LITTLE VILLAGE

Advent GUIDE

Centering your home around the good news
of the long-awaited Savior this season

Advent is an opportunity to pause and reflect on the birth of Jesus. This time of year can be filled to the brim with activities and obligations, especially for families with young kids. Before the calendar begins to overflow, set aside a few minutes to consider what you want this season to be for your family. Then make a plan so that time intended to remember and celebrate doesn't get swallowed up by lesser things. To help you with this goal, we have provided a family activity each week that will help you create intentional time to talk about Jesus.

There are additional ideas and activities at the end of this guide for families to create intentional time, capture teachable moments and mark significant milestones during Advent.

WEEK 1

The Promise of a Savior

Set aside 10 minutes one night this week to talk about God's promise to rescue His children from sin. The only materials needed are five candles, matches and a Bible.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light the first candle.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passages out loud:

Before they left the garden, God whispered a promise to Adam and Eve: "It will not always be so! I will come to rescue you! And when I do, I'm going to do battle against the snake. I'll get rid of the sin and the dark and the sadness you let in here. I'm coming back for you!" And he would. One day, God himself would come.

Jesus Storybook Bible (p. 36)

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6

REFLECTION

Briefly talk about what it means to be rescued from something. When might you need to be saved from danger? Whom would you call upon to rescue you? For example, if there were a fire,

whom would you call to save you? What are rescuers typically like?

Have an adult read the commentary below.

In the very beginning, God created a perfect world. There was no sin, pain, sickness, death or sadness. God created Adam and Eve to live in His perfect world with joy and peace. But Adam and Eve sinned. They disobeyed God. When they sinned, God's perfect world broke.

There was a punishment for Adam and Eve's sin. Because God is perfect, He cannot be near sin. So Adam and Eve were separated from God. The punishment for their sin would also be placed on all humans who were born after Adam and Eve.

ASK: *Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God, each of us needs to be rescued from something. What do we need rescue from?*

But before Adam and Eve left God's perfect Garden, God made a promise. God promised to send a Rescuer, someone to save Adam, Eve and mankind from the punishment of sin. He promised to send Jesus!

God did not send Jesus to rescue His people right away. God waited thousands of years to send the Rescuer. During that time, God's people faced many hard things. While they waited, God gave them hints and clues about how Jesus

would come, what He would do and what He would be like. These hints, written in Scriptures by prophets, would help God's people wait. The verse from Isaiah that we read together after lighting the Advent candle was written while God's people waited those thousands of years for the Savior.

During that time, God made other promises to His children and kept those promises. Each time God made and kept a promise, it helped His children trust that He would be faithful to His promise to send Jesus to rescue them from their sins.

ASK: *What do you think it felt like for God's people to wait for the promised Rescuer to come?*

Some days, God's children waited patiently. Some days, they waited with tears and frustration. Some days, they wondered if God had forgotten His promise. But God continued to whisper it over and over again as His children waited. And one day, when no one was expecting it, Jesus would come.

God shows us many things about what's He's like through the birth of Jesus. How do you see that God is the Deliverer, that He rescues His children, in this part of the Advent narrative? What other attributes of God do you see?

PRAYER

Have one family member say a prayer to thank God for His goodness and mercy in sending Jesus to rescue us from our sins.

SONG

As a family, sing or listen to "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus." As you do, read carefully through the lyrics and explain any words that might be unfamiliar to your kids. Ask them what they learn about Jesus from this song.

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.
Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.
By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Make plans for a fun Christmas activity next week that you know your children will love. Perhaps it's seeing a Christmas play or movie, decorating cookies together or seeing Christmas lights.

At the end of your family Advent time, promise your kids that you are going to do something special together to celebrate Advent—something they will love—but don't tell them what or when. As the days go by, remind them of your promise and give them hints as to what it might be. Let their expectation and excitement grow throughout the week. Use this opportunity to remind them of God's promise to send a Rescuer and the anticipation God's people felt as they waited.

