

ADVENT CALENDAR



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But the greatest of these is love.”
(1 Cor. 13:13)*

Merry Christmas, First Loved Family!

As a gift this year, we created a simple family-friendly Advent Calendar. Whether you are celebrating the season with kids or you are just a kid at heart, this calendar has something for everyone. Daily reflections, questions, and prompts that help you engage with scripture, the Holy Spirit, and one another.

Advent is a time of excited anticipation, remembering that we are in the “time between the times.” This means that we can celebrate what God has already done and still feel a longing for what has not yet been done. We have faith in what has already been accomplished; Jesus came into the world, lived and loved, and laid his life down as a sacrifice for all wrong and harm, only to be raised and glorified as the king over all creation! We have hope for what will be accomplished; Jesus will come again and make all things right, wipe away every tear, and end all suffering. And in and above it all, we have love; Jesus loves us so that we can love one another as and because we have been loved first.

We pray that in this Advent season, you have new and wonderful opportunities to experience, enjoy, and share the faith, hope, and love that Jesus has given us who call him our beloved Savior and Lord.

Remember, we love you, and if we treasure, adore, and enjoy you - for the incredible gift that you are - how much more does Jesus?

In faith, hope, and love,

Your First Loved Family



In Faith we look back on what God has done...



“Abram believed the Lord, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6)

Read Genesis 15:1-6 aloud. What happened before Abram believed? What does this teach us about faith, and what does it teach us about God?

“In a loud voice [Elizabeth] exclaimed [to Mary]: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ...Blessed are you who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!” (Luke 1:42, 45)



Read Luke 1:26-45 aloud. How is Mary's story like Abram's story? How are they different? Talk about how their stories shape our faith today.



Put your name in the blanks and read the following personalized verses out loud, hear it from God's heart to yours:

“Blessed are you, _____, who has believed in me, your Savior Jesus. I, your God, credit it to you, _____, as righteousness, when you believe that I fulfill my promises.” (Genesis 15:6, Luke 1:45)

Continue to personalize this passage by adding specific promises the Lord has made.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
(John 1:1)

Read John 1:1-18 aloud, but every time John writes “the Word,” replace it with “Jesus.” What does this passage teach us about God the Father, and what does it teach us about Jesus the Son?



“No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.” (John 1:18)

What do we know about God the Father, because Jesus showed us in his words and actions? Talk about your favorite Jesus stories.

“Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”
(John 20:28-29)

Read John 20:1-31 aloud. Notice, no one in this story believed until they saw Jesus with their own eyes. What are you struggling with believing in this season? Tell Jesus what you need to see, hear, or experience with him.



Put your name in the blanks and read the following personalized verse out loud, hear it from God's heart to yours:

“_____, you have seen my hand at work in your life and you have believed. I bless you, _____, for all the ways you have not yet seen me at work but you still believe.”
(John 20:29)

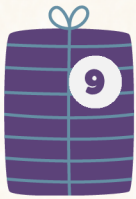
Continue to personalize this passage by adding specific situations where you believe Jesus is at work.

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”
(Hebrews 11:1)

Read Hebrews 11:1-3. Talk about what you have heard about in the scriptures that you would like to see for yourself. What might that experience be like?



...in Hope we look forward to what God will do...



“...Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.” (Romans 8:24-25)

What are you waiting for in this season? Talk about what makes waiting hard, and what makes it easy.

“But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.” (Luke 1:13)

Read Luke 1:5-25 aloud. When do you think was the last time they prayed to have a baby? Talk about prayers you are waiting for God to answer.



In this “time between the times,” sometimes God answers our prayers by telling us to wait, or by telling us no. And God is always compassionate and understanding with our pain, frustration, and disappointment. Put your name in the blanks and read the following personalized verse out loud, hear it from God’s heart to yours:

Call this to mind and have hope, _____: Because of my great love, you are not consumed, for my compassions never fail. It is true, in this world, you will have trouble. But take heart, _____! I have overcome the world.” (Lamentations 3:21-22, John 16:33)

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13)

Read Romans 15:1-6 aloud. The Holy Spirit inspires and encourages us through the scriptures. Talk about the bible stories that fill you with hope.



“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

Read Revelation 21:1-5 aloud. Imagine a time when everything is made new, and there is no more pain. Talk about what that will be like. What would the best part be?

“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

(1 Peter 1:8-9)

Read 1 Peter 1:3-9 aloud. Talk about a time when you were so full of joy you couldn’t even speak. Then imagine how much better your inheritance will be in heaven!



“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (John 14:3)

Read John 14:1-7 aloud. What do you imagine your room in heaven will be like? Who and what will be there with you?

Put your name in the blanks and read the following personalized verses out loud, hear it from God’s heart to yours:

“_____, keep your eyes fixed on me, Jesus, who for the joy set before me endured the cross. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we, the Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit, will glory in when Jesus comes back? Is it not you? Indeed, you _____ are our glory and joy.” (Hebrews 12:2, 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20)

Remember, God is looking forward to being with you!



...and in Love we celebrate what God is doing today!



“And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.”
(1 Cor. 13:13)

Read 1 Corinthians 13 aloud and talk about the synonyms and antonyms for love in this passage. What is and what is not loving? How can you share love today?

“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people.”
(Colossians 1:3-4)



Read Colossians 1:3-8 aloud. Share about people in your life who have a reputation for being loving. What have you learned from them?



“Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him, for the Lord shields him all day long, and the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders.” (Deuteronomy 33:12)

Bring to mind the best hug(s) you’ve ever experienced. Talk about the experience and then turn the memory into a God Sighting.

*It’s the Saturday before Christmas, so make sure to take a break to stop and be loved by Jesus. Put your name in the blanks and read the following personalized verses out loud, hear it from Jesus’ heart to yours:

“Come to me, _____, when you are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest... for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you, _____, will find rest for your soul. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)



“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1)

Read 1 John 3:1-3 aloud. Think about the Father figures in your life, the men who have loved you. Share loving memories you have with them, and then turn one of those memories into a God Sighting.

“As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 66:13)

Read Isaiah 66:12-13 aloud. Consider the Mother figures in your life, the women who have loved you. Share loving memories you have with them, and then turn one of those memories into a God Sighting.



“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” (Titus 3:4-5)

Read Titus 3:3-8 aloud. Consider the people in your life who have been kind to you when you were being foolish. Talk about how that made you feel then, and how it feels now, looking back on the memory.

“But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” (Luke 2:19)

Read Luke 2:1-20 aloud. Recall your favorite Christmas memories, and share those stories. Take some time to thank God for the precious gift of your loved ones.

