



Help! What can I do to focus my child's attention on Jesus during the holiday season?



Take action now to prevent a lifetime of midwinter materialism! Celebrate Advent! Advent, the four weeks before Christmas, is an old church tradition that's been rediscovered by many young families as a hands-on celebration that helps parents focus themselves and their children on the miracle of Jesus' incarnation and birth. Advent gives us a unique window of opportunity to combat the commercialism of Christmas. (Note: If your church does not celebrate Advent, get a book at the library that explains Advent in simple terms so that you are comfortable explaining the ideas to your children.)

Make an Advent calendar. Number each of the days between the current date and Christmas Day. On some of the days, plan a simple activity to do with your child. Choose activities that will help you make the days before Christmas a relaxed, happy time during which you play together, create together and chat about Jesus and why He came to Earth.

- Make an Advent wreath. Light one of the candles on each Sunday during Advent.
- Use a nativity scene to act out the story of Jesus' birth.
- Create decorations for your tree that help to tell the Christmas story.
- Work together to write new lyrics for a favorite Christmas tune, such as "Jingle Bells," and then sing the song together.
- Provide perfume to smell as you talk briefly about the wise men's gifts.
- Draw pictures and symbols related to Jesus' birth on a paper tablecloth. Use the tablecloth for your holiday meal.
- Let your child help you choose a Christmas-related book to buy. Start a collection of Christmas storybooks for your children to read and love through the years.
- Make cookies in shapes that relate to the Christmas story.