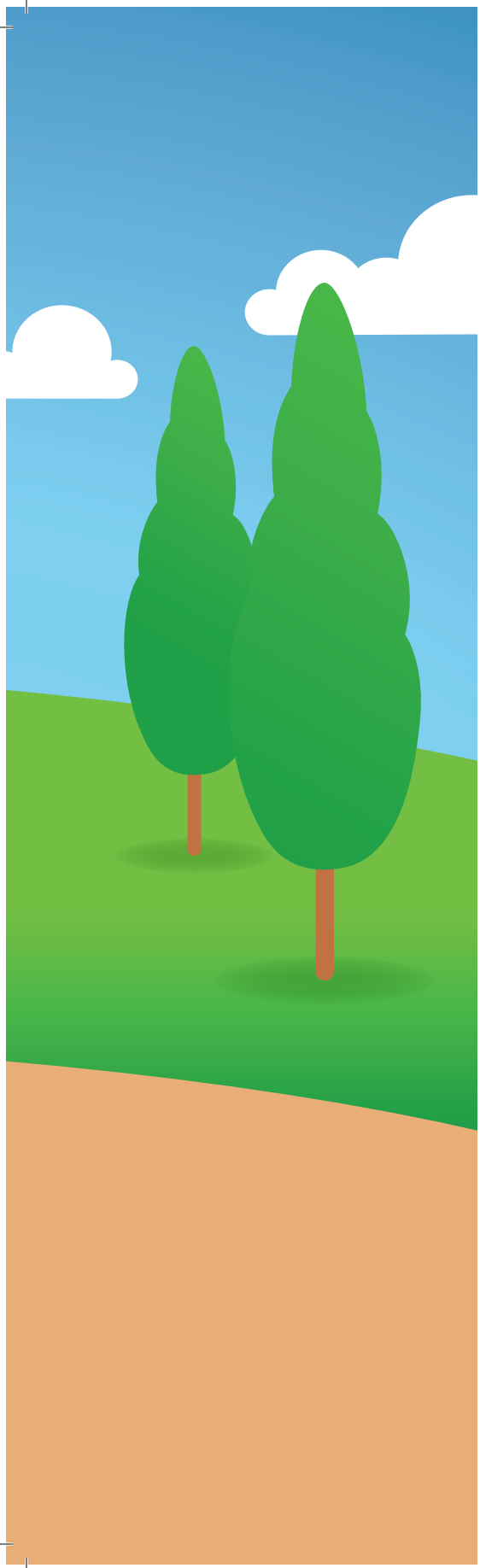
ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Examples and instructions can be found on The Village's Pinterest boards.

✓ Create an Advent wreath to use throughout the Advent season.

✓ Create a nativity scene to use throughout the Advent season. If you would like to make this activity last the entire season, consider creating just the stable, animals and Mary and Joseph this week.

✓ Complete the **Healthy World, Sick World** and **Candles of Advent** coloring cards at the back of this guide.



WEEK 2

The Promise Perfectly Kept: The Birth of Jesus

Set aside 10 minutes one night this week to talk about God's mercy in sending a Savior. The only materials needed are five candles, matches and a Bible.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light both last week's candle and a second candle.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passages out loud:

And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:3–7

And there, in the stable, amongst the chickens and the donkeys and the cows, in the quiet of the night, God gave the world his wonderful gift. The baby that would change the world was born. His baby son.

Jesus Storybook Bible (p. 182)

REFLECTION
Have an adult read the commentary below.

Do you remember the promise we talked about last week, God's promise to send a Rescuer? His promise to send Jesus? Well, Jesus came, just like God said He would!

After thousands of years of waiting, on an ordinary night, Jesus came. God gave His people hints and clues about how Jesus would come. He told them that Jesus would come from Bethlehem, be a ruler and bring peace. Many expected a soldier; some expected a politician. No one expected a baby. But that's how Jesus came.

ASK: *If you had been an Israelite, how would you have expected the promised Savior to come?*

Mary and Joseph lived in a town called Nazareth. One day, the king ordered every person back to their hometown to be counted for something called a census. Mary and Joseph traveled a long way to the town of Bethlehem, where Joseph's family was from. When they got to Bethlehem, the town was full of other travelers, and Mary and Joseph had nowhere to stay. Instead, they found a stable to sleep in. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby, and Jesus, the Savior, was born.

ASK: *How do you think Joseph and Mary felt when they finally got to Bethlehem and realized they had nowhere to stay? Do you think God knew they felt this way?*

Jesus, the King of heaven, left His perfect home to be born a baby to a young man and woman. He became fragile and helpless. His room that night was a stable—dirty, smelly and full of noisy animals. His bed was not kingly and luxurious; it was a box that animals ate out of. Mary had to wipe old, rotten food out of the manger and cover it with poky straw before she laid her tiny baby in it.

ASK: *Is a stable the place you would expect the Savior to be born? Why do you think God decided for His one and only Son to be born there?*

Everything happened that night exactly as God had planned and promised. Jesus came, just like God said He would. God saw that we needed to be rescued from sin. He cared about us in our need, and He acted. He sent Jesus.

The events of that night, in that stable in the little town of Bethlehem, would change the world forever.

God shows us many things about what's He's like in the birth of Jesus. How do you see that God is compassionate—that He sees, cares and acts when His children are in need—in this part of the Advent narrative? What other attributes of God do you see?

PRAYER

Have one family member say a prayer to thank God for sending Jesus to be born as a baby who would save us from our sins.

SONG

As a family, sing or listen to "Away in a Manger." As you do, read carefully through the lyrics and explain any words that might be unfamiliar to your kids. Ask them what they learn about Jesus from this song.

