

MAKING ROOM FOR JESUS

AN ADVENT JOURNEY FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

EmpoweredHomes.org

HELLO.

Christmas can become one of the busiest seasons of the year. There are presents to buy, decorations to display, parties to attend, traditions to keep, and memories to make. In the middle of all the activity, Advent gives our families an opportunity to slow down and remember why we celebrate in the first place. The word Advent means “coming” or “arrival”. For generations, God's people awaited the promised Messiah. At Christmas, we celebrate that Jesus came down from Heaven to earth and we remind one another of the hope we have in Him. Celebrating through Advent helps us intentionally make room for Jesus.

Over the next three weeks, your family will focus on three simple words: **Waiting, Preparing, and Receiving.** Each week includes Scripture to read together, a simple family lesson, age-specific activities, and questions designed to help faith conversations happen naturally at home.

You do not need to do everything in this guide. Pick what works for your family. The goal isn't to add another Christmas obligation to your calendar. The goal is to intentionally make room for Jesus in the everyday rhythms of your life.

We are praying for your family to slow down and experience the joy, peace and fulfillment that only comes from Jesus.



Week 1

WAITING.

Making Room for God's Timing

Big Idea: Waiting is not wasted when God is at work.



Read God's Word

Read Luke 1:5-25 aloud as a family. Take turns reading if you have children who can read. Be sure to encourage kids to underline/highlight words or phrases they don't know or portions that stand out to them.



Dig Deeper

Waiting is a huge part of Christmas. We wait to open presents. We wait for Christmas break. We wait for family to arrive. We count down the days until Christmas morning. But there are other kinds of waiting that aren't nearly as exciting. We wait for prayers to be answered. We wait for circumstances to change. We wait for something difficult to get better. Sometimes we even wonder why God is taking so long.

Zechariah and Elizabeth understood what it meant to wait. They loved God and faithfully followed Him, but for many years they had prayed for a child and had not received the answer they wanted. Then one day, while Zechariah was serving God in the temple, an angel appeared and told him that Elizabeth would have a son. His name would be John, and God would use him to prepare people for the arrival of Jesus. Zechariah and Elizabeth had no idea that while they were waiting, God was writing a much bigger story. Their story reminds us of an important Advent truth: **God's silence does not mean God's absence.**

We don't always know what God is doing while we wait. We also shouldn't assume that every prayer will eventually be answered exactly the way we want. But Christmas reminds us that God can be trusted even when His timing is different from ours. God's people waited generations for the promised Messiah, and at the right time, Jesus came.

Talk About It: Choose a few questions to answer



- **Name something that is really hard to wait for.**
- **If you could make one thing happen immediately, what would it be?**
- **Why do you think waiting can make it harder to trust God?**
- **What do you think Zechariah and Elizabeth learned about God while they waited?**
- **Have you ever prayed for something that took a long time to happen?**
- **What's the difference between trusting God and expecting God to give us exactly what we want?**
- **What is something our family is waiting or praying for right now?**
- **How can we encourage each other while we wait?**
- **What does Christmas teach us about God's promises?**
- **Finish this sentence: "God, while I wait, help me..."**

Family Connection Activity: The Waiting Jar



Place a jar or bowl somewhere your family will see it throughout Advent. Give everyone a piece of paper or two and have them write or draw something they are waiting for or praying about.

Place the papers inside the jar. Throughout Advent, when you notice the jar, use it as a reminder to pray: "God, help us trust You while we wait."

At Christmas, pull the papers out and pray about them again. The goal isn't to see how many prayers God has "answered". The goal is to remember that God is with us in the waiting.

Family Activities for Every Age & Stage

Preschool Activity: Wait For It!

Place a small Christmas treat or wrapped gift in front of your preschooler and tell them they have to wait 30 seconds before opening it. Make the countdown fun and dramatic.

Afterward say, “Waiting can be hard! God's people waited a very long time for Jesus. But God kept His promise. We can trust God while we wait.”

Have them repeat: “I can wait. God is good!”

Elementary Activity: Christmas Countdown Chain

Create a simple paper chain using strips of construction paper with one link for each day remaining until Christmas.

