

Advent for kids



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Invitation for Families

It's easy to have a love/hate relationship with Christmas. We might love the family time, the cute Nativity plays featuring our children, and the traditions that remind us of our own childhoods, but we might also resent the commercialism and the stress of so many expectations. The cheap Christmas decorations that adorn every surface in our shops and the tinny Christmas music blaring through shopping mall speakers can make the whole experience feel shallow. But the gathering of our family at the dining table to celebrate and remember the birth of Christ can bring a depth of meaning that is hard to find throughout the year.

This book is an invitation to dive deeper into the story of Jesus. It is an invitation to take the time to really look at the humble scene represented in the books and art and ceramic figurines. To examine the role each one of the players had, from the largest to the smallest. To get a bird's eye view of why the birth of Jesus mattered then and why it matters now. To look at the birth of Jesus in the context of the bigger gospel story. To use our imaginations to look at how the arrival of Jesus changed people then and continues to change people now. And most of all, it's an invitation to go on this journey of exploration with your children. Together.

In the traditional Christian calendar, the four weeks leading up to Christmas were known as the season of Advent. It was a time to re-read and retell the stories surrounding Jesus' coming into the world, and to reflect on the different aspects and implications of this story.

If you have not previously spent much time with the story of Jesus and His birth, we invite you to spend this time considering the deeper significance and claims that surround this seemingly simple story. We also invite you to re-read the original stories of Jesus' birth in the Bible. You can find these at the beginning of the New Testament, in Matthew Chapters 1 and 2; Luke Chapters 1 and 2; and John Chapter 1. You will find these stories in any edition of the Bible—although a contemporary translation of the Bible is easier reading. If you don't have a copy of the Bible at home, you can read it freely online.

We have written this book especially for families with children aged 5 to 12. It can be read on its own but works best as a companion volume to *Advent: Hearing the Good News in the Story of Jesus' Birth* (by Nathan Brown, Signs Publishing, 2020). We encourage the adults in your family to read through the daily readings in *Advent* throughout the month of December, then spend 10 minutes each day exploring the birth of Jesus with the children in your care using this child-centred *Advent for Kids* book.

We have included an overview of the story in the pages that follow. This might be helpful to reorient you to the main events surrounding the birth of Jesus before you launch into the story together and prepare you for questions from curious kids. The narrative of the birth of Jesus is placed in the context of the overall gospel story because if Jesus' birth isn't part of something bigger, then why is it important at all?

We have also included a "How To" guide (see page xi) to help you get familiar with the structure of the daily readings.

And once you have spent time with this book, we invite you to share it with someone else, whether in the form of the book itself or simply by sharing a conversation about what you have learned or appreciated. The best stories are worth retelling; the best news is worth sharing.

As you read this book, we invite you and the children in your care to hear—or hear again—the good news in the story of Jesus' birth.



How to Use Advent for Kids

There are 31 daily readings for families to work through together across the month of December. These are child-centred and are structured to encourage the sharing of ideas, thoughts and feelings as you explore the Christmas story as a family.

The daily readings have the same themes as the companion book for adults, *Advent: Hearing the Good News in the Story of Jesus' Birth*. If you have access to that book, it will give you additional background for leading and prompting discussion of the daily themes.

Each daily reading is divided into five sections:

ROUNDTABLE

A starter question to encourage discussion between adults and children.

REMEMBER

A Bible text related to the theme for the day.

READ

The devotional for the day. Read this aloud.

REFLECT

A question to ponder and discuss after the reading.

REACT

An optional activity to help consolidate understanding of the theme. Activities that offer a download from the *Advent for Kids* website are referring to signspublishing.com.au/advent-for-kids.

You can pick and choose which elements to use each day; however, the Read section contains the heart of the message. Feel free to substitute your own questions and activities for the Roundtable, Reflect and React sections if there is something that is more relevant to your context. We would love for you to make the *Advent for Kids* journey your own.

