

## Scripture & Advent Guide

As you prepare for Christmas, use these short explanations to integrate spiritual conversations into daily life. Some concepts are more easily grasped than others, but don't discount a toddler's ability to begin to understand the Bible! At the very least, young children can become familiar with the words of Scripture and the importance of the Bible guiding our lives.

Children with basic reading skills can practice looking up verses and highlighting them in their own Bible. They can use a sticky-note to write a short word or draw a picture (like, "Christmas Carols" or "Stockings") next to the verse so they can find the part in the Bible themselves. All verses are quoted from the New International Readers Version. It's written at a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading level.

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**Advent Calendar-** When we celebrate Advent, we remember how the world waited eagerly for a Messiah. The Messiah would come through King David's family- Jesse was David's dad.

Isaiah 11:1-2:

Jesse's family is like a tree that has been cut down. A new little tree will grow from its stump. From its roots a Branch will grow and produce fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on that Branch. The Spirit will help him to be wise and understanding.

*I wonder what it was like to wait for thousands of years. I wonder how we can prepare and wait for Christmas.*

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**Advent Wreath-** For hundreds of years, Christians have counted down the Sundays of Advent by lighting candles on a wreath. Three candles are purple, the color of waiting. One candle is pink, the color of Joy. Some wreaths also have a white candle to represent Jesus, the Light of the World.

Isaiah 9:2

The people who are now living in darkness will see a great light. They are now living in a very dark land. But a light will shine on them.

*Can you see that the light from the wreath gets brighter as we get closer to Christmas? I wonder how our hearts can reflect Jesus' light during Advent and Christmas this year. I wonder how you feel and what you think about when we enjoy the light of the Advent wreath.*

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**Christmas Tree-** Christmas Trees are sometimes called "evergreens". They are green all year long, unlike trees that lose their leaves in the fall. They remind us that the world is still alive in the winter, even though everything outdoors is quiet and still. The Psalms compare people who follow God to strong, growing trees, too!

Psalms 1:1-3

"Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on that

law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree that is planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither.”

*I wonder how God might help us grow strong. I wonder what kind of fruit we might have in our lives from growing with Jesus.*

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**Ornaments-** We decorate Christmas Trees as part of our celebration. Some ornaments are special because they came from people or places that we love. Some ornaments are special because remind us of a story. Throughout the Bible, God tells his people to remember the story of his love. The writer of this Psalm chose to write a song about God’s love!

Psalm 136:1-3

Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good.

His faithful love continues forever.

<sup>2</sup> Give thanks to the greatest God of all.

His faithful love continues forever.

<sup>3</sup> Give thanks to the most powerful Lord of all.

His faithful love continues forever.

*I wonder which ornaments are your favorite. I wonder if any of our ornaments tell a story. I wonder if there are any ornaments on our tree that tell the story of Jesus’ birth.*

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**Stockings (and Saint Nicholas)-** The tradition of Christmas Stockings began because of a story of a pastor named Nicholas, who lived by the sea. His love for Jesus gave him a generous heart. He was so generous, that there was a story- we aren’t certain if it is true or not- that he gave money to three young women who were very poor. He was sneaky about his gift- he hid it in their shoes- so that they would thank God instead of him. Over the years, people have followed his example by filling stockings or shoes with small gifts. Some people do this on Saint Nicholas’ Day, December 6. Some people wait until Christmas.

Proverbs 19:17

Anyone who is kind to poor people lends to the Lord.

God will reward them for what they have done.

*I wonder how Jesus’ love might pour out of our hearts. I wonder how we can show generosity this Christmas.*

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**Christmas Lights-** Christmas Lights bring cheeriness and joy to our holiday season. Some people hang them outside, and some people put them on their tree. The Bible tells us that the world was dark and lost and sad before Jesus. The people didn’t know how to live the right way. Jesus is the Light of the World.

John 8:12

<sup>12</sup> Jesus spoke to the people again. He said, “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in darkness. They will have that light. They will have life.”

*I wonder which Christmas Lights are your favorite. I wonder where we see Jesus' light. I wonder if we have a light in us, too.*

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**Christmas Dinner-** Christmas is one of the biggest feasts of the whole year! The Bible has lots of stories about feasts because good food is part of a party, and the Lord has given us many things to celebrate. At a feast, we make our best foods and share them with some of our favorite people. Jesus' birth was such a good gift that we celebrate it every year! At church, we call Communion a feast; it's a feast we share with Jesus as we remember God's grace.