Away in a manger,
no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid
down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked
down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus,
asleep on the hay.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

This week, keep the promise you made to your family during last week's family Advent time. Talk about how you fulfilled the hints and clues you gave them. Discuss the experience of waiting: What was it like to wait? What was it like to finally experience what you had been waiting and hoping for? Remember together God's faithfulness in sending a Savior. It happened just as He said it would.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Examples and instructions can be found on The Village's Pinterest boards.

✓ Continue making your nativity set. This week, create the baby Jesus piece and add it to the set.

✓ Create a set of ornaments that show the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus' birth and their fulfillments in the New Testament.

✓ Create a nativity scene out of Legos.

✓ Use a sock and stuffing to create a baby Jesus doll, wrapped in fabric scraps. Make a manger for the doll out of a paper sack. Let your preschooler care for baby Jesus and have him/her use it to retell Jesus' birth story throughout the week.

✓ Complete the **Mary and Joseph Travel to Bethlehem** and **The Nativity** coloring cards at the back of this guide.

WEEK 3

Tell of His Coming: The Shepherds and Angels

Set aside 10 minutes one night this week to talk about how God showed His glory to the shepherds on the night Jesus was born. The only materials needed are five candles, matches and a Bible.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light the candles from the first two weeks and a third candle.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passages out loud:

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

Luke 2:8–12

Behind the angel they saw a strange glowing cloud–except it wasn't a cloud, it was angels...troops and troops of angels, armed with light! And they were singing a beautiful

song: "Glory to God! To God be Fame and Honor and all our Hoorays!"
Jesus Storybook Bible (p. 188)

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.
Luke 2:15–17

REFLECTION
Have an adult read the commentary below.

As Mary and Joseph held their newborn son during those late hours of the night, God began spreading the wonderful news of Jesus' birth. And He began with an unusual group of people.

ASK: *Whom would you expect God to tell first that the promised Rescuer had come?*

Kings, queens and religious leaders were not the first people to hear about the birth of Jesus. Instead, God told the most unimportant of people His good news first. Back in those days, people looked down on shepherds and even hated them. Most people considered them criminals, thieves and liars. Yet these were the first people to hear that the Rescuer had come. And the way they heard that good news was nothing short of amazing.

While the shepherds watched their sheep in a field outside of Bethlehem, an angel appeared. The Bible tells us that the shepherds were filled with great fear. This angel that appeared to them was no baby with wings and a harp sitting on a cloud, like some stories might describe. No, this angel was a warrior of the Lord. And he shined with the glory of God. The bright radiance of heaven itself interrupted the deep darkness of the night. It was as if God peeled back the curtain of heaven and gave the shepherds a small glimpse of Himself.

ASK: *How do you think the shepherds reacted when they saw the angel of the Lord?*

The angel told the shepherds not to be afraid. God did what He had promised—He sent Jesus to rescue God's people from their sins. God was making peace between Himself and sinners through Jesus.

Upon telling the shepherds the good news of Jesus' birth and how to

find Him, the angel was joined by thousands of other angels who began singing about the greatness of God. That dark, quiet night sky filled with a beautiful, blinding light and roaring song that left the shepherds forever changed. Once they had heard the news, the shepherds were desperate to go and find Jesus and see the marvelous thing God had done.

ASK: *What is the greatest news someone has ever shared with you? What did you want to do in response?*

So the shepherds abandoned their sheep and raced to Bethlehem. Once they saw baby Jesus there in the manger, they left the stable and began telling everyone they saw the good news that the Savior had come. God used this group of men—men everyone despised—to tell the world that Jesus had come. As Jesus would do throughout His life, God was coming to sinners to show them the way to salvation.

ASK: *How can we be like the shepherds? As a family, whom can we tell that Jesus came to save sinners?*

God shows us many things about what He's like through the birth of Jesus. How do you see that God is glorious—that He shows His greatness and worth—in this part of the Advent narrative? What other attributes of God do you see?

PRAYER

Have one family member say a prayer to thank God for sending angels to share the good news of Jesus' birth to sinners just like us.

SONG

As a family, sing or listen to "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." As you do, read carefully through the lyrics and explain any words that might be unfamiliar to your kids. Ask them what they learn about Jesus from this song.

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th' angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest heav'n adored:
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of the favored one.
Veil'd in flesh, the Godhead see;
Hail, th'incarnate Deity:
Pleased, as man, with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail! the heav'n born Prince of Peace!
Hail! the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die:
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

FAMILY ACTIVITY

One night this week, go out caroling as a family. As you visit homes of neighbors, friends and family, sing songs of praise about the birth and salvation of Jesus. It might be easiest to start at the home of someone you know who loves Jesus as you do. Sing praises to God and invite them to join you at the next house.

