

2020

Advent Devotional

Week 4



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PEACE

Week 4 - December 20, 2020

“Just What I Wanted”

Celebrating with Children

Bring the family together and offer a simple prayer. You may read the one here or offer your own. Feel free to do each section in any order.

Prayer and Candle Lighting

Dear God, we are so excited for the coming Christmas day! We have been waiting a long time for this day and are thrilled that it will be this week. We light the first candle and remember that we began Advent in the darkness, hoping for the light of Jesus to fill our world. We light the second candle and remember the prophet's words that foretold of Jesus' arrival. We light the third candle and remember the joy and anticipation we have felt this Advent. With each week, we have added more light into the Advent wreath and our lives. (Pause to light the first three candles, two purple/blue and one pink.) We light this last candle and remember the gifts of this time together. (Pause to light the final purple/blue candle.) Help us to remember our many gifts every day. Amen.

Read the scripture

Luke 1: 28-30 - And [the angel] came to [Mary] and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.”

Activity: Using paper, crayons, markers or any other art supplies, create a little note that says “I love you” to wrap into your presents for others this year. Use lots of hearts and color to show your love. Next, draw a picture of the best present you ever got. Add a tag that shows who sent you this present. Draw a big heart around this present that shows how much love was included in that present. If you can, give that present to the person who gave you the present and say “thank you!”

Closing Song: “Away in A Manger”

<https://youtu.be/GeoM6E2lsrA>

Story Time:

Our story today is by Emily Bredthauer. Click [HERE](#) or read the following: <https://youtu.be/OxsvOLFcguy>

Take a minute to do some thinking with me: what was the BEST present you have ever received? No, no... really, take just a minute and call that present to mind. Okay, do you have that present firmly in your mind? Good!

Now, think about when you received it? A birthday? Maybe it was a Christmas present? Oh - it was a surprise present? Even better!

How did you feel when you got your BEST gift ever? Were you happy? Had you been waiting a long time for it? Or maybe it was something you didn't even know was going to be the best present ever until you unwrapped it?

Presents are fun, aren't they? Especially at Christmas time! Sometimes presents come wrapped in the most lovely wrapping, and they look so pretty and festive - and they're so wonderful to unwrap and open!

When I was 9 or 10, we had a huge family Christmas! Well, it seemed huge to me with both sets of my grandparents there, plus all of my aunts and uncles - lots of people in one house for the day. And I got the thing that I'd been hoping for: a Barbie car! Oh, I was so, so happy! It was exactly what I was hoping to receive for Christmas - now my Barbie's could drive! It was the best! My sisters and I played with that car, argued over that car (because my mean parents made me share) and had a grand time with it for a while until it gradually began to fall apart from so much play. It was great ... until it wasn't.

But do you know, there was something else in the box that I didn't see at the time. I think sometimes we miss this invisible present ingredient: Love! That Christmas was filled with love from all the people there who loved me and in with the Barbie car was a big helping of love from my parents.

Whatever might be under the tree for you this year, don't forget to look for the invisible love that's inside each package. Big or small, most presents are wonderful for a limited time, but it's that love in there that will last forever and ever.

Discussion Questions

- What's the best gift you've ever received? Who was it from?
- How do you think the gift giver felt about you? Was it easy to see the love?
- What's the best gift you've ever given someone else?
- What's the worst gift you've ever received? How do you think that person felt about you?
- If God sent you a gift today, what do you think it would be? Would you even notice it?

Week 4 - December 20, 2020

“It’s Just What I Wanted!”

PEACE

Celebrating alone, with youth and/or adults

Set aside time alone, or together, online, or on a phone call, and offer a simple prayer. You may read the one here, or offer your own. Feel free to do each section in any order.

Prayer and Candle Lighting:

We have been waiting for many things, including Christmas. We light the first candle and remember that we began Advent in the darkness, hoping for the light of Jesus to fill our world. We light the second candle and remember the prophet’s words that foretold of Jesus’ arrival. We light the third candle and remember the joy and anticipation we have felt this Advent. With each week, we have added more light into the Advent wreath and our lives. (Pause to light the first three candles, two purple/blue and one pink.) We light this last candle and remember the gifts of this time together. (Pause to light the final purple/blue candle.) Help us to be mindful of our many gifts every day. Amen.