On several links, write simple reminders such as: Pray for someone. Thank God for Jesus. Encourage someone. Do something kind. Donate a toy to a charity organization.

Explain that every link reminds us that God's people waited for Jesus. Waiting doesn't mean nothing is happening. Let your child remove a link from the chain each day until Christmas.

Teen/Tween Activity: The Thing I Am Waiting For

Give each person an index card and ask them to write:
“One thing I wish God would do right now is...”
Remind them: They do not have to show anyone what they wrote.

On the back, have them write:
“God, help me trust You even if I don't know when or how this will change.”
Encourage them to keep it somewhere private through Christmas as a reminder to pray.



Week 2

PREPARING

Making Room for God's Work

Big Idea: Preparing for Jesus means allowing God to reshape our hearts and lives.



Read God's Word

Read Luke 3:1–18 aloud as a family. Take turns reading if you have children who can read. Be sure to encourage kids to underline/highlight words or phrases they don't know or portions that stand out to them.



Dig Deeper

Think about everything your family does to prepare for Christmas. You might put up a tree, decorate the house, buy gifts, make food, travel, attend parties, or get ready for church services. Preparing can be one of the most enjoyable parts of Christmas. But what if God wants us to prepare something besides our house?

What if He wants to prepare us? Before Jesus began His ministry, God sent John the Baptist to tell people to get ready. John used words originally spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "Prepare the way of the Lord". The picture was of people preparing a road for the arrival of a king. Rocks and obstacles needed to be removed, rough places made smooth, and the road cleared because someone important was coming. John took that picture and pointed it toward people's hearts: The King is coming. Prepare the way.

John told the people to repent. Repentance means recognizing that we're moving in the wrong direction and then turning back toward God's way. When the people asked John what that should look like, his answers were incredibly practical. Share what you have. Be honest. Treat people fairly. Be content. John wanted them to understand that if God is changing our hearts, eventually it should change how we live.

That's an important lesson for our families. Preparing for Jesus means asking, "God, what do You want to change IN me, so I can make room for You?"

Talk About It: Choose a few questions to answer



- **What's your favorite thing our family does to prepare for Christmas?**
- **If Jesus came to our house for dinner tonight, what would you want to do to prepare?**
- **What do you think "prepare the way of the Lord" means?**
- **Why do you think John talked about generosity, honesty, fairness, and contentment?**
- **What's something that can distract you from God?**
- **What's one thing that can sometimes crowd Jesus out of our family's Christmas?**
- **Is there something about your attitude or actions you'd like God to help you change?**
- **What's something our family has that we could share with someone else?**
- **How can we make one of our normal Christmas traditions more about Jesus?**
- **Finish this sentence: "Jesus, prepare my heart by..."**

Family Connection Activity: Make Room



Choose one thing your family can remove or reduce this week and replace it with something that points you toward Jesus.

Maybe you have one device-free evening and play games together. Skip one extra Christmas purchase and give that money away. Choose toys or clothes to donate. Turn off the television for thirty minutes and read the Christmas story together.

The goal isn't to simply give something up.
Tell your family: "We're making room for something better."

Family Activities for Every Age & Stage

Preschool Activity: Clear the Road

Create a "road" across the floor (using painters tape) then cover it with stuffed animals, toys, pillows, or blocks.

Tell your preschooler: "Someone really important is coming! We need to prepare the way!"

Let them race around clearing everything from the road.

Once it's clear, walk a toy figure representing Jesus down the road.

Explain simply: "John told everyone to prepare for Jesus. We prepare for Jesus by loving Him and doing what He says."

Elementary Activity: Making Room For Jesus

Give your child a box stuffed full or overflowing with several objects and crumpled pieces of paper labeled with things such as: Complaining – Selfishness – Anger – Being Mean – Lying – Worry etc. Then take an object that represents Jesus like a heart or figurine...try to fit it in the box. **Ask:** "Why is there no room? What should we do?"

Help you child remove the items that don't belong and talk about how God can help us change things in our lives that don't belong there. Let your child choose one thing they want Jesus to help them change this week.

Teen/Tween Activity: The Distraction Audit

Have everyone who owns a device look at their **Screen Time report.**

No guilt trip. No lecture. **Simply ask:** "Does anything surprise you?"