Make sure you visit at least one home of people who do not love and trust Jesus. Just like God showed grace and love to the lowliest of sinners, share the good news of Jesus' birth with someone who does not know God. Maybe that person will hear the good news and will believe in Jesus.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

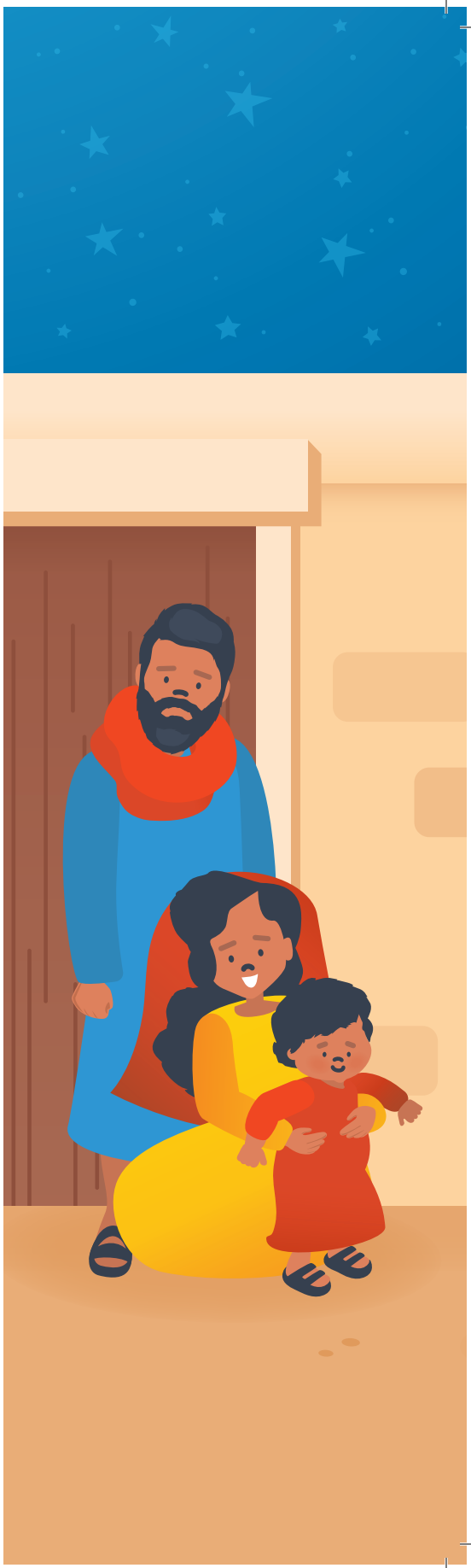
Examples and instructions can be found on The Village's Pinterest boards.

✓ Continue making your nativity set. This week, create the shepherds and angel pieces and add them to the set.

✓ Spend time imagining what the "glory of the Lord" shining down on the shepherds was like. Draw what you think it looked like. Or turn off the lights and recreate it with flashlights, candles, props and loud singing.

✓ Draw or paint what you think the night sky might have looked like when the angels appeared to the shepherds.

✓ Complete the **Angels** and **Shepherds** coloring cards at the back of this guide.



WEEK 4

The Promise for All Peoples: The Journey of the Magi

Set aside 10 minutes one night this week to talk about how only God is worthy of all glory. Consider sitting outside as you talk about the journey of the Magi, drawing particular attention to the stars in the night sky above you. The only materials needed are five candles, matches and a Bible.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light the candles from the first three weeks and a fourth candle.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passages out loud:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

Matthew 2:1–2

The journey that had begun so many centuries before had led three wise men here. To a little town. To a little house. To a little child. To the king God had promised David all those years before.

Jesus Storybook Bible (p. 198)

And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.
Matthew 2:11–12

REFLECTION
Have an adult read the commentary below.

The first people God told about Jesus' birth were the shepherds. He used a spectacular mass of angels to shout from the skies that Jesus had come. But the angels weren't alone in proclaiming the good news that night, and the shepherds weren't the only people to learn of the Rescuer's coming.

That same night, God placed a special star in the sky, a bright body of light that announced the birth of the King. Some men in a faraway country saw this star. These men were called Magi. They were educated men who studied the skies and nature. Most scholars believe these men came from Persia, or modern-day Iran. There was something very special about these men.

Throughout the Bible, God promised to send a Rescuer to save the Israelites from their sins. But these Magi were not Israelites; they were Gentiles. That means they were not from Abraham's family and likely did not know and worship God. But that night, God did something that no one expected.

By placing that star in the sky, God showed unbelievable mercy toward all people. In showing the Magi that Jesus, the King of heaven, had been born, God was extending salvation to people of all nations.

