



Day 1 - Sunday - Hope

Listen:

But you, Bethlehem, David's country,
the runt of the litter—
From you will come the leader
who will shepherd-rule Israel.
He'll be no upstart, no pretender.
His family tree is ancient and distinguished.

Meanwhile, Israel will be in foster homes
until the birth pangs are over and the child is born,
And the scattered brothers come back
home to the family of Israel.

He will stand tall in his shepherd-rule by GOD's strength,
centered in the majesty of GOD-Revealed.
And the people will have a good and safe home,
for the whole world will hold him in respect—
Peacemaker of the world!

- Micah 5:2-5, NRSV

Think:

Advent is a time of excitement, hope, and celebration. While celebration is important, we are also called to remember that Advent is a time of anticipation. We are *waiting*. We are waiting to celebrate the birth of Jesus, and this helps remind us that we still wait for the day that Jesus comes back to earth.

In many ways, our world is imperfect. Bad things happen, people experience pain and grief, and life can seem unfair, but we can look toward the coming of Christ with great hope. So; while we are waiting, we wait with great hope.

The beginning of this season of Advent reminds us that God gave his son for the whole world; we must celebrate his birth, but also have faith and hope that Jesus will one day come again.

Do: Prepare Advent Wreath and make first candle

1. Get all of the supplies for the advent wreath out of the box. (green construction paper, paper plate, purple construction paper, 1 roll of toilet paper, 1 yellow pipe cleaner, glue stick and clear tape)
2. Cut a hole about 4-5 inches in diameter out of the center of the paper plate so that it looks like a ring.
3. Have each family member get one sheet of green construction paper. Have everyone trace their hand on a sheet of the green paper. Each person will need to have someone else trace their dominant hand. After the hands are traced, cut them out.
4. Glue the green hand cut outs onto the paper plate, forming a wreath with the leaves

being the traced hands. The bottom of the plate should be the side that faces up and the side that you should glue the green hands onto.

5. Take a piece of the purple construction paper and wrap it around the toilet paper roll. Cut the construction paper to make sure that it wraps completely around the roll.
6. Then, glue or tape the purple construction paper around the roll to make your candle for the first week of Advent.
7. Put a piece of clear tape across the diameter of the top of the "candle."
8. Insert the yellow pipe cleaner through the piece of tape. Then bend the top of the pipe cleaner over so it looks like a flame.

Pray:

Each day during the advent season, we will pray silently while artistically reflecting on one word that stood out to you as you read the scripture verse for the day. You will need your colored pencils and each person will need their own December 2017 printed calendar for prayer time each day.

Have one family member read the scripture again, this time out loud. Every other family member should sit quietly with their eyes closed. As the person reads, focus on the words that are being spoken. Pick one word out of the scripture that will be your "prayer word" for that day.

After everyone has their prayer word, each person should find the block on the calendar that corresponds to that specific date. Take a few minutes (3-5 is ideal, but take the amount that works for your family) to draw something in the box that represents or symbolizes the prayer word that you picked from that days scripture reading. If you can't think of something that represents your prayer word, you could simply draw your prayer word in the box and then decorate the white space surrounding the word.

While you are drawing in that days calendar block, take time to breathe deeply and reflect on how that word makes you feel. During the rest of the day, think, repeat, and reflect on your prayer word to center yourself in the Advent season. Pray while you draw. What does this word challenge you to do? How does this word help us await the birth of Jesus?

The holiday season can be a time of chaos, wrapping presents, cooking, and special school programs and concerts. Allow this time of artistic reflection to re-center you on the saving birth of Jesus. While each person in your family may choose a different prayer word each day, this activity allows for unifying time of silence, reflection, and prayer.

Reflect:

Find the reflection prompt in your journal.



Day 2 – Monday – Hope

Listen:

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

- Luke 1:26-38, NRSV

Think:

This is a classic part of the Christmas story that many of us likely read every year as we await the coming of Jesus. While we have heard these words before, it's easy to forget the significance of this moment; not only for Mary, but also for us!

Mary was scared, just as we might be scared if we received news that we knew would change the course of our life forever. This wasn't normal news, she might've even thought that the information the angel was giving her was not true. After all, she does say, "How can this be?!"

Just as this news of Mary's pregnancy is shocking and makes Mary ask "how can this be," God's plan for the birth of Jesus should make us ask "how can this be?!" Asking questions may sometimes feel like you are denying the truth put plainly in front of you, but asking questions can also be ways of expressing of hope. Mary asks her question to the angel Gabriel, and because of her question she is reassured. Without this reassurance from Gabriel, Mary might not have been able to move forward in hope, she may have been forced to move forward in fear.

In each situation we encounter, as we saw in the story above, it is important to embrace hope and reject fear. What if Mary had become so frightened that she ran away? What if she had responded to Gabriel in anger? I don't know what might have happened in that case, but I do know that we have an active choice to live in fear or live in hope. When we do live in fear, we can be eager servants of the Lord as Mary was. Living in hope is a way that we can honor God.

Do:

Make a point to pay attention for the rest of the day and find a moment from the day that helped you or allowed you to embrace hope.

Pray:

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