

DECEMBER 2024

“ENRICHING THE SOIL FOR
DEEP GROWING ROOTS”



Spiritual Practice:

Waiting



Bible Story:

The Incarnation



Memory Verse:

Colossians 2:7 NLT



“Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.”

FORMATION ACTIVITY (7 min. read)



PARENTS:

Watch the introduction video to discover the big picture of your December curriculum. Advent is a time to practice waiting. Celebrating the church year as a family creates rich spiritual experiences for your children and will strengthen their roots in Christ.

Week 1:

Hint: Parents, please read the curriculum to familiarize yourself with the resources before opening the Resource bag with your family. Keep it in your binder to use throughout the month. Find what works with your family schedule and create a grace-filled family rhythm. [Resource bag contents](#)

1. Advent Liturgy: each Sunday in December and Christmas Day: this experience allows you to gather as a family once a week to reflect on the Christmas Story. Use the props in your large purple bag and the written Advent Liturgy: The Road to Bethlehem.

FORMATION ACTIVITY (cont.)

2. December 1 – 25, The Advent Talk Cards encourage your family to have a short spiritual conversation each day this month. You can keep these in your car, or on your table for mealtime. This resource is from our friends at Vibrant Faith, another Lilly Grant recipient. Let us know what you think about these.

The following activities can occur at any time during the month:

3. Mom, please read the Advent book titled “LOOK” to your children. Read short portions each night until you finish the story. Parents with babies and toddlers may read the book “Christmas in the Manger” to their children. Watch the video (4:39 minutes) from Valerie Stark for a few tips on reading aloud to children.

4. Dad, you are the storyteller this month. Watch the video (2:50 minutes) provided by Bridging Faith Curriculum. This valuable resource is from another Lilly Grant recipient and ATS Alumnus, Adam Lipscomb. We look forward to sharing more of their resources over the next few months.

Here are some suggestions for Dad’s storytelling topics:

- Tell your children how you started your walk of faith. Use the hints from the short video for your outline. This is a story to re-tell time and again.
- Tell a story from your childhood. Funny stories or examples of God’s faithfulness are a great choice.
- Next month, Mom, it will be your turn to tell your story.

5. For families with teens, we are excited to introduce Sujatha Balasundaram as our artist this month and share her beautiful Madhubani style (Indian folk art).

- Color the poster-size artwork with the new markers. Read her conversation guide while working as a family on this coloring sheet. When it is finished send us a picture. We would love to see your creativity.

6. For families with babies and toddlers, we have another fun rhyme to introduce your children to God’s Story this month. Watch this heartwarming video (3:00 minutes). Practice it together – as many times as they ask.

7. Look for two copies of a brand-new Comic book series. Bryan Sanders, our videographer in ATS Communications, has created a comic page to accompany our God’s Story script, He will continue this offering each month. When you unroll the comic, read about the family coloring contest. Use your colored pencils for this project.

TELLING GOD'S STORY (6 min.)



FAMILY:

Watch the video together as a family.

- Take time once a week for one of your family members to retell the story using the purple bag with the Nativity set. You don't have to use the script; tell it in your own words.
- Toddlers can tell the story with rhyming cards
- Elementary-age children can tell the story with the story props
- Youth can tell the story using the comic strip
- Parents can use any of the above.

COUNSELING VIDEO (20 min.)



PARENTS:

Watch the video - "Balancing Conflict"

When Seminary families try to balance family, school, and work, inevitable conflicts will arise. In this video, Dr Steve Stratton suggests there are creative ways for families to approach relationship pitfalls. He shares a simple 10-step process that can be used by spouses or parents and children. Look for the conflict resolution worksheet in your curriculum so you can take notes. You will want to use these tips often.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE



Waiting:

In a month filled with crowded schedules, holiday preparations, and wrapping up our school semesters, we challenge you to slow down and consider the spiritual practice of waiting. Advent is itself a time of waiting for Christ's birth and his return! This month we've provided multiple ways for your family to gather, slow your pace, wait on him, and wonder about God's rescue plan at Christmas.

In his book "Discernment", Henri Nouwen writes this about waiting:

"To wait with openness and trust is an enormously radical attitude toward life. It is choosing to hope that something is happening for us that is far beyond our imaginings. It is giving up control over our future and letting God define our life. It is living with the conviction that God molds us in love, holds us in tenderness, and moves us away from the sources of our fear."

What does waiting at Advent look like for our family?

This might look like decorating, devotionals, dinners with friends and family, lighting Advent candles, and counting the days until Jesus's birth using an Advent calendar or Talk Cards. As we center on Christ's coming at Christmas, we join in the biblical story of God's people waiting for the promised one. We too wait for the day that Jesus the King will come again and bring the fullness of God's Kingdom to earth.

Use your Growing Families' Journal to record your responses to these journal prompts then discuss your thoughts.

- What kinds of things have you done as a family to practice waiting?
- How will Christ's second coming be different from his first?
- How does Advent help prepare our family to wait for Jesus's return?



SERVICE PROJECT IDEAS

Service Projects

Ideas for families serving together in December. Choose one below or ask your family for other ideas about serving others this month.

1. December 2nd is International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. It is a significant annual observance that focuses on eradicating modern forms of slavery, raising awareness about human trafficking, and promoting the rights and dignity of all individuals, especially those who have been victims of slavery.

- For Families with youth and older elementary-age children: Refuge for Women is a non-profit organization providing long-term specialized care for women who have escaped human trafficking or sexual exploitation. Approximately twenty women live in a safe new complex in Garrard County while they heal. If you want to bless these women, contact peyton.goodwin@refugeforwomen.org to find out what they need.
- The ministry website is <https://refugeforwomen.org/kentucky/>

2. December 3rd is Giving Tuesday. Scheduled on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving in the US, this day is dedicated to encouraging people to donate time, resources, and talents to causes they're passionate about.

- The seminary is raising money to help welcome incoming international students; discuss this with your family, pray for international students, and contribute through this link: asbury.to/baskets

3. December 18th is International Migrants Day. It honors the contributions of migrants and the need to respect their rights. (A migrant is someone who moves away from their usual place of residence, either within or across a country's borders). Invite a migrant family over to your home and learn about their story and/or pray for migrants in our midst.

Group ideas for December

1. December 22nd is National Cookie Exchange Day. If you haven't already used your cookie mix, make cookies with your small group (there are a variety of cookie cutters among you), go Christmas caroling, and give away cookies to neighbors.