We recommend setting aside five to 15 minutes a day for *Advent for Kids*, depending upon how much time you wish to spend sharing and whether you choose to do the activity.

As you work through this book as a family, we hope that you will make memories, build relationships and gain a greater understanding of the miracle of Christmas.



Good News

ROUNDTABLE

What's something you are looking forward to this week? It might be a playdate with friends, something fun at school, watching your favourite TV show or reading a great book.

REMEMBER

“I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people”

(Luke 2:10).

Have you ever looked forward to something good happening in your family? Maybe you were going on a holiday. Maybe someone you loved was coming to visit. Maybe you were getting a new puppy or kitten. It's so much fun to look forward to something good. And it's even more exciting when that good thing finally happens.

A long, long time ago something happened.

Something very good happened.

In a place called Bethlehem in the ancient land of Israel, a tiny baby boy was born. Do you know what His name was? His name was Jesus.



Now, at the time it didn't look like baby Jesus was someone extra special. His parents were poor, and He was born in a small shepherd village called Bethlehem. It appeared that Jesus was an unimportant baby born to unimportant parents in an unimportant town. And given that Jesus was born thousands of years ago, it's surprising that we know anything about Jesus' birth at all.

But we do.

We know that people looked forward to Jesus' birth, just like you and your family look forward to something good happening. We know that some people celebrated and announced the birth of Jesus.

The night Jesus was born, an angel appeared to a group of shepherds to tell them something had happened. And not just something—something big, something significant, something that

would change the world: “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people” (Luke 2:10).

You see, a long, long time ago something happened. Something very good happened.

Jesus was born.

And that was—and still is—good news.

REFLECT

Why was it such good news that Jesus was born? Talk about how much Jesus loves us and how He showed His love for us through His life.

REACT

Set up a Nativity display at your house including the stable, Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, shepherds and angels. If you don't already have a Nativity set, you can make one! Just print out the templates from the *Advent for Kids* website.

Can't Wait!

ROUNDTABLE

Have you ever had to wait for something exciting to happen? Perhaps it was a birthday party or a holiday or a present. Share what it was like to have to wait.

REMEMBER

“In Bethlehem in Judea,’ they said, ‘for this is what the prophet wrote” (Matthew 2:5).

How do you get ready for Christmas? Maybe you put up a Christmas tree, listen to Christmas carols or open the door of an Advent calendar each day in December. It’s so much fun looking forward to Christmas Day, when we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Before Jesus was born, lots of people were looking forward to the arrival of a Messiah, a leader who would set them free. The Bible tells us about a group of wise men from a land far away, who had studied the Scriptures and were waiting for the promised Messiah, a new king. The wise men followed a bright shining star to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they asked where they might find this precious newborn king. The religious leaders told them the baby would be born in Bethlehem, just like the prophet Micah had written long, long ago (see Matthew 2:5).

But it wasn't just the wise men who couldn't wait for Jesus to be born. An old lady named Anna and an old man named Simeon were also looking forward to the birth of the Messiah (see Luke 2:25–38). They waited at the temple each day, hoping that one day they might get to meet this special promised baby. After Jesus was born, Anna and Simeon got to meet Him when His parents brought Him to the temple as a newborn baby. What a celebration!



Jesus was born a long time ago, but each year as we prepare for Christmas, we can retell His story and look forward to His birth. We can imagine how exciting it was for the wise men, Anna, Simeon, the shepherds and the angels all those years ago. We can count down the sleeps to Christmas every year, and every year we can experience that same excitement of knowing Jesus was born. When we can't wait to celebrate the birth of Jesus, we remember what it's like to live with hope.

REFLECT

What are you looking forward to most of all at Christmas this year?

REACT

Write a family “Can’t Wait” list of all the things you can’t wait to do over the holiday season. See how many of these things you can tick off during December.

End of product sample

This product is available at:

AdventistBookCentre.com.au



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