When the Magi saw the special star that God had placed in the sky, they left their home country to find Jesus. Their journey took a long time. They did not arrive in Bethlehem the night Jesus was born. In fact, it may have taken them up to two years to reach the place where Jesus was.

The Bible tells us that when the Magi found the place where Jesus was living with Mary and Joseph, they entered the house, bowed down and worshiped this small child who had come to save sinners. They then gave Jesus precious, costly gifts.

ASK: *Why do you think the Magi were willing to leave their homes and families and travel for such a long time to find Jesus? What did they know and believe about Him? Why do you think they brought baby Jesus such special, expensive gifts?*

Throughout the Advent story, we see that God is generous. He sent a company of angels to shout the good news of Jesus' birth to the shepherds, and He put a special star in the sky to guide men from

a faraway country to Jesus. He desires that all people know, love, trust and obey Him. And God promises that one day men, women and children from every tribe, tongue and nation will worship Jesus. God will rescue people from all over the world, and we will worship Him as He deserves.

God shows us many things about what He's like through the birth of Jesus. How do you see that God is worthy—that only He deserves all glory—in this part of the Advent narrative? What other attributes of God do you see?

PRAYER

Have one family member say a prayer to praise God and ask Him to show people of all nations the good news that Jesus came to save sinners.

SONG

As a family, sing or listen to "O Come All Ye Faithful." As you do, read carefully through the lyrics and explain any words that might be unfamiliar to your kids. Ask them what they learn about Jesus from this song.

O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him,
Born the King of angels:
O come let us adore Him;
O come let us adore Him;
O come let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

Sing choirs of angels,
sing in exultation;
Sing all ye citizens
of heaven above;
Glory to God, glory in the highest:
O come let us adore Him;
O come let us adore Him;
O come let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing:
O come let us adore Him;
O come let us adore Him;
O come let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Spend time this week looking at a map of the world. Play a game where you name a country and your kids try to find it. Talk together about what it would be like to live in a different culture with a different language and customs. Point out places in the world where people aren't free to openly worship Jesus or talk about Him.

✓ Look together at the list of missionaries on our church website.

Pick one person or family and pray for them by name. If possible, write them an email or letter of encouragement.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Examples and instructions can be found on The Village's Pinterest boards.

✓ Continue making your nativity set. This week, create the Magi pieces and add them to the set.

✓ Create luminaries for your front yard, sidewalk or porch to remind your family of the star God put in the sky to tell the Magi of Jesus' birth. Take paper lunch bags and draw or punch out a star on each bag. Fill the bottom of the bags with sand to keep them from blowing away. Place a battery-operated candle inside.

✓ Complete the **Magi** coloring card at the back of this guide.

Christmas Eve

Set aside 10 minutes one night this week to talk about God's mercy and compassion in sending a Savior. The only materials needed are five candles, matches and a Bible.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one person light the candles from the first four weeks, remembering together what you've learned about God's faithfulness during Advent. After reading Luke 2:1–20, provided below, have another person light the fifth candle—the Christ candle.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one family member read the following passage out loud:

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the

town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.
Luke 1:1-20

PRAYER
Have one person pray, thanking God for His incredible faithfulness in sending Jesus to save His people from their sins.

SONG
Sing or listen to "Silent Night" together. As you do, read carefully through the lyrics and explain any words that might be unfamiliar to your kids. Ask them what they learn about Jesus from this song.

Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
'Round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heav'nly hosts sing "Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!"

Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light

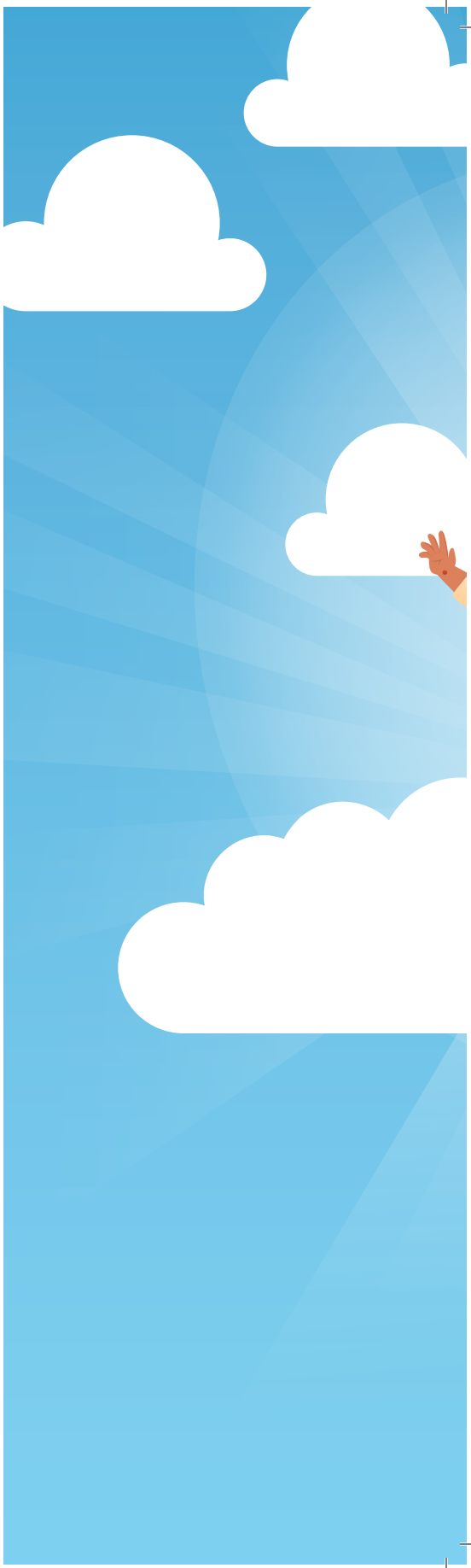
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth!
Jesus, Lord at Thy birth!

