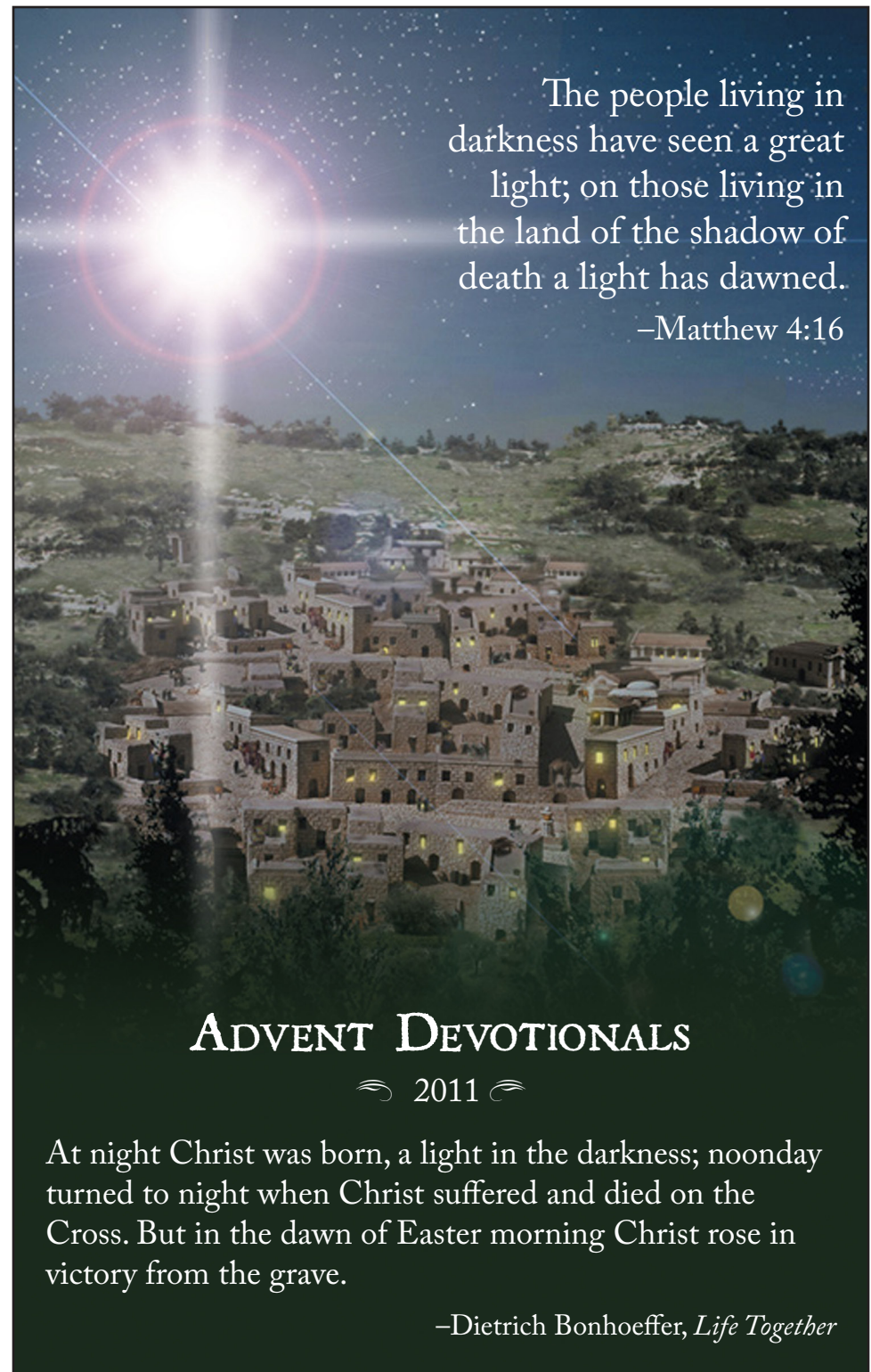




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The people living in
darkness have seen a great
light; on those living in
the land of the shadow of
death a light has dawned.

—Matthew 4:16

ADVENT DEVOTIONALS

☾ 2011 ☽

At night Christ was born, a light in the darkness; noonday turned to night when Christ suffered and died on the Cross. But in the dawn of Easter morning Christ rose in victory from the grave.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

This devotional is to be used in tandem with the advent wreath, which will enhance its overall significance. If your family does not have an advent wreath, we suggest getting together five candles to use instead. While this booklet is ideal for families with school age children, the lessons are designed to bless hearts of all ages. Therefore all are encouraged to use this guide as we navigate through this year's Advent season, keeping our eyes and hearts on our blessed Savior, the True Light of the World.