Isaiah 25:6-9

On Mount Zion the Lord who rules over all will prepare  
a feast for all the nations.

The best and richest foods  
and the finest aged wines will be served.

<sup>7</sup> On that mountain the Lord will destroy  
the veil of sadness that covers all the nations.

He will destroy the gloom that is spread over everyone.

<sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death forever.

The Lord and King will wipe away the tears  
from everyone's face.

He will remove the shame of his people  
from the whole earth.

The Lord has spoken.

*I wonder what your favorite parts of the Christmas feast are. I wonder how you might help get ready for the Christmas feast. I wonder what it will be like to share a feast with Jesus. I wonder if you have already shared a feast with Jesus.*

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**Baking Cookies-** Many families have favorite cookies they prepare every Christmas. Cookies take time to make, and they use special ingredients, so they're a special treat. For some families, cookie recipes are a tradition. Tradition comes from the Latin word *tradere* meaning, "to hand over." (We also get words like "trade" from this!) Christmas traditions are "handed over" from one generation to the next. In the Bible, we read that God uses generations to hand down the stories of His goodness and power.

Psalms 145:4-7

Parents praise your works to their children.

They tell about your mighty acts.

<sup>5</sup> They speak about your glorious majesty.

I will spend time thinking about your wonderful deeds.

<sup>6</sup> They speak about the powerful and wonderful things you do.

I will talk about the great things you have done.

<sup>7</sup> They celebrate your great goodness.  
They sing for joy about your holy acts.

*I wonder what Christmas traditions we have. I wonder who has handed down the good news of Jesus to us. I wonder who we might share our traditions with in order to share the love and good news of Jesus.*

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**Cleaning the House-** Even though it's not our favorite part of getting ready for Christmas, most people spend at least a little time picking up to get ready for a celebration. This helps us have time and room to celebrate! Just like we get our homes ready, we can also get our hearts ready. Spending lots of time with family and friends at Christmas can be fun, but it can also make us feel tired and grumpy! It can wear out our hearts and minds, and we can get bad attitudes. You can get your heart ready for Christmas by praying for patience, joy, and understanding. Whenever you feel overwhelmed or tired or grumpy, you can ask Jesus to be with you and help you.

Proverbs 17:22  
"A cheerful heart is good medicine,  
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."

*I wonder how we can get ready so that bad attitudes don't creep into our holiday celebrations. I wonder what it's like for Jesus when we ask him to help us get our hearts ready to love people around us.*

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**Toy Clean-Out-** Some families go through their toys before Christmas and give away things they no longer play with. You might choose to give away toys to a friend who would enjoy them even more than you. Sharing toys shows generosity and contentment. Generosity means sharing or giving with joy. Contentment means being satisfied with what you have, knowing that you have enough. Paul wrote to the Philippians about how he found contentment in Jesus.

Philippians 4:12-13  
<sup>12</sup> I know what it's like not to have what I need. I also know what it's like to have more than I need. I have learned the secret of being content no matter what happens. I am content whether I am well fed or hungry. I am content whether I have more than enough or not enough. <sup>13</sup> I can do all this by the power of Christ. He gives me strength.

*I wonder if there are things we have that we don't need. I wonder Jesus is asking us to give any of our things to someone else. I wonder how it feels to have Christ's power strengthening our hearts and minds.*

**Christmas Carols-** Ever since the church began, people have written songs to praise God and remember God's work. Christmas songs are often called "carols". Some of them are songs that tell about waiting for Jesus ("O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"), some tell about what happened at Jesus' birth (like "The First Noel" or "Away in a Manger") and some of them are songs praising God (like "Joy to the World").

Ephesians 5:19-20

<sup>19</sup>Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord. <sup>20</sup>Always give thanks to God the Father for everything. Give thanks to him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*I wonder which Christmas carols are your favorite. I wonder if you would like to sing some to praise God!*

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**Lessons & Carols-** At the lessons and carols service, we hear stories (lessons) and carols (songs) that celebrate the story of Jesus' birth. After thousands of years of waiting for the Messiah, God did a miracle! God himself came to earth as a little baby! He would make a way for people to be saved from their sins and live with him forever in his new Kingdom. Even more than 2000 years later, we still find lots of ways to celebrate this miracle with our community.

