



Reaffirming the Christ of the Christmas Season

The season of Advent is a wonderful time to engage with your family in a more creative way with respect to family devotions. One means of raising your children's awareness of the promises of God's Word and their fulfillment in Christ is to create and utilize an Advent wreath. You can use a straw form, Styrofoam, wire or woven vines as the base for the wreath, and to it attach branches of holly, garlands ivy or pine, pinecone, ribbons or whatever you like for decoration.

At equal distances around the wreath, place four candles; each candle representing a different aspect of the Christmas story. Historic custom has employed a gold candle to represent the prophets, a white candle for the angels, a green candle for the shepherds, and a purple candle for the wise men. Or you may prefer to use four candles of a single color, such as purple to represent the royalty of Christ. In the center of the wreath is often placed a larger single candle of a different color which represents Christ Himself, Who has come to bring the light of salvation to our darkened world. Once the candles are selected and your wreath is decorated, you might make use of it as the centerpiece for your dining table or suspend it by ribbons above the table. What a wonderful holiday chandelier!

On the fourth Sunday before Christmas, perhaps at your evening meal, ask the youngest child to light the first candle while family members read Scripture passages related to the prophecies of the forthcoming Messiah. Following the reading of Scripture, you might sing an Advent carol such as "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel", "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" or "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming." Conclude with prayer giving thanks to God for His faithfulness to His Word. Repeat this brief service each evening during the week by the light of only one candle.

Fourth Sunday Before Christmas

Sunday:	Isaiah 7:13-14; Matthew 1:18-23; II Peter 1:19-21;
Monday:	Isaiah 9:1-7; Matthew 4:13-16; Hebrews 1:1-3
Tuesday:	Micah 5:2; Matthew 7:24-29; Acts 26:22-29
Wednesday:	Isaiah 42:1-7; Matthew 12:17-21; Luke 2:32
Thursday:	Zechariah 9:9; 11:12-13; 12:10; Matthew 21:1-10
Friday:	Psalms 22:1-8; Matthew 27:35-36; John 19:31-37
Saturday:	Isaiah 53; Matthew 27:11-14, 27-44, 57-60

On the third Sunday before Christmas, ask a different family member to light the second candle. Thereafter, read Scriptures related to the angelic pronouncements of Christ's birth and the angels' interaction with Jesus throughout His earthly ministry. Sing a carol that speaks of the angels' involvement in the Christmas story such as "Angels from the Realms of Glory", "Angels We Have Heard on High" or "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." Conclude with prayer glorifying the God of heaven Whom all the heavenly hosts adore.

Third Sunday Before Christmas

Sunday:	Daniel 9:20-23; Luke 1:5-25
Monday:	Psalm 34:1-7; Luke 1:26-38
Tuesday:	Psalm 104:1-4; Matthew 1:18-25
Wednesday:	Psalm 29:1-2; 148:1-2; Luke 2:8-20; Revelation 5:11-12
Thursday:	Psalm 91:11-13; Matthew 4:8-11 (Jesus); Luke 22:39-43
Friday:	Matthew 28:1-7; Acts 1:6-11; II Timothy 3:16
Saturday	Matthew 24:29-31; I Thessalonians 4:16-17; II Thessalonians 1:5-10

On the second Sunday before Christmas, ask yet another family member to light the third Advent candle. Then read Scriptures related to the shepherds and their response to the angelic message. They were charged to "make known abroad" what they had heard (Luke 2:17). Sing a carol which speaks of the Shepherds such as "Go, Tell It on the Mountain", "How Great Our Joy," or "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night." Conclude your family devotional times with prayer asking the Lord to fill you with the same wonder and enthusiasm displayed by the Shepherds. Thank Him as well that He is a gracious and faithful Shepherd to His people.

Second Sunday Before Christmas

Sunday:	Luke 2:1-20
Monday:	Psalm 23; 79:13; 95:7; 100:3
Tuesday:	Isaiah 53:6; Matthew 18:12-14; 1 Peter 2:25
Wednesday	Isaiah 40:1-11; Hebrews 13:20-21
Thursday:	Ezekiel 34:11-31; John 10:1-18; 27-30
Friday:	Matthew 9:35-38; John 21:15-17
Saturday:	Acts 20:28-30; 1 Peter 5:2-4

On the Sunday immediately prior to Christmas, light all four candles. Ask God for the same spiritual insight and wisdom that once led the wisemen to Christ's cradle. Their epiphany, that God had finally fulfilled His promises of old, produced a desire to offer Him their finest gifts and bow in personal devotion. Pray that God would give you the same fervor to worship Him.

Sunday before Christmas

Sunday:	Isaiah 42:1-7; 60:1-3
Monday:	Job 28:12-28; Daniel 2:20-30
Tuesday:	Psalm 90:12; Psalm 111:7-10
Wednesday:	I Corinthians 1:17-21; 3:18-23; James 1:5; 3:13-18
Thursday:	Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 2:25-32
Friday:	John 8:12; 9:4-5; 12:35-50
Saturday:	Matthew 5:14-16; II Corinthians 4:1-6

On Christmas day, light the central Christ candle as a reminder that Jesus, the light of the World, has brought peace with God and hope for all you trust in Him. Read the Scripture passages related to His incarnation and the light He has come to shed on our darkened lives. Commit yourselves anew to the light of the Gospel shining through you.

Sunday of Christmas

Sunday:	John 1:1-14; 3:16-21; I John 1:5-7
---------	------------------------------------