Read the scripture: Luke 1:26-31

“In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.””

Expanded Scripture: [Luke 1:26-38](#) The Angel appears to Mary.

Sing: “Away in a Manger”

<https://youtu.be/QeoM6E2lsrA>

This week’s story is by Emily Bredthauer. You can find a video of her reading it [here](#).

Link: <https://youtu.be/-TxaKdEjwco>

When each of my children were in their preschool years, they had what I like to think of as “the most delighted Christmases.” They were delighted by everything! They were thrilled at even one present with their name on it. They loved unwrapping any gift. And then came the part that we all enjoyed the most: the gasp and the final unveiling of the packaged gift and the exclamation of, “It’s just what I wanted!!” Goodness, they were just delighted - with everything in that whole experience!

Of course, we all knew it couldn’t possibly have been “just what they wanted” because typically, they didn’t even know that such a thing existed until they pulled the final piece of wrapping off. And indeed sometimes the “it’s just what I wanted” was quickly followed with “What is it?” which just made the whole thing more fun.

The delight of a three year old was a very lovely experience and it is one that has passed from our household for now. But I think that delight gets to the heart of what we all want at Christmas: to be seen and to be loved.

When we discover a present under the tree with our name on it - we feel seen. Someone thought of us! Someone took the time to think of us, called our names to their mind and decided to give us a gift. Even a dreaded regift means that someone thought of us.

When the gift is opened, there are two things that come out: whatever may be inside physically and an invisible side of love. Sometimes the gift is a truly wonderful one and the love is obvious. Sometimes we are puzzled by the gift, but the love is usually still present, even if harder to see.

Let's face it, some people are not good gift givers and haven't the slightest clue about what a person actually would like to receive. I have a friend who consistently misses the mark and has given me the strangest assortment of items through the years. I suspect some of them were re-gifts because they seemed more like her style than mine. But here's the thing: even though she was a relatively terrible gift-giver, I always felt loved by her. Sometimes, the strangest or most curious gifts allow us to see the love even more.

Just like with many of our gifts, God arrives to us in a physical present: Jesus. Mary, Joseph, and all the heavenly hosts rejoice right along with the shepherds, sheep, and kings. I suspect that while the assembled people and animals had an inkling that this baby was a special gift, I also suspect they didn't know quite what that gift was. Sort of like a three year old's delight: it's just what we've always wanted - for God to be *right with us - but also, what is it? God chose to send... a baby? Well, hmmm...*

God sees us, calls us to mind, and sends us a gift of love - and it's just exactly what we wanted.

Discussion Questions

What's the best gift you've ever received? Who was it from?

How do you think the gift giver felt about you? Was it easy to see the love?

What's the best gift you've ever given someone else?

What's the worst gift you've ever received? How do you think that person felt about you?

If God sent you a gift today, what do you think it would be? Would you even notice it?

Closing Prayer

Oh God, in the vastness of this universe, it is remarkable that you see me. Not only do you notice me, you give me your love daily, even when I do not notice. Thank you for giving me the gift of love on Christmas and every day. And help me to share that love with everyone I meet. In Jesus name, Amen.



Additional options

You might want to keep a simple journal during this Advent season. Below are some suggested prompts that coincide with this week's theme and stories. Read ahead a day or two as some days require a bit of homework.

Week 4 Journal Questions:

- Day 1: Winter Solstice is December 21. It is the shortest day in the northern hemisphere with the fewest hours of daylight. What does that mean to you?
- Day 2: As Christmas nears, are you excited that Christmas is so near or overwhelmed that there is still too much to be done?
- Day 3: Tomorrow is Christmas Eve which brings a lot of excitement for some. Do you share the excitement of today and/or what other emotions are you experiencing as we draw near to Christmas? What made today special?
- Day 4: Christmas Eve - Looking back over your Advent Journals, what did you learn about yourself that surprised you? What filled you with Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace?
- Day 5: God sends you this gift of Love in Jesus on Christmas. And God sends you that same gift every other day. How does that feel?