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Just One Thing Advent 2022



**FAMILY
MINISTRIES**
UNIVERSITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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Advent Faith Practices Calendar

Doing *just one thing* each day to prepare for Jesus' birth will help everyone in your family grow in faith together. Just a few minutes each day with a simple faith practice can create meaningful memories and start new faith traditions that will support your children in the years to come. Use the Advent Faith Practices calendar (enclosed) to guide you through the Advent season. Miss a day? Don't worry—pick it up the next day. Doesn't work for your family—no problem, try something different or repeat a practice that everyone loved. Each family will should create an Advent experience that works for each person in their family (maybe not every person each day, but everyone throughout the season of Advent). Be creative and remember that faith is learned by doing!



ADVENT FAITH PRACTICES DECEMBER 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1. PRAY: "Thank you God for this Advent Season. May it be a time of HOPE, PEACE, JOY, and LOVE. Amen."	2. TALK: When did you show kindness to someone today?	3. SERVE: Bake (or buy) a treat to share with someone this weekend. Tell them you are thinking of them.
4. LIGHT: Light two candles today: one for hope and one for peace.	5. SING: Sing "O Come O Come Immanuel" or listen to it on YouTube	6. CREATE: Draw or paint a picture of a starry sky.	7. ENJOY NATURE: Tonight the moon is nearly full. Can you see it? If not, enjoy the clouds!	8. PRAY: "God, please be near to all who are lonely, today and every day. Amen."	9. TALK: When did someone show kindness to you today?	10. SERVE: Write a thank you note to someone who serves your community.
11. LIGHT: Light three candles today: one for hope, one for peace, and one for joy.	12. SING: Sing "This Little Light of Mine." Light your candles from yesterday again, if you want!	13. CREATE: Color your hopes, dreams, or prayers.	14. ENJOY NATURE: Take a short walk outside today. How does it feel?	15. PRAY: "God, please help us to notice all the beauty in our world. Amen."	16. TALK: What does Jesus teach us about how to love each other well?	17. SERVE: Do something kind for a neighbor this weekend.
18. LIGHT: Light four candles today: one for hope, one for peace, one for joy, and one for love!	19. SING: Christmas is almost here! Sing "Away in a Manger"	20. CREATE: Make a Christmas card for someone.	21. ENJOY NATURE: Today is the shortest day of the year. What time does the sun set where you live?	22. PRAY: "God, we are thankful for all the gifts this Advent season has brought. Amen."	23. TALK: What does Jesus teach us about how to love each other well?	24. CHRISTMAS EVE: Light five candles today! Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Jesus!
25. MERRY CHRISTMAS: Give thanks to God for the people you love and for those who love you!	Just a few minutes each day on faith practice can create meaningful memories and a holy Advent. Let this calendar be your guide and inspiration. Do the activities as you can and as time and space allow. When you miss a day, pick it back up the next day. The activities are suggestions. Feel free to make your own practices and incorporate your own traditions. This calendar was made by Traci Smith, author of <i>Faithful Families for Advent and Christmas</i> . Copyright 2021, Traci Smith. All Rights Reserved Worldwide. Used by permission. www.tracismith.com					



Just One Thing Window Reminders

In your packet, your family received a window cling sticker. Place this someplace to help remind you of the season and the hope to do *just one thing* each day to prepare for Jesus' birth and grow in faith as a family. Some suggestions for where to put this are your mirror to look at as you brush teeth or get ready for the day, your car window (lots of faith conversations happen in the car!), on the door that you come and go through most—anyplace that you will see and be reminded to do *just one thing* to grow in faith. As you practice these simple activities, remember that perfection is never the goal—instead, think about your family's needs and the best way to use these resources to create intentional moments to prepare for the greatest gift ever received, Jesus.



Spiritual Practice: Ornament Stories

Try this simple practice that can become a tradition in your home for years to come. Ask each family member to find an ornament on the tree that has a special story. Take turns showing the ornament and telling what is meaningful to you about the ornament. If you have guests coming to your house for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, ask them in advance to bring a special ornament with them so they'll also have a story to share. This is an activity that works well over a video call to include those who are far away.

Enclosed in your *Just One Thing_Advent* Packet is an ornament for your family to assemble together. Place a photo of your family in the frame and begin a new tradition. Say a simple prayer as you place the completed ornament on the tree.

When the season is over and it is time to take the decorations and ornaments down, be intentional about the process and say this prayer (particularly focusing on the ornaments on the tree).

