

VICTORY AT HOME

DECEMBER 2019 NEWSLETTER



Simplify The Season

What are you looking forward to most this Christmas season? Some would say they can't wait to have time to pause and reflect on the past year. Some would say they look forward to having intentional time with their family. From the various traditions we have centered around Christmas, the sights, the smells, the music and the movies...so many things happen around this time of year!

The challenge that most of us face is to not become consumed by all of "the things". You know what I'm talking about, the things that fill up the calendar, the to-do list that never ends, the busyness that can easily choke out the true reason we celebrate Christmas. A wise person once said, "if the devil can't cause you to sin, he'll make you busy instead". Being busy is often the enemy's best

If the devil can't cause you to sin, he'll make you busy instead.

strategy for keeping distance between God and humanity. Yet, we proudly proclaim how busy we are as if it were some sort of trophy to show off. As if our own personal worth is determined by how full our calendars are.

But what if this year was different? What if we took more control over the calendar instead of allowing the calendar to control us? What if we said "no" to some things and actually slowed down? What if we approached Christmas with more of Mary's posture, instead of Martha's? Can we just sit at the feet of Jesus? Do you have the kind of margin in your day, in your week, or in this season to just sit and be still?

Are we creating space for Jesus during Christmas? It seems like a crazy question to ask, I mean, it *is* His birthday! However, we're not the best when it comes to sitting or even resting. In fact, God already knew that about us, so He included a Sabbath Commandment (Exodus 20:8) specifically designed to give us rest, to force us to slow down. He didn't do it to restrict us or keep us from doing good things. He did it because He loves us.

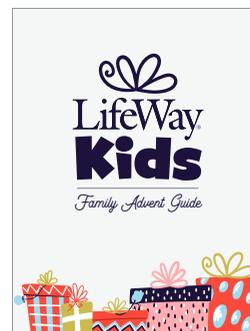
The Christmas season is about celebrating how God came near. How He entered our world and our mess, and how He created a way for us to **be with Him**. So what better way to celebrate and remember what He did than to **be with Him!** Make intentional decisions with your time that place you at the feet of Jesus. Our

relationship with God should not be so one-sided that He is doing all the work. We need to initiate, we need to make space and take steps towards The Father.

So let's get practical. How do we walk that out? The observance of Advent is a practice that could prove to be a game-changer for many families. What is Advent? The term is a version of the Latin word meaning "coming". In the Advent season, many Christians observe a time of expectant waiting and preparation for both the celebration of Jesus' birth and the return of Jesus at the Second Coming. It is the 25 days that lead up to Christmas that intentionally help us to focus on why we do Christmas. Focusing our hearts and simplifying the season. It's the build-up to the big day, the arrival of Jesus. Setting apart the season to remember our king.

How can we as parents incorporate Advent into our homes?

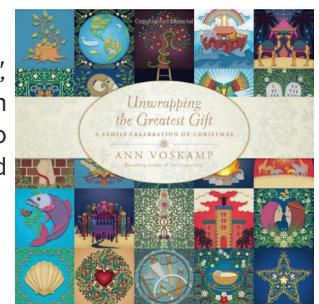
1. Read an Advent devotional together as a family. Lifeway (kidsministry.lifeway.com) has a free downloadable Advent guide. The PDF download includes:



- Weekly Devotionals
- Family Activities
- Connection Questions
- Daily Readings for the Family

2. Ann Voskamp's

"Unwrapping The Greatest Gift", is a phenomenal family guide with specifically written devotions to help children of all ages understand the Advent theme.



3. Resisting the spirit of consumerism. Look for opportunities to serve and be generous. Give back to people who serve or work on Christmas Eve. **Do it as family.**

Don't let Christmas consume you. Make sure you take time to rest and remember the miracle that took place!

JESUS IS GOD'S SON

PRESCHOOL

WEEK 1

THE ANGELS' MESSAGES - MATTHEW 1:18-25, LUKE 1:26-38

READ Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38 Today we learned an angel told Mary and Joseph that Mary would have God's Son, Jesus.

EXPLORE TOGETHER: If you have a large white t-shirt, allow your child to wear it. Encourage your child to pretend to be an angel. Ask your child to tell you about the message Gabriel had for Mary—that God wanted to send His Son to earth as a baby named Jesus, and Mary was going to be his mommy! Remind your child that Jesus Is God's Son.

Pray God, Thank You for Your special messengers. Thank You for allowing Joseph and Mary to be Jesus' parents.. Thank You for sending Your Son as a special gift. We love You. In Jesus Name, Amen!