Silent night! Holy night!
Wondrous star lend thy light;
With the angels let us sing
"Alleluia" to our King;
"Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!"

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Plan to have a birthday party for Jesus on Christmas Day! Use the provided template to create your own cake topper. Spend time as a whole family gathering ingredients, making a cake and decorating it. As you do so, remind your family that we have a reason to celebrate. God promised a Savior and sent us Jesus, the hope of the world!

See the **Christmas Cake Topper** template at the back of this guide.



WEEK FIVE

The Promise of Jesus' Return

Set aside 10 minutes one night this week to talk about God's promise that Jesus will return. The only materials needed are five candles, matches and a Bible.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

As a family, light all five candles. Talk about how Jesus, the Light, came into the world to pierce the darkness of sin once and how He will return to do away with it forever.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passages out loud:

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.
Luke 21:27–28

"I am going to show you a secret, John," Jesus said, "about when I come back." "Write down what you see so God's children can read it, and wait with happy excitement. I'm on my way...I'll be there soon."
Jesus Storybook Bible (p. 342)

REFLECTION

Have an adult read the commentary below.

Jesus came, just like God said He would. But God's promises don't end

there. Just like God's people waited with eager anticipation for Jesus to come and rescue them from their sins, we are waiting, too.

God made us another promise. He promised that Jesus would return to earth. He has already saved us from our sins if we love and trust Him. But when He comes the second time, He will save us from all the brokenness that sin has caused in the world.

Just like before, God has given us hints and clues about how and when Jesus will return. And just like before, we wait. Sometimes we wait patiently. Sometimes we wait with tears and frustration because we can't wait to live in a world without any sin. Sometimes we forget and wonder if Jesus really will come back. But God is faithful—even when we are faithless. And Jesus will come back.

This time, Jesus will not come in the middle of the night as a baby. He will not be weak and helpless. The Bible tells us that when Jesus comes back, He will ride out of the sky on a

horse, carrying a sword. He will do battle with Satan and He will win. Our Rescuer is coming back!

ASK: *How do you think we should be waiting for Jesus' return? What should we do as we wait?*

While we wait, we wait with hope. We live lives of joy, peace and compassion. We strive to be more like Jesus, every day putting sin to death. And we tell others that Jesus came to save sinners in hopes that they will love and trust in Him, too.

Jesus is coming back. We don't know when, but we know He's coming—soon. So be ready. Soon we will worship our King, as He deserves, forever. Come, Lord Jesus, come!

ASK: *As we read these verses and remember God's faithfulness to send a Rescuer and His promise that Jesus will come again, what attributes of God do you see?*

PRAYER

Have one family member say a prayer, asking Jesus to come again soon.

SONG

As a family, listen to or watch "God With Us" by Folk Angel (featuring Isaac Wimberley). To find the video, visit **www.vimeo.com/32459389**.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Together, read 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and talk about what Jesus' return will be like, look like and sound like. What do you learn from this passage?

Ask your children what questions they have about Jesus' return and if it's something that scares them to think about. Assure them that Jesus' return will usher in a world with no more sin, sickness, sadness, fights, punishment or having to eat foods they don't like. Even better, those who love and trust Jesus will be with Him forever with no separation. We should look to and long for Jesus' return. And while we wait, we should take seriously His command to love Him first and most, know His Word, care for the poor and share the gospel.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Examples and instructions can be found on The Village's Pinterest boards.

✓ Draw or paint what you think Jesus' return might look like.

✓ Spend time outside watching the clouds. After Jesus died and came back to life, He returned to heaven by going up into the clouds. The Bible tells us He will return, coming out of the clouds. Spend time imagining what Jesus' return will look like and pray for Him to come soon.

