

KIDS
CORNER

GIFTS OF KINDNESS

Advent Calendar and Devotional



WE CAN'T WAIT FOR DECEMBER 25TH TO COME!

Throughout the Old Testament, God's people waited excitedly for the Messiah. Today, we know that the Messiah has already come, that he was born two thousand years ago in a dusty stable in Bethlehem. But as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth on Christmas Day, we also excitedly wait, like God's people in the Old Testament.

In fact, the weeks leading up to Christmas are a special time for God's people to join together in anticipation of Christ's birth. This time is called Advent. We at *Kids Corner* hope this "Gifts of Kindness" Advent calendar activity and devotional will help you not only count down the days until Christmas, but also prepare your hearts for the greatest of gifts, Jesus Christ.

Every year, Advent starts four weeks before Christmas. That Sunday does not always fall on the same date. Advent can start as early as November 27 or as late as December 3, which means some years Advent can be as short as 22 day or as long as 28 days. Check this year's calendar to see which date Advent begins. Included in this Advent calendar activity are ornaments for each day of Advent (you may have leftover ornaments if Advent is less than 28 days) and 5 family devotionals.

Each Sunday: Read the week's devotional together and reflect on the importance of giving kindness and serving others. On Christmas day, read the special bonus devotional!

Each day: Commit to giving one "Gift of Kindness" to someone in your life. Write the gift of kindness on that day's ornament and hang the ornament on a string, your Christmas tree, or the wall. Invite your whole family to join you in giving daily gifts of kindness.

DIRECTIONS

1. Print, cut out, and decorate the gifts of kindness ornaments.
2. Each day, write down a gift of kindness you gave to someone else on that day's ornament. If you need help with ideas, look at the gift of kindness idea lists in the weekly devotions.
3. Hang the day's ornament on a string, your Christmas tree, or on the wall. Watch the ornaments multiply as you get closer and closer to Christmas day!



FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

FIRST SUNDAY



“But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him’” (Lamentations 3:21-24).

DEVOTIONAL

Have you ever said, “I hope we win our game tonight,” or “I hope the teacher doesn’t give us homework over the weekend”? When we use the word **hope**, we’re usually talking about something we really want to happen, but aren’t sure will happen. The Bible uses the word hope in a different way. In the Bible, our hope is in something that hasn’t happened, but that we know for sure will happen because God says so. When we trust Jesus as our Savior, God promises that he will never stop loving us and being kind to us. We can share our hope with others by showing God’s love and kindness in the things we do and say.

Today’s verse comes from the book of Lamentations. Jeremiah wrote this very sad book after he saw his city, Jerusalem, destroyed because the people who lived there didn’t obey God. In fact, the word Lamentations means “tears.” But even in his sadness, Jeremiah found hope in God’s promises to send a redeemer to restore Jeremiah’s city and to save his people from their sins. We can trust in God’s promises too! We know he always loves us and is kind to us and that he sent his son, Jesus—the redeemer Jeremiah was waiting for—to save us from our sins and offer us eternal life. This is our great hope!

During the season of Advent, we can share this hope with our families, friends, and classmates by showing them God’s love and kindness. Let them know that no matter how bad their troubles are God loves them...and so do you. Think of someone who is sad or in need. Find a way that you can show them God’s hope this week.

FAMILY QUESTION

Can you think of a time when someone showed you God’s love and kindness? How did that remind you of the hope we have in the Lord?

GIFTS OF KINDNESS IDEAS

Here are some ways you can give other people hope:

1. Compliment a friend who is having a bad day.
2. Check in on an elderly neighbor and help them with chores.
3. Donate food to a food pantry for someone who is hungry.
4. Hold the door open for someone and give them a big smile.
5. Help a tired parent make dinner.
6. Teach someone something new.
7. Smile at everybody. It's contagious.



FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

SECOND SUNDAY



“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

DEVOTIONAL

Have you ever heard somebody say “Be part of the solution, not part of the problem”? What they meant was that you should find a way to make things better for people, by being a peacemaker. When someone has peace, it means they don’t have anything to worry about or be afraid of. As followers of Jesus, we should always look for ways to help people be at peace, just as Jesus did for us. But how exactly did Jesus bring peace to the world?

When Adam and Eve were created by God in the Garden of Eden, they were friends with God. But then they disobeyed and their sin separated them from God. It made them—and us, because we’re related to them—God’s enemies. There is nothing we could do on our own to be at peace with God. But there was something God could do, and he did it. He sent his Son, Jesus, so we could once again be at peace with God. In the verse above, Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would come to earth as a baby. He said that Jesus would grow up and bring peace to us that would never end. That prophecy would be fulfilled in Isaiah’s future, but in our past. We know that two thousand years ago, Jesus came as a baby, grew up, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again to give us life and peace forever.

Christmas is the celebration of when Jesus came to earth as a baby. But not everyone feels peaceful during the holidays. Life can be busy and stressful, families can fight, and people can be lonely. Look for ways you can be a peacemaker this Advent season. If you have any friends or family members who haven’t trusted Jesus, tell them about how he came to earth to bring peace between us and God. You can also find ways to make things easier, less worrisome, or less lonely for people in need.

