

CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN GUIDE

Christmas is a season filled with anticipation. From the very beginning, the world was waiting for a promised Rescuer to come and make things right with God. At Christmas, we look forward to opening presents and being with family. Most of all, we can't wait to celebrate Jesus, the One who came to fulfill that promise.

Lighting the candles of Advent is a centuries-old tradition throughout the church. It's a chance to reflect on significance of the season and look forward to celebrating Jesus. Here's a simple way to create your own advent tradition. Over the next month, take time each Sunday and countdown to Christmas. Pause and remember the Christmas story. Celebrate how God sent Jesus to be our Savior.

Gather as a family and follow the prompts from the Christmas Countdown:

- Read the passage from the Bible and the short devotional.
- Discuss the questions together.
- Light a candle to mark the week.
- Pray and thank God for each week of Advent and the anticipation of celebrating Jesus.



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CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN

HOPE CANDLE

READ

Isaiah 9:6-7

As God's people were about to head into exile, God delivered hope through a promise. Someday, this will all be over—a King would come who would make all things new. Christmas celebrates the hope that God sent Jesus to fulfill that promise and rescue creation once and for all. Knowing that God has kept His promises in the past gives us hope that God will continue keeping His promises in the future.

ASK

- What is something you hope for?
- How can you stay hopeful even when you don't get what you want?
- When have you seen God take care of our family?

DO

Light the Hope candle.



PRAY

"Dear God, thank You for reminding us during this time of year that You keep Your promises—every single time! Thank You for the promise of Jesus. Thank You for the hope that we have in Him. Please help us to remember what You did for Your people—and for us—when You sent Jesus to be our Savior. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name, amen."

JOY CANDLE

READ

Luke 1:26-38, 46-47

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she would be Jesus' mother. This must have come as quite a surprise. After all, Mary wasn't married yet, and she had a different plan for her life. Gabriel reminded her that nothing is impossible with God. She could have been overwhelmed by this startling news, but she chose to respond with a song of joy. Nothing takes God by surprise. We can trust that God has an ultimate plan for our lives. Discover the joy that comes from believing in Jesus and God's plan for us.

ASK

- Who are we planning on seeing this Christmas?
- How do you feel when your plans don't happen like you want?
- How can we remember to have joy, even when our plans change?

DO

Light the Hope and Joy candles.

LOVE CANDLE

READ

Luke 2:1-7

From a human perspective, this whole situation must have seemed crazy to Mary and Joseph. Not only was Mary expecting the baby who would save the world, but now she and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem for the census. When they arrive, there's no room for them to stay except for the place they keep the animals. As hectic as this might have seemed, this is exactly how God wanted Jesus to enter the world. Right from the start, God wanted to have a relationship with us. Even when we messed that up with our sin, God continued to love and make a way to rescue us. Jesus is proof that God loves us unconditionally.

ASK

- What are we giving others this Christmas?
- How does it make you feel knowing God loves you so much?
- How can we show God's love to others?

DO

Light the Hope, Joy, and Love candles.

PRAY

"Dear God, thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior. We can see how Mary trusted Your plan, and You filled her heart with joy. Thank You for reminding us that You have a good plan for our lives, too. Help us to find our joy in You, because Your plans are ALWAYS good. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name, amen."

PEACE CANDLE

READ

Luke 2:8-20

After Jesus was born, the first people to find out are some unassuming shepherds in a field minding their own business. The angel announced Jesus' birth along with an angel choir that proclaimed God's peace for everyone on earth. They rushed to see the baby for themselves. They were so excited that they spent the rest of the night telling everyone they could about Jesus. We hope that this Christmas you would come to know God's love and believe that Jesus truly is the Savior of the world.

ASK

- What does it mean to have peace?
- Why is hard to find peace sometimes?
- How can we have peace knowing God loves us and sent us Jesus?

DO

Light the Hope, Joy, Love, and Peace candles.

CHRIST CANDLE

READ

John 1:1-5, 14

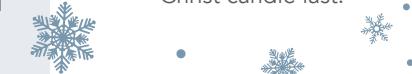
The "Word" John is talking about is Jesus. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He has been with God from the beginning, giving life and breath to all things. Christmas is the celebration that Jesus became like us. He lived and died and rose again, so that we could have life that lasts forever with God. This Christmas let's celebrate that Jesus came to rescue us and God is always with us.

ASK

- What's your favorite thing about Christmas? Why?
- How can we focus on Jesus this Christmas?
- How can we stay focused on Jesus throughout the whole year?

DO

Light all five candles with the Christ candle last.



PRAY

"Dear God, thank You for this reminder that Your peace is for everyone. You love and care about each and every one of us. You love us so much that You sent Jesus to be our Savior! Thank You for the peace that comes when we put our faith in You. Please help us to trust You and live Your way every day. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name, amen."



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DIRECTIONS

1. Cut along the dotted line.
2. Place a tea-light candle on each circle.
3. Gather as a family and follow the prompts from the Christmas Countdown:
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