As a practical application, we suggest that families read through this devotional around the breakfast or dinner table (or family room each evening).

ADVENT WREATHS

As we enter into the season of Advent, maintaining our focus on the true meaning of Christmas can be difficult – within our own hearts, and in the hearts of our children. The symbolism of the Advent Wreath may enhance our understanding of Christmas and keep the activities in perspective.

For starters, below is an explanation of the symbols in the Advent Wreath.

Advent means “coming,” and we use this word to look back on Christ's first coming to the earth as a baby as well as to his second coming as Lord and King.

The wreath: In the Greek Olympics, winners were crowned with a wreath of greenery (in Greek it was called a *stephenos*). The New Testament employs this same word when it talks of Believers winning the Crown of Life (James 1:12, Revelation 2:10). Therefore the wreath stands for eternal life awarded to God's children, who look to faith in Christ for abundant life (John 10:10). Both the greenery used in the wreath (green symbolizes life), and the fact that it is circular (like eternity, there's no beginning and no end), add to the concept of life eternal.

The progressive lighting of the candles represents the light of the Gospel that is growing as a result of Jesus' coming, his death, and his resurrection. The light of the Gospel expands as the message of grace is spread throughout the world.

ADVENT CANDLES

1st candle (purple): Candle of HOPE

We can have hope because God is faithful and will keep the promises made to us in his great plan of salvation.

2nd candle (purple): Candle of PREPARATION

Preparation means to “get ready.”

3rd candle (pink): Candle of JOY

The angels sang a message of joy, and we, too, join in the heavenly chorus as we celebrate God's salvation.

4th candle (purple): Candle of LOVE

Out of God's great love for us, he sent his only Son to earth to redeem us!

5th candle (white): The CHRIST CANDLE

The white candle reminds us that Jesus is the spotless Lamb of God, sent to wash away our sins! His birth was for his death, and his death was for our birth! (John 1:29 and John 3:1-8).



THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

The Candle of Hope (purple candle)



MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28

1. Read Genesis 1:1-2:

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

2. What was the earth like before God created it?

3. What was the Spirit of God doing?

4. When your house experiences a power outage in the middle of the night, what are your fears? What is your hope?

5. Light the 1st candle of Advent and pray through stanza 1 of the song, *Shine Jesus Shine* (by singing or by reading aloud). See song on page 2.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29

1. Read Genesis 1:3-5:

³And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

2. What was the first thing God created?

3. What do you think this would have been like?

4. When your house experiences a power outage in the middle of the night, and then later when the electricity is reset thus restoring power to your house, what emotions does it produce in you?

5. Light the 1st candle of Advent and pray through the chorus of the song, *Shine Jesus Shine*.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30

1. Read Luke 1:35. This is the Angel Gabriel's response to Mary when she asked how she could be able to have a baby boy when she wasn't married:

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

2. What was in Mary's womb before the Holy Spirit overshadowed her?

3. What was in Mary's womb after the Holy Spirit overshadowed her?

4. How is this action of God like his actions on the first day of creation? (it'd be a good idea to read Genesis 1:1-2 again).

5. Light the 1st candle of Advent and pray through stanza 2 of the song, *Shine Jesus Shine*.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1

1. Read John 1:1-5.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it.

2. Who does this say the light is?
3. What can the darkness not do to the light?
4. What do you think the “light of men” does for us?
5. Light the 1st candle of Advent and pray through stanza 3 of the song, *Shine Jesus Shine*.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2

1. Read John 1:6-9.
⁶There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.
2. What was John’s purpose in coming?
3. What does it mean to be “a witness to testify concerning the light”?
4. What does the true Light do?
5. Light the 1st candle of Advent and pray through the chorus of the song, *Shine Jesus Shine*.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3

Light the 1st candle of Advent and pray (or sing) through the song, *Shine Jesus Shine*.

THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

The Candle of Preparation (purple candle)



MONDAY, DECEMBER 5

1. Read Luke 1:76-79. This is the prophecy of Zechariah about his son, John:
⁷⁶And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, ⁷⁷to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven ⁷⁹to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”
2. What does Zechariah say the mercy of God will do?
3. What will happen to those living in darkness?
4. When your house experiences a power outage in the middle of the night, what are your fears? What is your hope?
5. Light the 1st and 2nd candles of Advent and pray through stanza 1 of the hymn, *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent* (by singing or by reading aloud). See song on page 4.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6

1. Read John 6:32-35:
³²Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”
³⁴“Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread.”
³⁵Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.”
2. What does the *Bread of Heaven* do?
3. What (or who) is the *Bread of Heaven*?
4. Light the 1st and 2nd candles of Advent and pray (or sing) through stanza 2 of the hymn, *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent*.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7