FAMILY QUESTION

What is one thing that you are worried about or afraid of? How can other members of your family help you be at peace?

GIFTS OF KINDNESS IDEAS

Here are some ways you can give other people peace:

1. Donate outgrown clothes.
2. Make a get well card for someone.
3. Clean up your toys or room without being asked.
4. Do a chore for someone without them knowing.
5. Shovel a neighbor's driveway.
6. Read a book to someone.
7. Donate a book to a doctor's office waiting room.
8. Give high fives to a friend.
9. Donate socks and supplies to the homeless shelter.



FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

THIRD SUNDAY



“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit”
(Galatians 5:22-25).

DEVOTIONAL

During the Christmas season, we often hear the familiar song “Joy to the World.” We know the words well, “Joy to the World, the Lord has come...” But what exactly is the joy of Christmas all about? Many people confuse joy and happiness. Happiness is often based on your circumstances—like whether you win your game, get an A on your test, or finally get that present you’ve been wanting. But joy is a deeper emotion, one that lasts through good times and bad. It comes from seeing God at work in the world.

Sometimes joy makes your heart feel like it wants to explode with hope and excitement about something to come. Other times it’s a strong sense of peace, like everything is just as it should be. During Advent, we remember with joy the gift of Jesus, we enjoy his blessings now, and we delight in the promise of his coming again.

Galatians 5:22-25 tells us that joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. This means that God is the source of the joy, but the Holy Spirit helps us to see it, practice it, and give it away. The Spirit draws our attention to beautiful things and helps us remember God’s faithfulness in the stories of the Bible and in our lives. When we are “in step with the Spirit,” we can be joyful in all circumstances.

The Spirit also helps us see people who are in need of God’s joy, so that we can share it with them. When we are filled with joy, we know how to give it away. Christmas is a perfect time to remind others of good times and stories of God’s faithfulness. We can show them examples of God’s goodness and beauty all around us. We can share God’s promises from the Bible and we can also bring joy to others doing simple acts of kindness and service. What a joy to share God’s good gifts!