WEEK 2

THE JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM -LUKE 2:1-7

READ Luke 2:1-7 Today in VicKids we learned that Mary and Joseph had to travel to a town called Bethlehem and stay with animals.

EXPLORE TOGETHER: Have you ever taken your child on a trip and stayed in a motel or hotel? Talk to your child about how nice it was to have somewhere to stay while you were away from home. Ask your child how he or she would feel if you had to stay with some animals and sleep on the ground instead of a nice, comfy bed. It would be very hard! You would probably get very cold, and wouldn't get much sleep. Talk about how Mary and Joseph had to stay with the animals.

Pray God, Thank You for taking care of Mary and Joseph and getting them to Bethlehem safely. We love You. In Jesus Name, Amen!

WEEK 3

BABY JESUS IS BORN - LUKE 2:1-7

READ Luke 2:1-7 This week in VicKids we learned that when baby Jesus was born, Mary laid Him in a manger.

EXPLORE TOGETHER: Allow your child to play with a baby doll. When you're done, talk with your child about baby Jesus. Baby Jesus wasn't born in a hospital, was He? No. He was born where the animals lived. His mommy didn't have a crib to put Him in, so she laid Him in a manger. Animals eat out of mangers. Even though baby Jesus was born with the animals, He was still God's Son. Jesus Is God's Son.

Pray God, thank You for Your Son, Jesus! Thank You for providing a manger for Him to be born in. Help us always remember how special He is. We love You. In Jesus Name, Amen!

WEEK 4

THE SHEPHERDS VISIT BABY JESUS - LUKE 2:8-20

READ Luke 2:8-20 Today we learned an angel appeared to some shepherds and they went to visit baby Jesus.

EXPLORE TOGETHER: Talk about the angels appearing to the shepherds. The angels told the shepherds the good news about Jesus' birth, and where they could find Jesus. Sing or listen to Christmas songs with your child. There are many songs that talk about the angels and the shepherds, such as "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "Angels We Have Heard on High," "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," and "The First Noel." Explain that the angels were praising God, just like we do when we sing. They were so excited that Jesus had been born!

Pray God, thank You for sending angels to give the shepherds the good news of Jesus' birth. We love You. In Jesus Name, Amen.

WEEK 5

THE WISE MEN VISIT JESUS - MATTHEW 2:1-12

READ Matthew 2:1-12 This week in VicKids your child learned that the wise men followed a star and brought Jesus gifts.

EXPLORE TOGETHER: Bundle up and go outside on a clear night and look at the stars with your child. Talk about the star the wise men saw. Talk about how they followed the star for a very, very long time. Talk about how excited they were when they finally got to worship Jesus and give Him gifts. Talk about the different ways we can worship and follow Jesus. You can also use a nativity set and retell the story of Jesus' birth using the figurines provided. Give them the opportunity to repeat the story back to you using the nativity figurines.

Pray God, thank You for guiding the wise men with Your star. Thank You for their example of joy and worship. Thank You for sending Your Son as a special gift. We love You. In Jesus Name, Amen!

CELEBRATE JESUS!

ELEMENTARY

CELEBRATE JESUS AS LOVE - ISAIAH 1:1-31

WEEK 1

Read: Isaiah 1:1-31 NLT. Today in Vickids your student learned God's message to the Israelites, and to us, is to repent of sin. God offers forgiveness of our sin through His Son, Jesus. During this month, we can celebrate Jesus' gift of love for us. Your student was also challenged to look for opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus with someone and to do it.

EXPLORE TOGETHER: Ask your family if religion is a good thing or a bad thing. Why do they think so? They should also feel free to describe how other people view religion. Why do so many people look negatively at religion these days? Remind your family that God is pleased by our relationship with Him, not merely going to church every weekend.

PRAY: Lord we Thank You so much for who You are and what You are doing with our family. Jesus, we know that Your love is given freely and let us never take that for granted. Help us to model Your love for others as we experience Your love for us! In Jesus name, Amen!

CELEBRATE JESUS AS MERCY - HEBREWS 4:16

WEEK 2

Read: Hebrews 4:16. Today in Vickids your student learned Jesus forgives our sin because of His mercy and love. He is rich in mercy, and His mercy and love never end. Jesus delights to show us mercy, and His mercy should cause us to want to repent. Your student was challenged to choose to follow God's way and be thankful for His mercy.