1. Read Psalm 119:105:
Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
2. How is God’s Word like a lamp for feet and a light for our paths?
3. Read John 14:6:
Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
4. On our path through life, who do we need to help us light the way?
5. Light the 1st and 2nd candles of Advent and pray (or sing) through stanza 3 of the hymn, *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent*.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8

1. Read about the scene in heaven and try to picture in your head what John saw (Revelation 4:5-8):
⁵From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of

SHINE JESUS SHINE

Words & Music by Graham Kendrick. CCLI License No. 2323789

Lord, the light of your love is shining
 In the midst of the darkness, shining
 Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us
 Set us free by the truth you now bring us
 Shine on me, shine on me

*Chorus: Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father’s glory
 Blaze, spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire
 Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy
 Send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence
 From the shadows into your radiance
 By the blood I may enter your brightness
 Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
 Shine on me, shine on me

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
 So our faces display your likeness
 Ever changing from glory to glory
 Mirrored here may our lives tell your story
 Shine on me, shine on me

God. ⁶Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. ⁷The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. ⁸Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

2. What were some things that caught your attention as you read this?
3. What are some things we can learn from these angels?
4. Light the 1st and 2nd candles of Advent and pray (or sing) through stanza 4 of the hymn, *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent*.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9

1. Read through the whole hymn, *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent*, thinking about the deep truths of these words.
2. Go around the table (or room) and ask each person to talk about one area in their lives where they'd like God to improve them.
3. We talk about "taking our burdens to Jesus." What does this mean when it comes to our areas of failure, insecurity, and need? (if you need help in answering this, look back at the Scriptures from this week).
Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
5. Light the 1st and 2nd candles of Advent and pray to Jesus, taking to him your family's requests.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10

Light the 1st and 2nd candles of Advent and pray (or sing) through the hymn, *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silent*.

LET ALL MORTAL FLESH KEEP SILENT

Liturgy of St. James; trans. by Gerard Moultrie. CCLI License No. 2323789

Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand;
ponder nothing earthly-minded, for with blessing in his hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.

King of kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth he stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture, in the body and the blood;
he will give to all the faithful his own self for heavenly food.

Rank on rank the host of heaven spreads its vanguard on the way,
as the Light of light descendeth from the realms of endless day,
that the powers of hell may vanish as the darkness clears away.

At his feet the six-winged seraph, cherubim, with sleepless eye,
veil their faces to the presence, as with ceaseless voice they cry:
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Lord Most High!

THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

The Candle of Joy (pink candle)



MONDAY, DECEMBER 12

1. Read Matthew 4:16:
The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.
2. This verse is from the prophet Isaiah and was used by Matthew to refer to who?
3. What does it mean to live in darkness?
4. What does it mean to live in the light of Christ?
5. Light the 1st, 2nd and 3rd candles of Advent and pray through stanza 1 of the hymn, *Joy to the World* (by singing or by reading aloud). See song on page 6.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13

1. Read Nehemiah 8:10:
...Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.
2. According to this verse, what should be our strength?
3. What is joy? (hint: it's not a feeling, but rather a position)
4. How do we experience joy?
5. Light the 1st, 2nd and 3rd candles of Advent and pray (or sing) through stanza 2 of the hymn, *Joy to the World*.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14

1. Read Mark 15:33-34:
³³*At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour.*
³⁴*And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*
2. What came over the land on the sixth hour (which would have been in the afternoon)?
3. On the cross, Jesus experienced darkness for us. What all does darkness remind us of?
4. What is so special that the Jesus, the Light of the World, entered into darkness while on the cross? (if you have a hard time with this question, go onto 5, which will help illuminate this question).
5. Light the 1st and 2nd candles of Advent and pray (or sing) through stanza 3 of the hymn, *Joy to the World*.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15

1. When the baby Jesus was eight days old, his parents took him into the Temple of God in Jerusalem. Read about what a man named Simeon said about Jesus (Luke 2:28-32):
²⁸*Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,*
²⁹*"Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. ³⁰I have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared for all people. ³²He is a light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel!"*
2. As a light, what was Jesus going to reveal?
3. What are some things we can learn about Jesus from what Simeon says?
4. Light the 1st and 2nd candles of Advent and pray (or sing) through stanza 4 of the hymn, *Joy to the World*.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16

1. Read Matthew 5:14-16:

¹⁴*You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

2. What does Jesus call us, his disciples, in this passage?
3. What do we do as lights of the world?
4. How is our ministry like Jesus' (as the true Light of the World)?
5. Light the 1st, 2nd and 3rd candles of Advent and pray (or sing) through the hymn, *Joy to the World*.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17

Light the 1st, 2nd and 3rd candles of Advent and pray (or sing) through the hymn, *Joy to the World*.

THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

The Candle of Love (purple candle)



MONDAY, DECEMBER 19

1. This week we celebrate the great love of God that he has shined down upon us. In addition to Scripture, we'll be using a Christmas hymn that may be unfamiliar to some but yet is full of beautiful truth, *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*. Read Isaiah 1:18: *"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*
2. What does God promise to us in this verse?
3. How does God wash our sins away? Hint: it has *something* (actually, *everything*) to do with Jesus.
4. What does it mean to live in the light of Christ?
5. Light the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th candles of Advent and read through stanza 1 of the hymn, *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*.
6. Before blowing out the candles, talk about what it means to be "comforted." See song on page 8.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20

1. Read Isaiah 53:5-6: *⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
2. This prophecy of Isaiah speaks about Jesus. What made Jesus want to go through all that he did for our sake?
3. Light the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th candles of Advent and read through stanza 2 of the hymn, *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*.
4. While the candles are still burning, take some time to pray and thank Jesus for going through something that we deserved.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21

1. Read John 1:23 and Matthew 4:17:
²³*John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"*
¹⁷*From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."*
2. What does it mean to repent? Hint: in the New Testament, the word *repent* comes from the two words *change* and *mind* put together.
3. What do you think Jesus means when he says the "Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"?
4. Light the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th candles of Advent and read through stanza 3 of the hymn, *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*.
5. While the candles are still burning, take some time to pray and ask Jesus to show you areas where you might need to repent (or "change your mind about something).

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22

1. Read Romans 12:1-2: *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your*

JOY TO THE WORLD, THE LORD IS COME!

Written by Isaac Watts. CCLI License No. 2323789

Joy to the World, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room, and Heaven and nature sing,
And Heaven and nature sing, and Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the World, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains, repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found, far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness, and wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love, and wonders, wonders, of His love.

spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

2. Jesus' love for us is not just something we can enjoy and celebrate. His love is a transforming love! What does God want to do in us, his children (you may need to read Romans 12:1-2 again)?
3. According to the passage, who transforms us? We or God?
4. How does God transform us?
5. Light the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th candles of Advent and read through stanza 4 of the hymn, *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23

1. At Christmas, we don't just celebrate Jesus' first coming, we also look forward to his return (his second coming). Read Revelation 21:1-4: *1Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*
2. What are some things about this passage that should bring us hope?
3. Light the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th candles of Advent and then pray, asking Jesus to grant you greater hope and joy at the prospect of Christ's return and subsequent heaven.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24

Light the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th candles of Advent and read through the hymn, *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People*.

COMFORT, COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE

Johann Olearius, 1635-1711. trns. by Catherine Winkworth, 1829-1878. CCLI License No. 2323789

Comfort, comfort, ye My people, speak ye peace, thus saith our God;
Comfort those who sit in darkness, mourning 'neath their sorrows' load.

Speak ye to Jerusalem of the peace that waits for them;
Tell her that her sins I cover, and her warfare now is over.

Yea, her sins our God will pardon, blotting out each dark misdeed;
All that well deserved His anger He no more will see or heed.
She hath suffered many a day, now her griefs have passed away;
God will change her pining sadness into ever-springing gladness.

Hark, the Herald's voice is crying in the desert far and near,
Bidding all men to repentance since the Kingdom now is here.
Oh, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way;
Let the valleys rise to meet Him, and the hills bow down to greet Him.

Make ye straight what long was crooked, make the rougher places plain;
Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits His holy reign.
For the glory of the Lord, Now o'er earth is shed abroad,
And all flesh shall see the token that His Word is never broken.

CHRISTMAS DAY

The Christ Candle (white candle)



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25

1. On this Christmas day, read Revelation 21:22-26:
22I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. 24The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. 25On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. 26The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.
2. What do you think is significant that in heaven (which will be here on earth) there will no longer be any night?
3. Light the four candles of Advent along with the Christ Candle and read (or sing) through the hymn, *O, Come all Ye Faithful*.
4. While the candles are burning, talk about how much light is being shown as opposed to the first week of Advent when there was only one candle. How is this like the good news of the Gospel?
5. Consider this quotation from Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *At night Christ was born, a light in the darkness; noonday turned to night when Christ suffered and died on the Cross. But in the dawn of Easter morning Christ rose in victory from the grave.*
6. Take some time to pray as a family, thanking Jesus for his great love to us.

OH, COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

Written by John F. Wade. CCLI License No. 2323789

Oh, come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant!
Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him born the king of angels:

*Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.*

God of God, Light of Light;
Lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;
Very God, begotten, not created; *chorus*

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above;
Glory to God in the highest; *chorus*

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given! Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing! *chorus*