We put the decorations up to remember a special season.

We take them down and remember this special time.

We put things away gently and look forward to taking them out again next year.

Next year they will be new again.

Next year they will be waiting for us.

Next year they will bring us joy and happiness.

Next year, we will be a year older and add new memories to our tree.

Thank you God for our memories and time together! Amen.



Excerpted from *Faithful Families for Advent and Christmas: 100 Prayers, Practices and Lessons to Make the Season Sacred* by Traci Smith (Chalice Press: 2020, All Rights Reserved)

Advent Candle Lighting Simple Devotions

Each Sunday of Advent, November 27, December 4, December 11, December 18, and Christmas Eve you are encouraged to light a candle and prepare for the birth of Jesus. You can use an Advent wreath, a collection of candles from around your home, or even birthday candles will work—the most important part is gathering to intentionally focus on the waiting season of Advent and to prepare our hearts for Jesus’ arrival. Use the following, simple devotions and prayers to guide your Advent candle lighting.

Sunday, November 27—Light a candle for Hope



The first week of Advent is the week of hope. Hoping and waiting are similar. What does it feel like to wait? I wonder what hoping feels like?

Prayer for Hope

To hope is to wait for something.

Hoping and waiting are the same.

When we hope, we wait.

When we wait, we hope.

May God be with us as we wait and hope for Jesus.

Amen

Sunday, December 4—Light a candle for Peace



The second week of Advent is the week of peace. Peace is the absence of conflict and fighting, feeling connected, calm, and together. Peace can be felt in your heart, in your family, in your community, or in the world. How does peace within your own heart help to create peace in the whole world? I wonder how you share that peace with others?

Prayer for Peace

We can have peace every time we take a break.

We breath in deep.

We can have peace every time we slow down.

We notice the world around us.

We can have peace every time we are quiet before God.

Thank you God, for peace.

Amen

Sunday, December 11—Light candle for Joy



The third week of Advent is the week of joy. Jesus came into the world and brought joy and love for all, but there are still many emotions that we experience. What are some of those emotions? We can have joy knowing that God is with us when we feel all of the emotions—even the hard ones like anger and sadness. What is joy? Is it the same as happiness? I wonder what joy feels like?

Prayer for Joy

Joy is a smile that begins deep within.

It rises and rises.

We smile and laugh.

To have joy means to be happy and to have everything we need.

Thank you, God, for joy.

Amen

Sunday, December 18—Light a candle for Love



The fourth week of Advent is the week of love. Jesus says the most important thing we can do is love God and love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Jesus came into the world to show us how to love one another. As we learn more about Jesus, we learn about how to love everyone in the world. How can we show love to our neighbors during Advent? Who needs to know and feel our love most of all? I wonder what sharing Jesus' love feels like?

Prayer for Love

God, you ask us to love you.

Please help us love you more every day.

God, you ask us to love our neighbors.

Please help us to love our neighbors more every day.

God, you ask us to love you and love our neighbors.

Help us to do both of those things, more and more each day.

By loving God, we love our neighbors.

By loving our neighbors, we love God.

Amen

Saturday, December 24—Light a candle for Jesus!



Read the Christmas story together from Luke 2:1-20. Invite everyone in your family to join in the reading (or act it out together). Let the story speak for itself and enjoy the beauty of Jesus birth, coming to teach us to love.

Prayer for Christmas Eve

On this holy night we remember the angels who said, “Do not fear.”
On this holy night we remember the shepherds who bowed down before the
baby.

On this holy night we remember Mary and Joseph, who had faith in God.

On this holy night we remember Jesus, who came to save us.

On this holy night, we remember God is with us.

Amen



Advent Movie Night Movie Guide

Ideas about faith are never limited to Sundays at church or reading scripture. Opportunities to engage in faith conversations with your children and family are all around us. Advent is an excellent way to dive into the movies of the season to find new opportunities to talk about faith and how we are called to live as Christians---listening and learning from the ways of Jesus. Looking for a low key opportunity to share with your family—watch a movie! Below are four movies to enjoy and then some ideas to have a conversation after the movie. Laugh, be moved by the stories, and look through a new lens this Advent season to find examples of faith hidden in the everyday reality we live.

