



# SOUTHSIDE Advent

**A Family Story Guide for Advent**



# WAITING IN THE DARK

A Family Story Guide for Advent

Four Weeks of Stories, Activities & Prayer

For Families with Kids

**Southside Church**

## Welcome, Families!

Advent is a special season. It's a time of waiting and wondering. It's a time of watching for the Light that breaks through darkness. This guide is designed to help your family experience Advent together through stories, conversation, and simple activities.

Each week, you'll gather together to light candles, hear a story, talk about what it means, and do something together that helps the meaning stick. These moments don't have to be long or complicated. They just need to be together.

### How to Use This Guide

1. **Find a cozy spot.** Gather your family in a comfortable place, such as the dinner table, the couch, or by the fireplace.
2. **Light a candle.** Each week, light one more candle on your Advent wreath (or any candles you have). Let kids help!
3. **Read the story.** Read the week's story aloud. These are written for families with kids ages 4-10, but younger and older kids should get something out of them, too.
4. **Talk together.** Use the discussion questions. There's no right or wrong answer. The goal is simply to think and talk together.
5. **Do an activity.** Choose one of the suggested activities to do together during the week.
6. **Pray together.** Close with a simple prayer. Let everyone contribute a word or sentence.

*Even here, in the dark, the Light is coming.*

## WEEK ONE: HOPE

### *The Waiting*

#### *Light One Candle*

Before you read the story, turn off the lights. Sit in the dark for just a moment. Then light one candle together. Watch how even one small flame changes the room.

#### **The Story: Stars in the Dark**

The night was very dark. Darker than most nights. The kind of dark where you can barely see your own hand in front of your face.

Hannah sat outside her house with her grandmother, looking up at the sky. Somewhere behind all those clouds, she knew there were stars. But tonight, she couldn't see a single one.

"Grandma," Hannah said, "are the stars still there? I can't see them."

Her grandmother smiled. "Of course they are. The clouds don't make the stars disappear. They just hide them for a little while."

Hannah thought about that. "Are you sure? How do you know they're still there?"

"Because I've seen them before," her grandmother said. "In the Bible, there's a story where God makes a promise that talks about the stars. He promised Abraham that his family would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. That was a long, long time ago. Way before my grandmother's grandmother's grandmother was alive. And God kept that promise. So when God makes a promise, we can trust it, even when we can't see how it will happen."

It was a cold night, and Hannah snuggled closer to her grandmother. "So we just... wait?"

"Yes," her grandmother said softly. "We wait...And we hope. This season is called Advent, and that's what it is all about. It's remembering that God's people waited a very long time for Jesus to come. Sometimes it was hard to wait. Sometimes they felt like they were sitting in the dark. But God was working, even when they couldn't see it."

Just then, the clouds began to part. One star appeared. Then another. Then dozens, scattered across the sky like a promise.

Hannah whispered, "Look, Grandma! They were there the whole time."

Her grandmother nodded. "They always are. And so is God's love. Even in the dark, His promises are true."

## Scripture

*"The people who walk in darkness will see a great light." — Isaiah 9:2*

## Talk Together

- What's something you've had to wait for? How did waiting feel?
- Have you ever felt like Hannah, waiting in the dark, wondering if God was there?
- What's one thing you're hoping for this Advent season?

## Family Activities

- **Make a Hope Chain:** Cut strips of construction paper. Each family member writes one thing they hope for or are thankful for on a strip. Link them together into a paper chain and hang it where everyone can see. Repeat as many times as you can to create a chain.
- **Star Gazing:** On a clear night, go outside and look at the stars together. Talk about God's promise to Abraham.

## Pray Together

*Dear God, thank You for being with us, even when we can't see You. Help us to wait with hope and trust that Your promises are true, even when we can't see them. Amen.*

*Even here, in the dark, the Light is coming.*

## WEEK TWO: PEACE

### *The Letting Go*

#### *Light Two Candles*

Light last week's candle and one more. Notice how the room is a little brighter now. This week, we talk about peace. Not a shallow peace, but the kind of peace that comes when we let go of our worries and give them to God.

#### **The Story: The Heavy Stone**

Eli loved to collect rocks. Smooth ones, bumpy ones, speckled ones, it really didn't matter. He was fascinated by them all. He kept them in his pockets, he kept them in his room, he even kept some in the backseat of his parent's car.

One day, Eli found a rock that was different from the others. It was really dark, and it was cold. And it was way heavier than it looked. But there was something about this particular rock that made him want to keep it with him all the time.

At first, it wasn't so bad. But the more he carried it, the heavier it became. His steps slowed, and his pants would barely stay up when he put it in his pocket. His friends thought it was silly because he couldn't even run or play while he was carrying it.

His friend Mike asked, "Why do you carry that thing?"

"I don't know," Eli said. "I guess I'm afraid to let it go."

That night, Eli sat by a little pond near his house. He thought about why he really was carrying around that rock. He thought about all the things that heavy stone felt like: his worries, his fears, the things that kept him awake at night.

Slowly, he lifted the stone from his pocket. He looked at it one last time. Then he dropped it into the water.

It made a soft splash and sank to the bottom. The ripples spread out and faded. And Eli felt... lighter. Freer.

He didn't know where God had taken the weight. He just knew it wasn't his to carry anymore.

The water was still again. And in the stillness, Eli felt something new. Peace.

