

Faith-Filled HOLIDAYS

Christmas / Advent Season

Week 1 - Hope

Best Use

As a way to anticipate the celebration of the birth of Jesus and recapture the tradition of Advent in your home this Christmas season

Purpose

The word Advent comes from the Latin word that means *coming* or *arrival*. For centuries the Church has celebrated the four-week Advent season by lighting candles in a wreath and reflecting on the coming of Jesus as told in Scripture. The circle of the wreath represents God's never-ending love for us, the evergreens represent Christ's gift of eternal life and the candles announce Jesus as the Light of the World.

Advance Preparation

You can find an Advent wreath and candles in the arts & crafts or holiday section of many stores. You will need some kind of simple wreath and five candles. Arrange them in the center of your table throughout the Christmas season. Use this *Advent* activity to guide your family through a brief moment of reflection during a meal or bedtime snack each of the four weeks before Christmas and on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Light the first candle:

Before eating, light the first candle. Traditionally a purple candle is lit first, but the color is not important. Consider taking turns lighting the candles and reading the verses each week.

Explain:

The first week of Advent is the week of *Hope*. The story of Jesus' birth actually began thousands of years before he was born. God promised the people of Israel that he would provide a Messiah (Savior) to save them from their sins. For centuries, the people of Israel waited with great hope for the Messiah to come.

Read:

Isaiah 7:14 - *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

Explain:

The prophet Isaiah, who lived hundreds of years before Jesus, predicted the birth of Jesus as a promise of hope from God. The word Immanuel means God living with us, and was fulfilled when Jesus came to live on earth as the Messiah.

Discuss:

- What is something you are hoping for this Christmas?
- What's the hardest part of waiting until Christmas to receive your presents?
- Can you imagine waiting hundreds of years for Jesus to come like the people of Israel had to do?

Pray:

Father in heaven, thank you for the gift of your son Jesus who was not only the hope of Israel thousands of years ago, but our hope of salvation today. Help us to keep the hope of Jesus in our home this Christmas season. Amen.