Word of caution, not all movies will be perfect for every family, if you have concerns about a movie, commonsensemedia.com is an excellent source of parent and professional reviews of movies to help you make a good decision for your family. Additionally, Arthur Christmas and Klaus both focus on ideas and imaginations of who Santa is and how he came to be. Santa can be confusing for children who often confuse him with God (“he sees you when your sleeping, he knows when your awake”). Watching different movies about ideas and imaginative views of Santa, along with finding meaningful examples of faith can help to differentiate between God and Santa.

Pop some popcorn and enjoy a good movie!



Arthur Christmas

PG, 2011, 97 minutes

Directed by Sarah Smith

Watch on Amazon Prime, Amazon, HBO Max, Hulu, Netflix, VUDU, AppleTV, GooglePlay

Arthur Christmas tells the story of the state-of-the-art gift drop around the world orchestrated by “Father” Christmas—the heir apparent to the long line of Santa’s. And while the high tech gifting to all the children on Christmas Eve is usually seamless, there is one gift that is not delivered. In the eyes of the large operation, one gift doesn’t matter, but to Arthur Christmas, it is impossible to let this mistake stand. The movie is a fun adventure to deliver a package. But the movie is much more, it is an opportunity to recognize the unique gifts God has given each of us to be exactly who we are created to be, even when we might not have the confidence yet to speak up. It is a movie about the importance of each and every individual and the joy of sharing in an effort to make the world a better place, one simple act at a time. How can you share the gifts God gave you (not the gifts under the Christmas tree, but the gifts that make you who you are)?

Prayer: Thank you God for giving me gifts that make me AMAZING! Help me as I learn to share my gifts with the world to spread your love. Amen.



Angela's Christmas

NR, 2017, 30 minutes

Directed by Damien O'Connor

Watch on Amazon, Netflix, AppleTV, GooglePlay

Angela's Christmas is a short animated film based on the children's book, *Angela and the Baby Jesus* by Frank McCourt. The film is set in 1914 Ireland on Christmas Eve and tells the story of Angela and a caring, empathetic choice she made that led to a Christmas adventure. This film is full of opportunities to talk with your family about compassion, empathy, seeing a need and responding, being brave, and the importance of family and loving one another. Who showed compassion in the film and what can we learn from Angela and her family's adventure?

Prayer: God, thank you for gift of family. Help us see the needs of others and share your joy and love with all. Amen



Klaus

PG, 2019, 97 minutes

Directed by Sergio Pablos

Watch on Netflix

Klaus tells the story of Jesper Johansen, a spoiled, lazy, self-centered son of the Royal Postmaster General who has done everything possible to change Jesper's attitude and ways of being in the world. As a final test to learn a new way of living, Jesper is sent to the remote northern island town of Smeerensburg with the task of posting 6000 letters in a year. The only problem, besides Jesper's attitude, is that the town is divided into two groups who are constantly in conflict. No one is writing any letters—everyone spends their time angry. It is the chance encounter with a reclusive woodsman, Klaus that changes everything. While this movie imagines ways the legends of Santa might come to be, it also provides many opportunities to discuss big ideas. Talk with your family about conflict and the toll it takes on our lives, the importance of kindness and how one act of kindness leads to another act of kindness, or what does it take to end conflict in our relationships. How does your family resolve conflict? Can you think of new ideas to be kind to others?

Prayer: God, we know that when we are hurt, that you are with us. And we trust that when we hurt others, you are with us and help us repair the hurt. Help us as we learn to forgive others and be forgiven. Amen.



The Star

PG, 2017, 86 minutes

Directed by Timothy Reckart

Watch on Amazon, VUDU, AppleTV, Google Play

Experience the Christmas story through the eyes of a young donkey who wants nothing more than to be freed from his boring life—at least until he meets Mary and Joseph and sees that they need his help. Together with a cast of animals, Bo and friends follow the star and realize their importance in the story of Jesus. They even continue being a part of Jesus' life as he grows. This film helps us imagine a new perspective on how Jesus came into the world. Yes, it is filled with imagination and fun, but it is a chance to place ourselves in the Christmas story. Talk with your family about what you imagine the beginning of Jesus' life to be like—how did the animals sound, what did it smell like in the stable, what part of the story is most exciting to you? I wonder what it would have been like to see the newborn Jesus? Remember that Jesus was a child, just like all of us. How does that make you feel?

Read the Christmas Story: Luke 1:26-38; Luke 2:1-20; Matthew 2: 1-12

Prayer: Thank you, God for sending us Jesus to teach us how to love you and love our neighbor. Help us as we grow to be more and more like your son, Jesus.

Amen.