

Family Advent Readings

December 3: First Sunday of Advent *Light the first candle*

Leader: Today we begin our Advent journey, a time of listening and waiting.

All: We listen to God, and we wait for the coming of Jesus into our lives again.

Leader: As we wait, hear this promise from the prophet Isaiah:

Reader: *Read Isaiah 2:1-5. (New Revised Standard Version)*

2 In days to come
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
3 Many peoples shall come and say,
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.'
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
4 He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!

Leader: Isaiah brought the promise of a day when all people will go to the mountain of the Lord.

All: There, God will teach us how to live.

Leader: God will decide what is right.

Prayer: God of promise, help us to wait for the fulfilling of your promise in the coming of Jesus.
Amen.

Discussion: Isaiah invited the people to "walk in the light of the Lord," to live the way God wanted them to live. What are sources of light in our world today? Your light can be a candle, a lantern, the sun, or any kind of light you want to think of. Think up ways we can "walk in the light of the Lord" by living the way God wants us to live today.

December 10: Second Sunday of Advent

Light the candle from last week and the second candle.

Leader: Our Advent journey of listening and waiting continues.

All: We listen to God, and we wait for the coming of Jesus into our lives again.

Leader: As we wait, hear this promise from the prophet Isaiah:

Reader: *Read Isaiah 11:1-2. (New Revised Standard Version)*

A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

²The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

Leader: Isaiah promised that someone was coming, someone upon whom the spirit of the Lord would rest.

All: Someone who would be wise and see that all people are treated fairly.

Leader: Someone who would follow God's ways.

Prayer: God of peace, teach us to live in peace with one another in our homes, in our schools, in our jobs, in our community, and in our world. Amen.

Discussion: Think together about rules for peaceful living for your home, your community, and the world.

December 17: Third Sunday of Advent *(Light the first two candles and the third candle)*

Leader: Our Advent journey of listening and waiting continues.

All: We listen to God, and we wait for the coming of Jesus into our lives again.

Leader: As we wait, hear these words from the prophet Isaiah.

Reader: *Read Isaiah 35:1-2, 5-8, 10. (New Revised Standard Version)*

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus² it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;

⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,*
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸ A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Leader: Isaiah talks about a time of great joy when the desert will blossom and be filled with springs of water.

All: And the people will sing with joy.

Prayer: God of joy, how wonderful your promises are! Help us to wait with patience, knowing that you always keep your promises. Amen.

Discussion: Talk together about times when people in your family have had to wait a long time for something. How does it feel to wait? What makes waiting easier? What makes it harder? What are you waiting for right now?

December 24: Fourth Sunday of Advent *(Light all of the candles on the outside of the wreath.)*

Leader: Our Advent journey of listening and waiting continues.

All: We listen to God, and we wait for the coming of Jesus into our lives again.

Leader: As we wait, hear these words from Matthew's Gospel about what we are waiting for.

Reader: *Read Matthew 1:18-25. (New Revised Standard Version)*

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel',

which means, 'God is with us.' ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Leader: God promised the people a Savior.

All: God worked through Mary to make that promise come true.

Leader: God worked through Joseph to make that promise come true.

All: Mary and Joseph were people that God worked through in a special way.

Prayer: God of ordinary people, help us to listen carefully to you and to be willing to do what you want us to do, even when it is hard. Amen.

Together Time: Talk together about how God still uses ordinary people in extraordinary ways. Not to be the parents of the Christ child but to do God's work in the world. Think of some famous people (Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr.) and some people your family knows.

December 25: Christmas Day

Light all of the candles on the outside of the wreath and the white Christ candle in the middle.

Leader: Our waiting is over!

All: This is the day we have been waiting for, the day of our Savior's birth!

Leader: Let's hear the story.

Reader: *Read Luke 2:6-14. (New Revised Standard Version)*

⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, * the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, * praising God and saying,

¹⁴'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!'

Leader: Today we celebrate the way God's promise of a Savior came true in the birth of a baby named Jesus.

All: Jesus is God's gift to us. Thanks be to God.

Prayer: God of Christmas, thank you for giving us the gift of Jesus. Help us to remember to thank you by the way we live our lives each day. Amen.