Additional Activities for Families During the Advent Season

The hope and goal for believing parents in raising their children is to point them to the gospel of Jesus continually in hopes that God will save them. This can seem like an overwhelming task at times. Where do we start? What do we do? How do we point our children to Jesus in the everyday rhythm of life?

To help answer these questions, we ask parents to consider three areas of life as they think about family discipleship: time, moments and milestones.

Time – Create intentional time in the rhythm of your family's life to think about, talk about and live out the gospel.

Moments – Capture and leverage moments in the course of everyday life for the purpose of gospel-centered conversations.

Milestones – Recognize and remember significant spiritual milestones of God's work in the life of your family.

In an effort to help families focus on time, moments and milestones during the Advent season, we have given additional activities in each of these areas.

Activities to help you create intentional **TIME**:

★ Make a set of Christmas ornaments to remind you of the prophecies of Jesus' birth and their fulfillments.

★ Spend time imagining what the "glory of the Lord" shining down on the shepherds was like. Draw what you think it looked like or turn off the lights and recreate it with flashlights, candles, props and loud singing.

★ Make a Christmas card for someone who does not love and trust Jesus. Wish them a merry Christmas and tell them that Jesus came to save sinners!

★ Consider a way your family can serve in the community during the Advent season. Here are a few ideas:

✓ *Adopt an angel and shop for them together.*

✓ *Visit an elderly care center and sing carols for the residents.*

✓ *Serve a meal at a homeless assistance shelter.*

✓ *Take dinner to someone you know who is lonely or in need.*

✓ *Play hide-and-seek and talk about how Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Thank God for sending Jesus.*

Ideas for capturing teachable
MOMENTS:

★ Give hints about Christmas gifts your children will be receiving to build anticipation in their hearts. Remind them of the "hints" God gives us in Scripture of what Jesus' birth and second coming will be like. There is no greater gift than loving and trusting Jesus!

★ Have a kid-friendly nativity set for your children to play with. As they play, retell the Christmas narrative.

★ As you're out shopping, look for opportunities to remind your children that all material things are temporary and will ultimately never satisfy them. The only lasting hope is Jesus.

★ When you see Christmas lights, talk about which lights and houses are your favorites and why. We are attracted to lights because we are made for the Light. Talk with your children about how these lights remind us of Jesus, the best and perfect Light of the World.

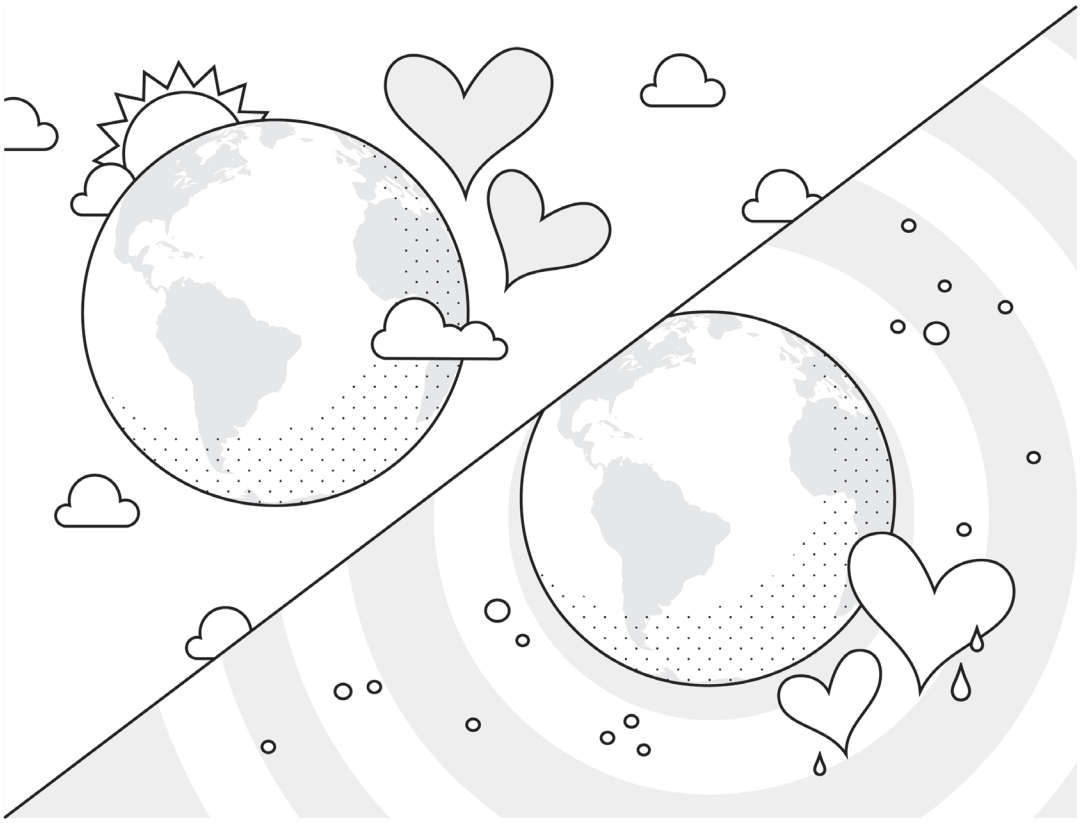
★ If carolers come to your house, remind your children of the angels who appeared to the shepherds proclaiming the good news of Jesus' birth.

