

## Activity instructions

Today we are thinking all about Advent and the idea of waiting and preparing for Christmas

### Activity 1: Candle and Jesse Tree

There are two parts to this activity: (1) marking a candle to burn each day in Advent and (2) making a Jesse Tree

The candle: Take a white dinner candle and mark off 24 sections, one for the first 24 days in December. Each day take a few minutes to burn the section of the candle for that day while you read the story and hang the decoration on your Jesse tree.

Jesse Tree: Make the decorations and write or stick the Bible reference to the back of each one. Share out the decoration making between the whole family. (See this link <https://www.whychristmas.com/customs/jessetrees.shtml> for ideas) Then each day from 1<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> December read the story and hang the decoration on your Jesse Tree. You can use a few branches in a bucket or vase or a Christmas tree for this or you could stick them onto a big tree shape cut from card or paper.

*Out of the stump of Jesse will grow a shoot – yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. Isaiah 11:1*

### Activity 2: Christmas Cards

This activity is all about making your own unique family Christmas cards to share the true meaning of Christmas with your friends and family.

Here are some ideas of what you might do: (1) dress up as characters from the Christmas Story, Mary, Joseph, sheep, shepherd, wisemen and create a scene and then take a photo of yourselves. Then print out the photo as many times as you want for cards and stick it onto the card and write your message inside. This could also be used as a digital card where you email or what's app the photo and you message to friends and family.

(2) Use the Bethlehem Fold-Up card idea which has been emailed to you. Print the card on card, stick on some yellow windows and doors and cut around the outline and fold it. And write you message inside.

(3) Use cut outs from old Christmas cards and stick them onto cards OR draw pictures of the Christmas Story and stick them on

As you are working talk together about who you will send the cards to.

*Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel – God with us.' Isaiah 7:14*

### Activity 3: Lists

Make a list of the things you like about Christmas time. Then think about what it would be like if you had none of those things. Perhaps you would like to choose a charity and donate some relevant items to make Christmas a happier time for another family. Or you might do a clear out of toys, clothes or other items in good condition that you no longer use or need and bring them to a charity shop. Or you might make some items and sell them amongst

your family and friends and give that money the charity. Perhaps you could make Christmas cards, gift tags, cakes or cookies, the list is endless...

As you work you could think about which charity you would donate to and why you have chosen that charity.

*This is what the Lord requires: to do what's right; to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8*

#### **Activity 4: Decorations**

One of the things we can do to prepare for Christmas and to make some special family memories is to spend some time together making some decorations to hang on our Christmas tree.

There is a separate sheet with some Christmas shapes on it which you can use in different ways. Print them out onto coloured card, use them as a template to cut the shapes from recycled card (cereal or similar boxes) or cut from old Christmas cards. You can make 3D shapes by cutting part way through two similar shapes, one from the top and the other from the bottom and slotting them together or by folding three or four of the same shape and sticking them together (See video for how to do this) Then get the paints, markers, stickers, glue and glitter out and be creative.

As you are working talk together about the different shapes and what part of the Christmas Story they come into. Maybe some of them don't but can you think of different ways to link them. For example: there is no mention of a Christmas Tree in the biblical Christmas Story but you might say that as it's an evergreen tree it could represent how Jesus' love goes on forever. Do you know any Christmas songs that mention these shapes?

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village in Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past. Micah 5:2*

#### **Activity 5: Preparing food**

Help prepare some food/cakes/goodies for storing away perhaps in the freezer. You might also make something to help another family as a gift to them to show God's love.

What are the foods you like to make for Christmas? Plan what you can do in advance and make the shopping list and then all work together to prepare the food. And remember boys and girls it is good to help Mum and Dad with the tidy-up afterwards too!

Enjoy your time together doing this and as you work talk about your favourite memories of past Christmases. And you might say a thank-you God prayer for all the good memories.

*Thank the Lord! Praise his name! Tell the world what he has done. Isaiah 12:4*

#### **Activity 6: Gift tags**

There are a few different ways you could do this: (1) Make little folded cards and draw a little Christmas symbol like Jesus in a manger, a candle, tree, holly leaf or star on them. If you have an ink pad you could make a thumb print and turn it into a robin with markers. (2) Use the Christmas shapes as templates or cookie cutters to cut shapes from old Christmas cards or coloured card.

As you make them, think about how you can show love to others by giving them gifts. And remember how God sent Jesus as a gift to the world to show how much he loves us.

*For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6*