manger, we wait. He arrived then and He promised to arrive again some day!

There is much we can learn at Christmas about who Jesus is and how He wants us to live for Him. "Awaiting the Arrival" explores HOPE, FAITH, JOY and LOVE as we celebrate the birth of Jesus. Savor this season of waiting and enjoy the gifts that only Jesus can give!



FAMILY TIME TRAINING has been serving families for over 20 years. Our mission is to train and equip parents and grandparents to pass the faith to the next generation in the home. You can follow us on social media or learn more by visiting www.famtime.com.