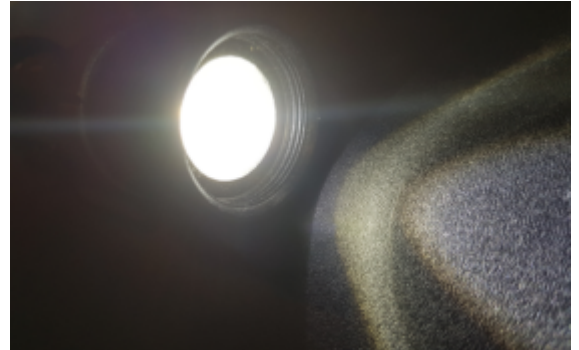


ADVENT: HOPE WEEK ONE

December 2, 2023

Throughout the Old Testament, God's people waited full of hope for the Messiah. Today, we know that the Messiah has already come, that he was born over two thousand years ago in a stable in Bethlehem. But as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth on Christmas Day, we also excitedly wait, like God's people in the Old Testament. The four weeks leading up to Christmas are a special time for God's people to join in anticipation of Christ's birth. This time is called *Advent*.



Many churches use Advent wreaths that have five candles making up a circle. The candles are lit one per week for four weeks; the fifth is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

The following four parent blogs can be read each week at home. Your family can arrange and decorate five candles with a simple wreath. You can discuss the four Advent candles: hope, peace, joy, and love. On Christmas Day, light the fifth candle to represent Christ, the light of the world.

What You Need

1. Four votive candles. Weekly candles represent the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. Three of the candles can be purple, the traditional color of Advent. Use a pink candle on the third week to represent joy.
2. A white pillar candle to represent Christ, the light of the world.
3. A plate or board underneath all five candles. Place the candles in a circle around the white pillar candle on the plate or board. If safety is a concern, use battery-operated candles instead.

What To Do

Choose a day and time each week when your family will light the Advent candle—for example, Sunday evening after supper. Try to be consistent.

Light the candle of the corresponding week. Hope is the first candle. In the following weeks, you will also light the candles from the previous weeks.

Each week, take turns reading and lighting the candle(s). Have someone say, “*This is the first week of Advent, and we light the candle of hope.*” Then, have someone light the candle of hope.

Dig Deeper

- Talk about the devotion [The Prophet's Message of Hope](#). You might use the prayer at the end of the devotion together.

- To learn more about the prophets and what hope means in the Bible, read [Isaiah 9:2](#) and [John 1:1-14](#).
- Ask this question: “*Can you think of a time when someone showed you God’s love and kindness? How did that remind you of our hope in the Lord?*” Allow each family member to answer the question and discuss what hope means. After the sharing time, say, “Let’s find ways to show our hope in Jesus to everyone we meet this week.”
- Share these [Gifts of Kindness](#) ideas and explore some ways you can give other people hope:
 1. Compliment a friend who is having a bad day.
 2. Check-in on an elderly neighbor and help them with chores.
 3. Donate food to a food pantry for someone who is hungry.
 4. Hold the door open for someone and give them a big smile.
 5. Help a tired parent make dinner.
 6. Teach someone something new.
 7. Share smiles.
- Listen to (or even sing!) a family favorite Christmas carol about hope, like “O Come All Ye Faithful.” You can listen to an [Advent playlist on Spotify](#). We also love ["Waiting Songs" by Rain for Roots](#).

written by Ron VandenBurg