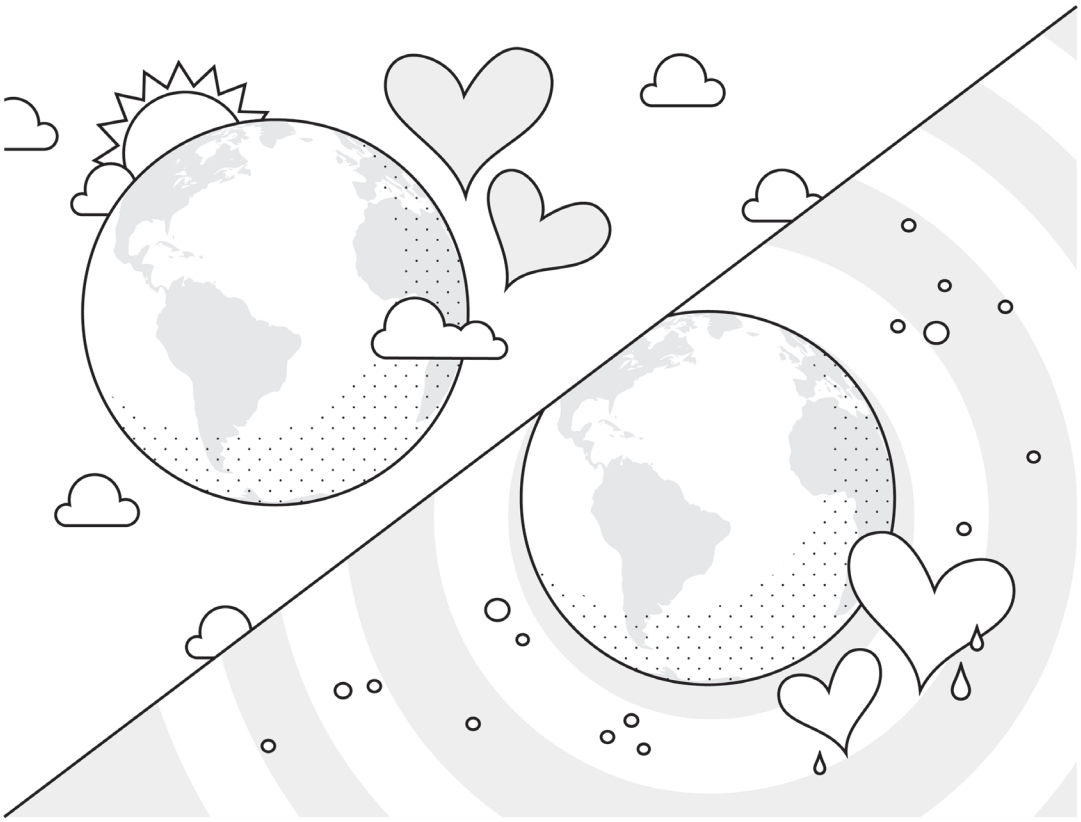
Ways to recognize and remember
MILESTONES:

Milestones are significant moments in the life of a family. Not every family will have a milestone to remember this Advent season. If your family does, take time to recognize the work that God is doing in your family and worship Him.

Celebrating a new family member
If another person joined your family this year, there is much to celebrate. Families grow through the birth or adoption of a child, marriage or taking in a person who needs love and support. Often, when a new person joins a family, they do not have many Christmas ornaments to add to the family tree. Make or purchase a special ornament for your new family member to recognize and remember God's goodness to bring you together.

First Christmas without a family member
Celebrating can be hard when your family is grieving the loss of a loved one. Take time to help your child remember and talk about that special person if they need to. Help them to remember the good times and memories they have about that person. If your loved one was a believer, talk about the beautiful reality that they are now with Jesus. Hang an ornament or put out a special decoration that reminds your family of that person. Be honest with God about your sadness and ask Him to make your hearts joyful again.





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Instructions: Cut out both images on dotted line. Adhere popsicle stick in the middle; glue or tape back to back. Celebrate the birth of Jesus as a family!

Christmas Cake Topper

LITTLE VILLAGE

PRESCHOOL MINISTRY

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