



Hope The Prophecy Candle

Therefore, the Lord will give you a sign. The young woman is pregnant and is about to give birth to a son, and she will name him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14

CHRISTMAS IS COMING! BUT WAITING IS HARD!

Today is the beginning of Advent, and that's when our Christmas ADVENTure starts. Each day brings us a little closer to Christmas, when we celebrate Jesus' birth. Light the purple candle, opposite the pink one.

The angel Gabriel announced to Mary, "He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High." How exciting! But, after hearing this, Mary had to wait nine months to see Jesus and to hold him. Mary was not the first person to wait for Jesus to come. Prophets long ago told about his coming. The Israelites had waited for centuries for the prophecies to be fulfilled, for the coming of Immanuel.

Family Activities and Devotions for Advent

First, set up your Advent wreath. It's a circle of evergreens with four candles evenly spaced around the wreath. A circle has no beginning and no ending. That's like God's love!

The reason for Christmas is to celebrate Jesus. This first candle is called the Candle of Hope, or the Prophecy Candle. There's just a little glow, because we are just beginning the journey to Christmas.

There's no need to pack! It's a journey into your heart to discover more about God, who sent Jesus, the Son of God.



Christmas Is Coming! But Waiting Is Hard!

PRAYER

Thank you, God, for sending your Son, Jesus. Help us wait patiently for Christmas to come. Amen.

HYMN/SONG

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

QUESTIONS

- What do you like about the Advent wreath?
- What does *Advent* mean?
- How will the wreath help us get ready for Christmas?

TRY IT

Look up a prophecy and how it was fulfilled.

Prophecy: Isaiah 7:14

Fulfilled: Matthew 1:18-23

Family Activities and Devotions for Advent

CHRISTMAS SYMBOL: WREATH



Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love. 1 John 4:7-8

Do you know that God loves you? God will always love you. A circle shape is a reminder of God's everlasting love. God also wants you to love other people.

Wreaths decorate doors with an inviting message of welcome. Wreaths were used in the ancient world, especially Greece. Wreaths of laurel were used as crowns to honor a person. In Germany, people used wreaths as a sign of hope for the coming of spring. In 1 Corinthians 9:25, Paul speaks of a crown that will never die.

TRY IT

Encircle each family member with your arms to give wreath-shaped hugs.



Micah's Prophecy

As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah, though you are the least significant of Judah's forces, one who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf will come out from you. His origin is from remote times, from ancient days. Micah 5:2

LONG AGO, Isaiah, Micah, and other prophets told people about the coming Messiah. Micah even told the people where the Messiah would be born. Wow! Every single prophesy happened as God had foretold it!

Christmas is good news because it shows God keeps promises and sent Jesus, the promised Messiah, to bring hope to the world. We share that hope when we tell others about Jesus and say, "Merry Christmas."

Family Activities and Devotions for Advent

PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us share the hope of eternal life with others. Amen.

HYMN/SONG

"Mary Did You Know?"

QUESTIONS

- Why is it so great that God loves you?
- In what part of the world is Bethlehem? Can you find Israel and Bethlehem on a map?
- What prophets can you name?
- What is your hope for the future?

DID YOU KNOW?

The organization Wreaths Across America places wreaths on hundreds of thousands of veterans' graves in December to honor them.

TRY IT

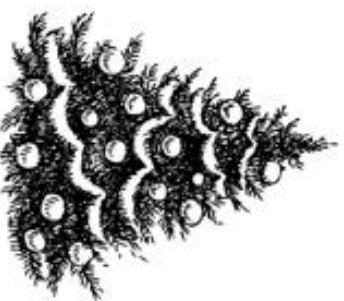
Copy, cut out, and decorate the small Bible below and add it to the wreath as a reminder of the prophecies.



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Christmas Is Coming! But Waiting Is Hard!

CHRISTMAS SYMBOL: CHRISTMAS TREE



I am like an evergreen tree, yielding my fruit to you throughout the year. My mercies never fail. (TLB)

Christmas trees transform a room into a holiday wonderland. God is compared to an evergreen tree in the Hosea passage. In some Bible translations, God is compared to a “luxuriant evergreen tree.” God is splendid and extravagant.

The Christmas tree originated in Germany. There are a number of different stories about how the tree became a Christmas symbol. It may have started with the Paradise plays, where an evergreen tree hung with apples represented the garden of Eden. Or, it’s said that Martin Luther brought an evergreen tree inside and decorated it with candles after noticing the beauty of one tree during a walk on Christmas Eve.

Hessian soldiers from Germany brought the tradition of the lighted evergreens to America during the American Revolution.

Let evergreen trees that point to the heavens remind you that you are part of God’s family tree.

Family Activities and Devotions for Advent

TRY IT

Make Christmas tree gift tags with notes of hope. You will need colored paper (variety of colors), ribbon, markers, scissors, paper punch, and Christmas tree cookie cutters (optional).

1. Copy the pattern below (or trace tree cookie cutters) on various colors of paper, and cut out the paper trees.
2. Stack three trees of different colors, punch a hole through the layers, and tie together with a ribbon.
3. Write “Merry Christmas” on the top card. Spread the other cards open and write on them “Jesus loves you” and other messages.