## Scripture

*"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give." — John 14:27*

## Talk Together

- Have you ever felt like you were carrying something heavy? Maybe a worry, a fear, a problem, or a hurt from a friend.
- What would it feel like to let go of it and give it to God?
- Where do you need peace right now?

## Family Activities

- **Stone Release:** Give each family member a small stone. Have them hold it tight and think of a worry. Then pray together and "release" the stones by placing them in a bowl or jar—a picture of giving our burdens to God.
- **Breathing Prayer:** Practice taking slow, deep breaths together. Breathe in: "Be still." Breathe out: "And know that I am God."

## Pray Together

*Dear God, sometimes we carry heavy things, worries, fears, and problems that feel too big for us. Help us to let them go and trust You. Fill us with Your peace. Amen.*

*Even here, in the dark, the Light is coming.*



## WEEK THREE: JOY

### *The Small Sparks*

#### *Light Three Candles*

Light three candles now. The room is getting brighter! This week, we talk about joy, not the loud, bouncing kind, but the quiet kind that grows slowly, like dawn.

#### **The Story: The Joy Jar**

Nothing was going right in what was already a hard week for Mia. It rained every day, and her best friend, Ashley, was sick and couldn't play. She even lost her favorite hairbow. Everything felt sad.

"Why does everything have to be so hard?" she asked her dad one night.

Her dad thought for a moment. Then he went to the kitchen and came back with an empty jar.

"What's that for?" Mia asked.

"It's a Joy Jar," her dad said. "Every time you notice something good, even something small, write it on a piece of paper and put it in the jar."

"But what if there's nothing good?" Mia asked.

"There's always something good," her dad said. "You just have to look."

So Mia tried. The first day, she wrote: "The cat sat on my lap for a long time." The next day: "Dad made pancakes for breakfast." Then: "I saw a rainbow through my window."

At first, it felt strange. But after a few days, something changed. Mia started noticing more good things. Not because there were more of them, but because she had started looking. The jar filled up. And somehow, even though the hard things were still there, she felt better.

"Dad," she said one evening, "I think I found joy. It was hiding in the small things all this time."

Her dad smiled. "That's where it usually is."

## Scripture

*"Don't be afraid! I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people." — Luke 2:10*

## Talk Together

- What's something small that made you smile this week?
- Why do you think joy often hides in small things?
- What's one thing you're thankful for right now?

## Family Activities

- **Start a Joy Jar:** Get a jar and some paper. All week, write down small things that brought you joy and add them to the jar. Read them together on Christmas!
- **Gratitude Circle:** Go around the table at dinner and have each person share one thing they're thankful for.

## Pray Together

*Dear God, thank You for hiding joy in small things. Help us to notice the good things You give us every day. Fill our hearts with gratitude and joy. Amen.*

*Even here, in the dark, the Light is coming.*

## WEEK FOUR: LOVE

### *The Light Spreads*

#### ***Light All Four Candles***

Light all four candles. The room is full of light! This week, we remember that God's love came close, so close that He became a baby. And now, we get to carry that love to others.

#### **The Story: The Light That Spreads**

On Christmas Eve, a church held a special service. The whole building was dark except for one candle at the front.

The pastor said, "Tonight, we remember that Jesus is the Light of the World. And when we follow Him, we carry His light to others."

The pastor then lit his small candle from the main candle and passed the flame to the person next to him. That person lit their candle. And then the next person lit theirs. And then the next.

A little boy named Lucas watched as the light spread, row by row. Soon, the whole room was glowing with hundreds of tiny flames.

"Look," his mom whispered. "Each light came from the one light. And now the whole room is bright."

Lucas held his candle carefully. It was warm in his hands. He thought about how one light had become so many.

"That's what love does," his mom said. "It spreads. When God loved us, He sent Jesus. And when we love others, we pass the light along."

Lucas looked around at all the faces glowing in the candlelight. Grandmas and grandpas. Babies and teenagers. His neighbors. His friends.

"One light doesn't seem like much," he thought. "But together... together it changes everything."

## Scripture

*"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it."*

— John 1:5

## Talk Together

- How does it feel to know that God loved us so much that He came to be with us?
- Who has shown you God's love this year?
- How can our family spread the light of God's love to others?

## Family Activities

- **Pass the Light:** On Christmas Eve, light a candle together and pass it around the circle. And quietly pray and ask, "Jesus, how can I let your light shine through me?"
- **Acts of Love:** As a family, choose one way to show God's love to someone else this week, whether a neighbor, a friend, or someone in need.

## Pray Together

*Dear God, thank You for loving us so much that You sent Jesus to be with us. Help us to carry Your light everywhere we go. Let Your love shine through us to everyone we meet. Amen.*

*Even here, in the dark, the Light has come.*

# CHRISTMAS EVE

## *The Light Has Come*

### ***Light All Five Candles***

Tonight, light all of the candles. The waiting is over. The Light has come.

### **Read the Christmas Story Together**

Read Luke 2:1-20 together as a family. Let different people read different parts, or have someone read while the others listen quietly.

### **Talk Together**

- What's your favorite part of the Christmas story?
- What does it mean to you that God came as a baby?
- How can we keep the light of Christmas with us all year long?

### **Pray Together**

Go around the circle and let each person say a short prayer thanking Jesus for coming. Keep it simple. Even just one word is enough.

### **A Christmas Blessing**

*May the light of Christ go before you, surround you, and shine within you.  
May you carry His love into your home, your school, your neighborhood, and  
your world. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not  
overcome it. Merry Christmas!*

*Even here, in the dark, the Light has come.*