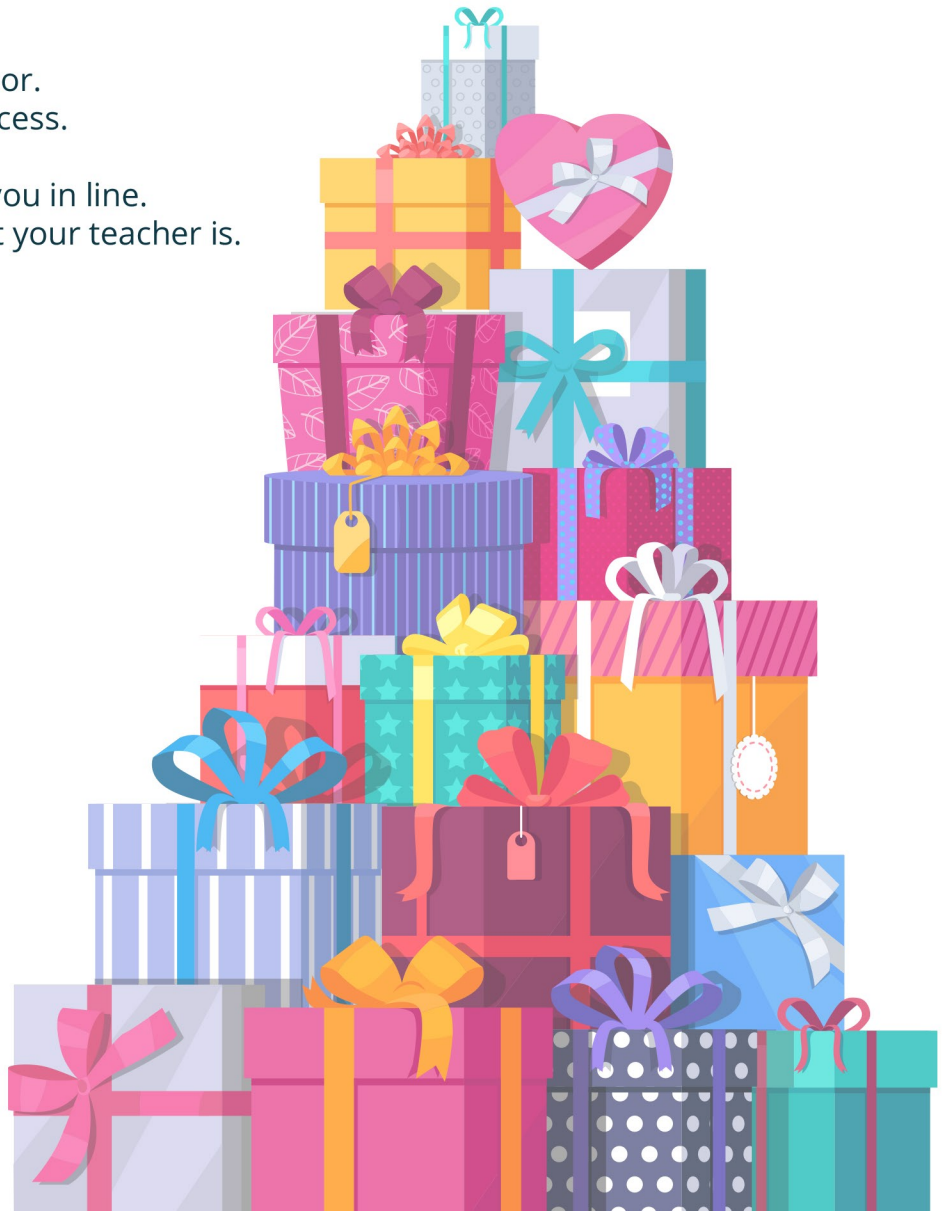
FAMILY QUESTION

Have you ever made a special gift for someone? How did you feel when the person was about to open it? How did you both feel when it was opened? How does this experience remind you of the gifts God has already given you, and the ones you haven't "opened" yet? How can you share this joy with others?

GIFTS OF KINDNESS IDEAS

Here are some ways you can give other people joy:

1. Make a memory photo album and share it with a friend or family member.
2. Take a walk with someone and find beautiful examples of God's creation.
3. Call your grandparents and ask them about their childhood.
4. Make a homemade gift for someone.
5. Leave something small and beautiful where a stranger will find it.
6. Tell a joke.
7. Feed the birds.
8. Check in on an elderly neighbor.
9. Invite someone to play at recess.
10. Pick up litter.
11. Let someone go ahead of you in line.
12. Tell the principal how great your teacher is.



FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

FOURTH SUNDAY

Christmas Eve



“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”
(John 13:34-35).

DEVOTIONAL

Waiting is hard. But often it can make the time go faster if you do something while you wait. What if you were told to love while you waited? Would that make the time go faster? People usually think of love as a feeling. Did you ever think of love as an action? Well, God’s love is active!

In John 13, Jesus told his disciples that he would soon be going into heaven and that they would have to wait for him to return. But Jesus gave his followers something to practice while they waited: loving one another with the same love that he had shown them. Jesus’ love is a self-sacrificing love that puts others’ needs first. It’s not just a feeling; it’s a love that acts! It touches people, heals them, feeds them, comforts them, cries with them, washes their feet, and even dies for them. That is a difficult kind of love! The Holy Spirit gives you this kind of active love as one of the “Fruits of the Spirit.” Sharing that gift shows people that you are followers of Jesus.

Advent has been a time of waiting. But while you waited, you loved others by sharing your gifts of kindness. You practiced the job Jesus gave to his disciples: to love one another! You did something! You put hope, peace, and joy into action! Christmas is tomorrow, but we are still waiting for Jesus to come back, so there is plenty of time to fill with love. What are you waiting for?

FAMILY QUESTION

Jesus loved people that were outcasts in his society. He touched those that others forgot or looked down on. Who does our society forget or ignore? How can you show them the active love of God?

GIFTS OF KINDNESS IDEAS

Here are some ways you can give other people love:

1. Make a thank you sign for sanitation workers.
2. Set the table for dinner.
3. Tell someone why they are special to you.
4. Make a thank you card for your librarian.
5. Write an encouraging letter to someone in prison
6. Make a family member's bed.
7. Write a letter to try to help someone who is the victim of injustice
8. Bring cookies to the church or school custodian.
9. Skype with some faraway friends.





FAMILY DEVOTIONAL FOR DECEMBER 25TH Christmas Day

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”
(John 3:16).



DEVOTIONAL

It's here! This is the day that we have looked forward to all month. We have shared Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love in acts of kindness for others, and now we see how God's gift of Jesus pulls all of these themes together at Christmas.

You may know today's verse by heart, but did you ever think of it as an Advent verse?

“For God so LOVED the world that he gave his one and only son...”

He loved us so much that he did something! Remember, God's love isn't just a feeling, it's an action. How have you put your love for him and for others into action this Christmas season?

“...that whoever believes in him...”

Believing is one way we “keep in step with the Spirit.” It is how we tap into the JOY of seeing God in our lives. How have you shown people God's joyful presence in their lives?

“...shall not perish...”

Think of the PEACE that this promise gives us. We are safe in God's hands and do not need to worry. Have you taken away the worries of people around you this season?

“...but have eternal life.”

Because of God's gift of Jesus, we have the ultimate HOPE that we will live with him forever. That hope gets us through difficult times. What have you done to give people hope in difficult times this Advent?

“Every good and perfect gift comes from above, coming down from the father of heavenly lights” (James 1:17). Because God has given us all the gifts of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love at Christmas, we are able to share those gifts too. When we share the gifts of Christmas, we point others to the ultimate gift: Jesus.

FAMILY QUESTION

Which of the gifts of kindness that you did this month were the most memorable? Why? Which Advent themes (Hope, Peace, Joy, Love) did you see in them? Which ones would you like to do again?

GIFTS OF KINDNESS IDEAS

Are there any gifts of kindness that your family didn't get to do? God's gift of his son was not just for Christmas, but for all time! Look for ways to share his gift all year!