Colossians 3:16

Let the message about Christ live among you like a rich treasure. Teach and correct one another wisely. Teach one another by singing psalms and hymns and songs from the Spirit. Sing to God with thanks in your hearts.

*I wonder which Christmas songs are your favorite. I wonder which parts of the stories are your favorite. I wonder if God has a favorite part of the story.*

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**Nativity Scene-** (Note- you can get a lot of mileage out of a nativity set! There are verses that correspond with each person as well as the stable and star). This nativity scene is a little picture of when Jesus was born. We don't know exactly how it looked, but we know that Bethlehem was a small town near big hills. We know that it was not a normal place for a baby to be born! We know that the Father in heaven knew all about it and sent angels to tell the shepherds the good news.

Luke 2:6-7

<sup>6</sup>While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the child to be born. <sup>7</sup>She gave birth to her first baby. It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger. That's because there was no guest room where they could stay.

*I wonder what it was like in the stable that night. I wonder what Mary and Joseph thought. I wonder what baby Jesus thought. I wonder what God the Father thought.*

**Christmas Eve Service-** Have you ever been so excited for your birthday or another special event that you had trouble sleeping? Maybe you were so excited that you couldn't keep your energy or joy inside. For a long time, the church has started celebrating Jesus' birthday on Christmas Eve because people were too excited to wait until morning. Many people would start their celebration late at night, so they could all be together at midnight exactly when Christmas Day begins!

Luke 2:8-14

<sup>8</sup>There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby. It was night, and they were taking care of their sheep. <sup>9</sup>An angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news. It will bring great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup>Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Here is how you will know I am telling you the truth. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup>Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven also appeared. They were praising God. They said,

<sup>14</sup>"May glory be given to God in the highest heaven!  
And may peace be given to those he is pleased with on earth!"

*I wonder how you would like to begin to celebrate. I wonder what kind of celebration will please Jesus.*

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**Making or Choosing Presents-** At Christmas, we give presents to others because God gave us the best present ever! He came to earth to save us from our sins and make it possible for us to live with him. Making or picking out presents is one way to say "I love you" to family and friends. Presents don't have to be fancy or perfect or expensive to be special. One way we say "I love you" back to people who give us presents is to say "thank you for caring about me" or "I love you."

John 3:16

<sup>16</sup>God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life.

*I wonder how you would like to say "I love you" to people this Christmas. I wonder how we can say "I love you" back to Jesus for being our best present ever.*

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**Wrapping Presents-** One way we make presents special is to keep them a surprise. It's exciting to see presents stacked under the Christmas tree. We wonder what we might receive, and we wonder how people will react when they see what we have picked out for them. The kind of waiting we do at Christmas is an excited waiting. We know that what's about to happen is going to be wonderful! That's exactly the kind of waiting that the world had for Jesus. It sometimes felt long, but they knew the Messiah, who would save them from their sins, would be wonderful! Isaiah wrote these words a long time before Jesus was born!

Isaiah 9:6

A child will be born to us.

A son will be given to us.

He will rule over us.

And he will be called

Wonderful Adviser and Mighty God.

He will also be called Father Who Lives Forever  
and Prince Who Brings Peace.

*I wonder what the hardest part of waiting is. I wonder what the best part is. I wonder how we can focus together on Jesus as we wait.*

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**Christmas Cards-** You might have realized that there's more mail in the mailbox at Christmas. It's special mail- Christmas cards! People send cheerful cards to family and friends to wish them a merry Christmas. Sometimes there's also a family picture or a little update on how everyone in the family is doing. You might like to hang these cards or collect them in a basket. During Advent, or Christmas, or even after Christmas, you can use these cards to pray for family and friends who live all over the place.

Ephesians 3:14-17

<sup>14</sup> I bow in prayer to the Father because of my work among you. <sup>15</sup> From the Father every family in heaven and on earth gets its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that he will use his glorious riches to make you strong. May his Holy Spirit give you his power deep down inside you. <sup>17</sup> Then Christ will live in your hearts because you believe in him. And I pray that your love will have deep roots. I pray that it will have a strong foundation.

*I wonder who you know in our Christmas card pile. I wonder if there's anyone you would like to pray for today.*

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