

Resource: Preparing Hearts for Advent

Topical Verses and Family Practices for Parents with Children Ages Pre-K–5th Grade

Introduction

Advent is a season of anticipation, preparation, and celebration as we reflect on the coming of Jesus Christ. The word “Advent” comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning “coming” or “arrival.” It is a time for us to slow down, focus our hearts, and remember the hope, peace, joy, and love that Jesus brings into our lives. Celebrated over the four weeks leading up to Christmas, Advent invites us to pause amidst the busyness and prepare our hearts to receive the greatest gift ever given: Emmanuel, God with us.

This resource offers verses and practical ideas to guide families through this season of hope, peace, joy, and love. Each section addresses a challenge and provides a simple family practice to support discipline in godly love to refocus our hearts on Advent.

1. **Hope Challenge:** Feeling overwhelmed or discouraged as a parent.
 - **Verse 1:** *Isaiah 40:29-31* — “He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”
 - **Verse 2:** *Romans 15:13* — “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

Family Practice:

Create a “Hope Jar.” Write down hopes for your family, prayers for your children, or things you’re trusting God for. Each evening during Advent, pick a slip of paper from the jar, pray over it as a family, and thank God for the hope He gives.

2. **Peace Challenge:** Navigating sibling conflicts, defiance, or stressful situations.
 - **Verse 1:** *Philippians 4:7* — “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
 - **Verse 2:** *Matthew 5:9* — “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

Family Practice:

Light a candle each evening and pray for peace in your home, using specific examples from

your day. Encourage your children to share one way they brought peace (e.g., resolving a conflict or being kind).

3. **Joy Challenge:** Struggling to find joy amidst busyness or unmet expectations.
 - **Verse 1:** *Psalm 16:11* — "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."
 - **Verse 2:** *Luke 2:10-11* — "And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'"

Family Practice:

Create a "Joy Journal." Each family member writes or draws one thing that brought them joy during the day. Share your entries over dinner or during bedtime prayers, thanking God for His blessings.

4. **Love Challenge:** Feeling frustrated, unappreciated, or weary in your parenting role.
 - **Verse 1:** *1 Corinthians 13:4-7* — "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."
 - **Verse 2:** *1 John 4:19* — "We love because he first loved us."

Family Practice:

Write and or draw "love notes" to each other as a family. These can be simple affirmations like, "I love how you helped your sibling today," or "Thank you for making me laugh." Leave them on pillows or read them aloud at the dinner table to create a family practice of encouragement.

5. **Gratitude Challenge:** Overcoming entitlement or comparison during the holiday season.
 - **Verse 1:** *1 Thessalonians 5:16-18* — "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
 - **Verse 2:** *Psalm 136:1* — "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."

Family Practice:

Create a "Gratitude Chain." Cut strips of paper and write one thing you're thankful for each day as a family. Link them together to make a chain that grows throughout Advent. Hang it as a reminder of God's faithfulness.

6. **Forgiveness Challenge:** Helping children learn to forgive and seek forgiveness.
- **Verse 1:** *Colossians 3:13* — "Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."
 - **Verse 2:** *Ephesians 4:32* — "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Family Practice:

Role-play scenarios where forgiveness might be needed, such as taking turns saying, "I'm sorry for [specific action], will you forgive me?" and responding, "I forgive you." Pray together, asking God to help you forgive and love one another.

Closing Reflection

As parents, God has entrusted us with the incredible role of discipling our children. This Advent season, let's slow down and focus on preparing our hearts and theirs for the hope, peace, joy, and love that Jesus brings. No matter the challenges we face, God is faithful to equip us for the journey.

Contact Us:

If you need prayer, encouragement, or additional resources, reach out to info@cedarcrest.church.

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