Then challenge everyone—including the parents—to choose one source of distraction to reduce this week and replace some of that time with prayer, Scripture, serving someone, or simply being present with the family.

The point isn't "devices are bad." The deeper question is "What is occupying the space that belongs to God?"



Week 3

RECEIVING

Making Room for Jesus.

Big Idea: Receiving Jesus means trusting Him enough to make room for His presence, purposes, and plans.



Read God's Word

Read Luke 1:26-38 aloud as a family. Take turns reading if you have children who can read. Be sure to encourage kids to underline/highlight words or phrases they don't know or portions that stand out to them.



Dig Deeper

Christmas is a season of receiving. Someone chooses a gift, buys it, wraps it, puts your name on it, and gives it to you. But eventually there is something you have to do - You have to receive it. Christmas is ultimately the story of something God has given us. God gave us Jesus. He came near to us. But the story of Mary helps us see that receiving what God gives sometimes means trusting Him when His plans are different from ours.

Mary was living an ordinary life when the angel Gabriel appeared with extraordinary news. She would have a son, and His name would be Jesus. He would be the Son of the Most High. Mary's life was about to change in ways she could never have imagined. She had questions, but she chose to trust God. Mary didn't receive an explanation for everything that would happen next. She received God's promise and trusted Him with the rest. Receiving Jesus does not mean receiving all the answers. It means receiving Him even when some of our questions remain. Joseph had to trust God too. God's plan was very different from the future Joseph had imagined. Yet when God told Joseph what to do, he obeyed. Mary made room for Jesus through surrender, and Joseph made room through obedience.

Sometimes we want God to show us everything before we'll trust Him. We want to know exactly what is going to happen. Mary and Joseph remind us that God often gives us enough to take the next faithful step. We may not know the whole story, but we know the One who does.

Talk About It: Choose a few questions to answer.



- **What's the best gift you've ever received, and why was it special?**
- **How do you think Mary felt when Gabriel told her God's plan?**
- **Why can it be hard to trust God when His plans are different from ours?**
- **What's the difference between having questions about God and refusing to trust God?**
- **What do Mary and Joseph teach us about surrender and obedience?**
- **What's something people your age often want to control?**
- **What is something Jesus gives us that money can't buy?**
- **If you could ask God one question about your future, what would you ask?**
- **What could it look like for our family to have "open hands" toward God?**
- **Finish this sentence: "Jesus, I want to make room for You by..."**

Family Connection Activity: Open Hands



Sit together and ask everyone to make tight fists.

Say: "Sometimes we hold really tightly to things—our plans, our stuff, our fears, what we want, and even our need to be in control."

Have everyone slowly open their hands. **Explain:** "Open hands remind us that we can give things to God and receive what He has for us."

Let each person finish: "Jesus, this Christmas I want to make room for You by...". Parents, go first.

Family Activities for Every Age & Stage

Preschool Activity: Receive the Gift

Wrap a box with a picture or figurine of Jesus. Give it to your preschooler and let them open it.

Ask: "What do we do when someone gives us a gift?"

Answer: We receive it!

Explain: "Christmas reminds us that God gave us the greatest gift—Jesus!"

Finish by saying together: "Thank You, God, for Jesus!"

Elementary Activity: Open Hands Prayer

Have your child hold several small objects in both hands. Keep adding things until they can't hold anything else. Then offer them something representing Jesus—a cross, nativity figure, or card with JESUS written on it.

Ask: "Can you take this while you're holding everything else?" Talk about how sometimes we hold tightly to what we want, our worries, or our plans. Have them put everything down and open their hands. Then set the object that represents Jesus in their hands.

Pray together: "Jesus, help me trust You with the things I want to control."

Teen/Tween Activity: Release & Receive

Give each person a piece of paper divided into two columns: RELEASE | RECEIVE

Under Release, encourage them to privately write something they need to place in God's hands: pressure, fear, expectations, comparison, a relationship, plans for the future, disappointment, or something they want to control. Under Receive, write something Jesus offers: grace, peace, forgiveness, direction, identity, hope, or His presence.

They don't have to share what they wrote. Encourage them to pray: "Jesus, help me release what I'm holding and receive what You have for me."

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JESUS

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