

Week 1

The Candle of Hope

For the first week of Advent, we light the candle of Hope.
We give thanks that God is present with us. This gives us reason to hope.

Candle Lighting

We light this first Advent candle, the candle of Hope.
The candle reminds us to look for signs of God's presence all around us.

Wonder Together

I wonder what I might do differently if I remembered that God is present with me all the time. I wonder how I might better remember to place my hope and trust in God.

Candle Snuffing Prayer

May God's hope shine in and through us even as we blow out this candle.



Week 1: Hands On Activity

"Let us act as we should... Don't fight with each other. Don't be jealous of anyone" (selected verses from Romans 13). Paul wrote these words many years ago, but they contain wisdom that will help us today as we begin our Advent journey. It is so easy during this season to get jealous of others and get caught up in the "I wants" as we dream about presents and wait for Christmas to arrive.

Do: Fill 3 of your cups with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water. Add a color fizzler tablet to each cup with water. You should have a cup of yellow, blue and red water. Fill the pipette with yellow water. Have a family member answer the question "what am I wanting that someone else has?" After answering, squirt the yellow water into the empty cup. Repeat the process with the red water and then blue, each time with someone naming a way they have been jealous. Keep alternating colors until you are out of ideas. How does the water look where you have been squirting your jealousy? Is it a pretty yellow, blue or red? What does it look like? Proverbs 14:30 says this about jealousy, "A peaceful heart gives life to the body. But jealousy rots the bones."

If jealousy rots our bones, how can we find hope? What can we do? Paul wrote in Philippians 2:13-14 that we should think the same way as Jesus. "Don't do anything only to get ahead. Think of others as better than yourselves. None of you should look out just for your own good. You should also look out for the good of others." As you work through the Advent in a Box activities, you will find lots of ideas for "looking out for the good of others." The Interactive Prayer Activities are focused on praying prayers of blessing for others which would be a great thing to do when you feel jealousy rising up in you.

Pray

Dear God, help me not to be jealous of anyone.
Teach me more about Jesus and to look out for the good of others like Jesus did.

*See our Hospitality Challenges and prayerfully chose a few to try as a family this Advent!



Supplies:

- *3 Color Tablets
- *Pipette
- *4 clear glasses
- water

Nativity Story 1: The Angel Gabriel & Zechariah

Read: Zechariah (z ACK er i uh), the priest, and his wife, Elizabeth were faithful followers of God. They had been married for many years but did not have any children. While it was Zechariah's turn to serve God in the temple, an angel appeared to him. Zechariah was very afraid. Luke 1:13-17 tells us what happens next:

"But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will have a child. It will be a boy, and you must name him John. He will be a joy and delight to you...He will bring many of Israel's people back to the Lord their God. And he will prepare the way for the Lord.'" Zechariah wondered how this could possibly happen because he and his wife were so old. The angel said to Zechariah,

"I am Gabriel. I serve God. I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will have to be silent. You will not be able to speak until after John is born" (Luke 1:19-20). Everything happened just as the angel said. Elizabeth became pregnant and Zechariah could not speak the entire time they waited for the baby to arrive.



Let's Talk: How do you think Zechariah felt while he was unable to speak? What do you think Elizabeth was feeling? How would you feel if your ability to speak was taken away? How would you communicate?

God sent the angel Gabriel to deliver His message to Zechariah. Angels are often messengers from God. What other ways do you think God delivers messages?

Do: Find the angel Gabriel and Zechariah in your box and color them. How could you make Zechariah look old? Cut the figures out and display them somewhere in your house. Let's hear Mary's story next...



Week 1: Interactive Prayer Activity

Knot Prayers

Supplies:

1 foot piece of yarn for each family member, coloring page

There is a longstanding tradition of elders and leaders praying blessings over God's people. The blessing is not a promise of a perfect life but a reminder that a perfect God is with us always.

Perhaps the most well known blessing in the Bible is "May the LORD bless you and take good care of you. May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. May the LORD look on you with favor and give you his peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). The Israelite priests would pray this blessing every morning in the temple. Praying this prayer of blessing frequently is a reminder to rely on God for everything.

Do: During the season of Advent, we are going to focus on praying prayers of blessing for others. Think of someone who may need a prayer. Pray a prayer of blessing and tie a knot in your yarn. Your prayer can be as simple as "May the LORD bless ____." Keep the yarn in your pocket throughout Advent. Whenever you see someone who looks like they need prayer, tie a knot and say a prayer of blessing.

If you need help memorizing the prayer of blessing from Numbers 6, work on the coloring page and put it up somewhere where you will see it often.



Nativity Story 2: Mary

Read: Mary lived in Nazareth, a small village located far from Jerusalem. She was young and was engaged to marry Joseph, a carpenter. "One day the angel Gabriel came to her and said, 'The Lord has given you special favor. He is with you'" (Luke 1:28). Mary was confused. What could the angel mean? While Mary was wondering about this, the angel continued, "Do not be afraid, Mary. God is very pleased with you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God" (Luke 1:30-32). Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen?" Gabriel told her that God's Spirit makes anything possible. The angel also told Mary about her relative Elizabeth who was six months pregnant even though she was old. Mary said, "I serve the Lord. May it happen to me just as you said it would" (Luke. 1:38). Then the angel left her. Mary hurried to visit her relative Elizabeth.



Let's Talk: Like Zechariah, Mary received a message from God through Gabriel. How do you think Mary felt in the presence of the angel? How do you think you would feel? What was Mary's answer to Gabriel? While we might not understand some of the events in our lives, do you trust that God will be with you? Why do you think God chose Mary to be Jesus' mother?

Mary hurried to visit her cousin Elizabeth. The journey from Nazareth to Hebron is about 80 miles in a direct line which means a bit longer when you have to follow a roundabout path. Her trip would have taken 3-5 days. What do you think Mary was thinking about while she traveled?

Do: Find Mary in your box and color her. In what ways could you make her look young? Cut Mary out and display her speaking to the angel Gabriel.



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