



# Advent Resources for Families

## Introduction

Advent has deep roots in the early Western church, shaped over centuries and echoing older rhythms that emphasized expectation, quiet, and preparation. It was never meant to be a frantic season but a slow one, marked by watching and waiting. Christians stepped back from noise, leaned into patience, and prepared their hearts for Christ's coming through prayer, reflection, and simple acts of devotion. The season was meant to be slow.

Modern families often overcommit. We load up on devotionals, special activities, service projects, crafts, and events. These plans usually look good on paper, but real schedules take over, and parents end up exhausted. Advent calls us back to Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. It invites us to step away from the frenzy of shopping, cooking, and endless obligations. Scaling back on presents can help make room for this. A simple approach for families is giving each child four gifts: something to wear, something to read, something they want, and something they need.

Advent asks us to practice silence and patience, to let anticipation grow. Many Christians have forgotten that slow posture, but recovering it is part of the gift of the season.

The resources below help families return to a quieter Advent without adding pressure. Choose one or two, not all. Let them create space, not stress.

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## Recommended Resources

### I. Jotham's Journey Series by Arnold Ytreeide

Our all-time favorite Advent series. These four historical fiction books—Jotham's Journey, Tabitha's Travels, Bartholomew's Passage, and Ishtar's Odyssey—frame the story of Christ's birth through the eyes of a shepherd boy, a shepherd girl, an orphan, and a Persian prince. Each book is read daily through Advent, giving families a natural time to slow down and refocus on the coming of the Messiah. Start with Jotham's Journey.

### 2. All Creation Waits by Gayle Boss

A beautiful exploration of Advent themes through the natural world. There's a children's edition that is short and simple, and a longer version for teens and adults. Both highlight silence, patience, and the posture of waiting.

### 3. The Advent Jesse Tree by Dean Lambert Smith

A classic devotional for families who want to trace the story of redemption from Genesis to Christ. It covers the 25 days of December and is excellent for families who enjoy crafting.



#### 4. Devotional Hymn Series: The Carols of Christmas by Alan Vermilye

Three volumes that walk through the theology and history behind the hymns and carols of the season.

#### 5. Happy Hymnody ([happyhymnody.wordpress.com](http://happyhymnody.wordpress.com))

This site offers wonderful seasonal hymn studies, reflections, coloring pages, historical notes, and simple family activities. A great resource for weaving hymn singing into Advent.

#### 6. Campfire Curriculum ([campfirecurriculum.com](http://campfirecurriculum.com))

They offer three different studies on the history of Christmas, including one focused entirely on Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. These are solid, family-friendly units.

#### 7. Glad and Golden Hour by Lanier Ivester

A warm and creative guide filled with recipes, activities, and crafts that help families walk through the Christmas season. The gingerbread cookies are a family favorite.

#### 8. Sacred Seasons: A Family Guide to Center Your Year Around Jesus by Danielle Hitchen

A strong introduction to the liturgical year for Protestant families who didn't grow up with it. Helpful ideas for recognizing each season and restoring traditional celebrations.

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### Traditional Activities for the Advent Season

#### Caroling

Completely free, deeply meaningful, and easy to start. Pull out an old hymnal or print off lyrics. Musical skill isn't a requirement. As Buddy the Elf says, "The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear." Let your neighborhood know that your joy comes from Christ, not from Santa. We started small with just a few families. Four years later, nearly fifty join us.

#### Light Candles

If you can find an Advent wreath, great. If not, any candles will do. This was the original form of "Christmas lights." Traditionally, you light one candle each week of Advent: purple, purple, pink, purple. The first will burn down the most and the last will barely be used. Light them during reading, prayer, or singing.





## Host Friends and Family

Keep it simple. Make soup. Use disposable bowls and plates. Add hot chocolate or cider if you want. Hospitality doesn't need to be complicated. Advent is a time to welcome others and share peace.

## Lighting the Winter Fires

In early Celtic Christianity, Advent was associated with the lengthening of days and preparing for the "Light of the World." Families would light fires or candles each evening, not just as decoration, but as a symbol of Christ coming to

dispel darkness. So often campfires are associated with Fall but why not enjoy a campfire to celebrate this tradition? Winter Solstice always falls in Advent. Cozy up with a blanket and a kid or two to enjoy storytelling, hymns, and carols around the campfire. Spark up a simple reflection: "Where can we shine God's light this week?"

## The Jesse Tree

The Jesse Tree is a way to tell the story of God's plan for salvation, leading to the birth of Jesus, using symbols and ornaments. You can make or choose small ornaments that represent people or events from Scripture. Examples include Noah's Ark, Abraham's stars, Moses' tablets, Ruth's sheaf of wheat, David's crown, the prophet Isaiah's scroll, and Mary's lily. Each day (or each week), hang one ornament on the tree and read the corresponding Bible story aloud. Afterward, take a moment to talk with your children about how that story points toward Jesus. You can ask questions like, "How did God keep His promise here?" or "What does this story teach us about waiting for Jesus?" Over the course of Advent, your tree becomes a visual timeline of God's faithfulness, helping children connect each story to the hope and joy of Christ's coming.

## A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols is the Christmas Eve service held in King's College Chapel since 1918. It was first broadcast in 1928 and now reaches millions. Eric Milner-White introduced it to bring a more imaginative approach to worship. Families can follow a guide online and read the lessons together or simply watch the service online.

## Seasonal Practices of Advent: Food, Herbs, and Gratitude

Many people used Advent as a time to prepare for the winter months, preserving foods from the harvest so their families would have sustenance during the cold season. You can bring this same rhythm into your home with simple, hands-on activities that connect your family to God's provision. One easy project is dehydrating oranges. Slice oranges thinly and lay the slices in a single layer on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Place the sheet in the oven on its lowest setting, around 200°F or lower. Flip the slices every 30–60 minutes until they are fully dried and slightly leathery. The hotter your oven, the more often you will need to flip them. Once dried, string the slices together to make garlands, optionally adding cloves or cinnamon for a warm scent.

You can expand on this by drying or bundling herbs like rosemary, thyme, bay, and pine. Tie small bundles or sachets with twine and rotate them weekly. As you work, explain the traditional symbolism of each herb, rosemary for remembrance, pine for eternal life, thyme for courage, and use the time to reflect on God's provision and the spiritual meaning of the season. This activity not only creates a beautiful, fragrant decoration but also teaches children practical skills for preserving food and encourages gratitude for God's fall harvest (or the grocery store.)

### Liturgy of Christmas Gifts

A helpful resource that centers gift-giving around Christ rather than consumerism: [wolfmuehler.co/liturgychristmasgifts/](http://wolfmuehler.co/liturgychristmasgifts/).

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### Major Feast Days During Advent

#### Feast of St. Andrew (November 30)

Traditionally marks the beginning of the Advent season in many older calendars.

#### Feast of St. Nicholas (December 6)

A day to honor the generosity of Bishop Nicholas. Often celebrated with small gifts or acts of charity.

#### Feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8)

A long-standing Western Christian observance focused on God's work in preparing Mary.

#### Feast of St. Lucia (December 13)

A beautiful winter-light celebration emphasizing service, brightness, and hope.

#### O Antiphons (December 17–23)

A week of ancient prayers reflecting on the titles of Christ. These are excellent for simple family readings.

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### End with Worship

Attend a candlelight service or Mass. If your church doesn't hold one, consider visiting a liturgical church that does. You can find one near you here: [wolfmuehler.co/findachurch/](http://wolfmuehler.co/findachurch/).



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*Choose what helps your family breathe and points you to Christ. That is enough.*

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