EXPLORE TOGETHER: One of the greatest gifts we can give another person is the gift of mercy. Ask your child/children if they know what mercy means. Ask them if they have ever experienced mercy and how that made them feel. Were they thankful or indifferent? How did that act of mercy show them kindness? Take this time to talk with them about the mercy and the grace of God and how Jesus is the true gift of mercy.

PRAY: Lord, we Thank You that You love us dearly. Jesus, we know that we are not perfect and that there are many things that we do wrong, but we Thank You that You still love us through mercy and grace. In Jesus name, Amen!

CELEBRATE JESUS AS PEACE - ISAIAH 26:1-21

WEEK 3

Read: Isaiah 26:1-21 NLT. Today in Vickids your students learned about King Hezekiah and how he learned to rely on and trust in God's peace. Your student learned that through Jesus' death on the cross, it is possible for us to have peace with God. Your student was challenged to trust in God's gift of peace in every situation.

EXPLORE TOGETHER: Talk with your child about the things that comfort him/her and share the things that comfort you. A stuffed animal, chocolate chip cookies, a certain type of music, a night light, or a hug from a loved one can help when we feel troubled. Have your child show you his or her favorite comfort item, or you can do an activity that brings comfort. Reflect on the peace God's brings us when we are doing His work or sitting in His presence. Help your child talk about how they feel when they are in His presence.

PRAY: Lord, we Thank You that You love us dearly. Jesus, we know that we are not perfect and that there are many things that we do wrong, but we Thank You that You still love us through mercy and grace. In Jesus name, Amen!

THE GREATEST GIFT - ISAIAH 9:6

WEEK 4

Read: Isaiah 9:6 NIV. Today in Vickids your students experienced the greatest story ever told, the coming and birth of Jesus Christ. Over two thousand of years ago God called Mary and Joseph to be the earthly parents of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Our story was told through the perspective of the drummer boy.

EXPLORE TOGETHER: Make a fun family tradition for your family! Each year when Christmas come around, your family can look forward to the many aspects of this holiday, whether that is decorating, singing songs, filling a stocking and reading the Bible story of our Savior's birth. Take some time this week to discuss with your family what would be a fun and meaningful family tradition to start that everyone could look forward to as we near this time.

PRAY: Lord, Thank You for giving us the Greatest Gift of all, Your Son Jesus. Help us to keep our focus on why we celebrate this time of year. Help us as a family build meaningful reminders of why we come together to remember and celebrate this time of year. In Jesus name, Amen!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS! - ISAIAH 49:1-26

WEEK 5

Read: Isaiah 49:1-26 NLT. This weekend we are celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ! Jesus has done more than we could ever possibly imagine. Today your student got to celebrate and have a party in honor of Jesus! Take some time with your family to celebrate Jesus, you can never celebrate Him enough!

EXPLORE TOGETHER: Starting a new year can be a great opportunity to create a family-oriented vision that helps set a specific path of growth and unity. This isn't so much like a "New Year's resolution", but a way to bond and make the most of the blessing of family that God has given you! This vision should embody what you and your family care about most and where you want to be a year from now. This isn't meant to be rushed, but thoroughly prayed and talked about!

PRAY: Lord, we are so unbelievably grateful for Your presence and your love. My family and I ask that during this week and for the years to come, that we would give honor and praise to you Lord. Father, let us never take for granted the priceless gift you have given us, Your Son Jesus. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

WHAT IS AN **ADEVENT** CALENDAR AND **HOW CAN I MAKE ONE WITH MY FAMILY?**

An Advent calendar is a simple countdown reminder that gives you a visual of how many days are left before Christmas.

The first Advent calendar was created in the mid 1800's and was drawn by hand. It was sometimes as simple as making chalk strokes on a wooden door to countdown the days or in later years, by hanging family pictures up each day as a form of remembering those you love.

Today, Advent calendars come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. They can be simple or elaborate and depending on the design, can hide small candies or chocolates inside the crafted calendar. It is easy to purchase one to get your family started in this tradition, but for those who are gifted in DIY, you can find some really neat ideas online that you can customize to make fit the style of your family!



ADVENT CALENDAR IDEAS

Google - "2019 Advent Calendar Ideas"
or
"2019 Advent Calendar DIY"

Victory Christmas Eve Services

Norcross and Hamilton Mill - 4, 6 & 8pm

Midtown Campus - please join us at Norcross

Note: Children's ministry will be open for children age 5 and under during the 4pm and 6pm services. Children's ministry will not be available during the 8pm service.

There will be no Elementary Children's ministry at any of our campus services.

MONTHLY MEMORY VERSE

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given... And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6 NIV

Additional Resources

victoryatl.com/athomenewsletter/