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“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

—Matthew 20:28

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Serving Others

Families can follow Christ's example by serving others. For each week of Advent, we've posted a list of ideas for service. You can download those lists at ThrivingFamily.com. Search “Ideas for Serving Others This Christmas.”

Join the conversation.

On Facebook, we'll give you a chance to talk with other parents about your family's journey through Advent. Be sure to “like” *Thriving Family* at [Facebook.com/ThrivingFamily](https://www.facebook.com/ThrivingFamily) and participate in the discussion.

You can find links to Scripture references for the names of Jesus that are included in this Advent calendar. Search “Names of Jesus” at ThrivingFamily.com.

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KNOWING *His* BY NAME



THE 2012
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FAMILY
ADVENT ACTIVITY CALENDAR

MAKE YOUR OWN ADVENT WREATH

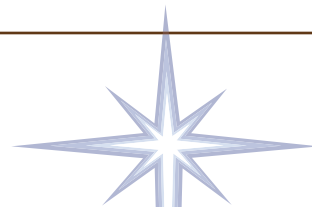
One of the most treasured traditions of the Advent season is the Advent wreath. You can make this wreath with your children out of live or plastic evergreen branches by fastening them into a circle with green twisty ties or lightweight wire. Then place four candleholders and tapered candles within the greenery. Three of the candles should be purple, and the fourth is rose-colored.

The wreath's evergreen branches represent God's faithfulness; they remain green during all seasons. The four tapered candles symbolize the world's long wait for the birth of the promised Christ child.

On the first day of Advent, light one of the purple candles. You can light it during dinner and blow out the flame when dinner is over. Every night during the first week of Advent, light the same candle. The next purple candle is lit throughout the second week of Advent, the rose-colored candle during the third week and the last purple candle during the fourth week.

Although traditional Advent wreaths have just four colored candles, many modern families place a thick, white candle in the center of the wreath's circle. It serves as a reminder that Christ is central to the holiday season. This candle is lit on Christmas Day.

—Selah Woody



BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

JOHN 8:58

DECEMBER

2

Ask the children to shout out “I am” statements surrounding the Christmas story. For example, “I am the one who told the shepherds about Christ’s birth.” The rest of the family can guess who the child is pretending to be.

We can describe ourselves in many ways: “I am a daughter”; “I am a son”; “I am a student.” Jesus described himself as “I am,” too, but He didn’t always add a title afterward. Through this statement, He was describing himself as God. Jesus has always been God and a part of His work in the world. He needs no explanation or title. He simply is and therefore can say, “I am.”



Serving others. Download a list of creative ideas for “Serving Siblings or Close Friends” this week. Search for it at ThrivingFamily.com.

ADVENT

An arrival or coming, especially one which is awaited
[from Latin *adventus*, from *advenīre*, from *ad-* to + *venīre* to come]

Taken from *World English Dictionary*

The Word

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

JOHN 1:1-3

DECEMBER

3

With your kids, inflate several balloons. Put the balloons on a table and blow them around. Can you see the breath that fills the balloons or moves them?

Things such as our breath and words aren't seen, but they can make things happen. God's words are even more powerful than ours. He spoke and created everything in the universe. Only God can do that. That's part of the reason that Jesus is called the "Word." He existed before the world was created. God made all things through the Word, who is Jesus. Jesus is the source of all things.

Son of David

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 1:1

DECEMBER

4

Find photos of grandparents, great-grandparents or other distant relatives. Talk about things that have been passed down to your children: beliefs, interests, talents, heirlooms. Discuss how family names are passed down, too.

Jesus was called the "Son of David" not because His dad's name was David but because His ancestor was King David, a special king whom God had chosen to rule over Israel. God had said that the Savior of the world would come from David's family line. And that Savior is Jesus!

f Join the conversation. If you were able to pick one famous person (not someone in the Bible) to be in your family tree, who would it be? Does your whole family agree? Share your answers with other parents at [Facebook.com/ThrivingFamily](https://www.facebook.com/ThrivingFamily).

True Vine

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

JOHN 15:1

DECEMBER

5

Tie yarn to something solid, such as a chair or table leg, and then weave the rest of the ball throughout the room, around furniture, through the banister, etc. Challenge your kids to trace the yarn back to the source.

The yarn is like a vine. A vine connects leaves to its roots, just as Jesus connects us to God. Through the vine, the plant receives water and food. Jesus is called the "True Vine." He provides the things we need from God, who is our source of life.

Lion of the Tribe of Judah

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

REVELATION 5:5

DECEMBER

6

Listen to a free audio clip from the Radio Theatre drama *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. (Search "Help From the Beavers" on [ThrivingFamily.com](https://www.thrivingfamily.com).) Mr. Beaver says that Aslan, the lion who symbolizes Jesus, is not safe, but he is good.

Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Lions are strong and courageous—even ferocious—but Jesus always uses His power for good. Jesus' earthly family was part of a bigger family (a tribe) known as "Judah," named for one of Jacob's 12 sons. People were expecting a savior, the Messiah, to come from this family. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah may not be "safe," but He is good. How do you think you will feel when you meet Him?

Bread of Life

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

JOHN 6:48-51

DECEMBER

7

Ask your kids how much bread they've eaten in the last few days. Remind them that hamburger buns, tortillas, pastries, etc., are all forms of bread. Talk about what would happen if we didn't nourish our bodies with food. When Moses and the Israelites were wandering in the desert, God provided manna to keep them alive. Without this special source of food, they would have died.

Our physical bodies need food. In the same way, our spirits need nourishment to stay strong, too. Our spirits need something special. Just as God provided manna for His people's physical needs, He also gave us Jesus, who is called the "Bread of Life," because He is the only one who can satisfy our spiritual hunger.

Rock

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-4

DECEMBER

8

Ask kids to stand on different items such as a pillow or an empty soda can. What would happen if you had to rely on those items beneath your feet to keep you steady? The pillow would become unstable and the can would flatten. Then have your kids stand on a concrete sidewalk or basement floor. How stable is the sidewalk or floor?

Jesus is our Rock. We don't stand on Him physically, but He provides the solid and sturdy base for how we view the world. He's there through all our troubles and is a solid foundation for our faith. He never loses His love for us. He never fails!

Mediator

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE


1 TIMOTHY 2:5-6

DECEMBER

9

Tell your family that if they want to talk to you, they must find someone else in the house to "connect" the two of you. The "connector" must hold your hand and a hand of the person who wants to talk with you. After playing this game awhile, explain that the person who serves as a connector is a "mediator."

People need a mediator because of sin. God, who is holy, must separate himself from sinners. Jesus is called a mediator because He reconciles, or connects, us with God. Because Jesus suffered and died for humankind's sins, He has become the perfect mediator between humans and God.

 **Serving others.** Teach your kids about serving others. Give them a list of ideas of how they can serve you this week. Download a starter list at ThrivingFamily.com. Search "Serving Your Family."

Counselor

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

ISAIAH 9:6

DECEMBER

10

With your child, talk about obstacles that might be in the way when walking to another room in your house. Then blindfold the child and guide her to her destination using only your voice. Redirect or comfort your child if she goes in the wrong direction.

Sometimes it feels like we're wearing a blindfold because we don't know how to work through a tough situation, like when we have disagreements with friends or are tempted to do things we shouldn't do. One of Jesus' names is Counselor. A counselor listens, guides and comforts. Jesus can guide us through any situation or problem because He sees and knows everything.

Lamb of God

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

JOHN 1:29

DECEMBER

11

Make handprint lambs with your kids. Trace each child's hand on construction paper, and cut out the shape. The fingers become the legs, and the thumb is the lamb's head. Glue cotton balls on the body, and color the legs and head. Older kids can write a list of what *obedience* means in their lives, such as "doing what my parents say" or "doing chores with a good attitude."

In Old Testament times when people sinned, God accepted a perfect lamb as a sacrifice for their sins. God sent Jesus to be our lamb. People saw lambs as innocent and gentle. Jesus, though He is powerful, chose to be gentle and offer himself as a sacrifice for our sins. He died so we can be forgiven. God no longer requires the blood of lambs. Jesus' sacrifice covers all sin.

Prince of Peace

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

ISAIAH 9:6

DECEMBER

12

Ask your kids to draw a new picture of a subject they've often drawn before. Tell them if they can keep drawing until you say, "Stop," you'll give them a treat. While they draw, try to distract them with noise, gentle tickling, jokes, etc. Explain that it's hard to accomplish a task in such chaos. Working in a peaceful environment would be much more effective.

Sin brought chaos into the orderly and peaceful world that God created. But Jesus came to restore peace and to give us the opportunity to have peace in our lives. He is our Prince of Peace.

f Join the conversation. The Christmas season is such a hectic time for families. In what area of your life would you like God's peace to reign this season? You can discuss this with other parents at [Facebook.com/ThrivingFamily](https://www.facebook.com/ThrivingFamily).

Great High Priest

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

HEBREWS 4:14

DECEMBER

13

Ask your children to walk a "tightrope" (a string lying on the floor) while balancing a book on their heads and on each of their open palms. Can they do it without dropping any of the books?

What if we had to be perfect all of our lives, never making a mistake? Could we do it? Explain to your kids that although they may mess up by dropping a book or falling off the "tightrope," those aren't sins. But sometimes the mistakes we make *are* sins. When we sin, Jesus represents us before the Father, ready to forgive us and help us do the right thing again. That's why He is called the "Great High Priest." A priest is someone who represents people before God. In Bible times, the high priest was the only one who could go into the holiest place in the temple. Today, Jesus is in heaven, speaking to God on our behalf.

f Join the conversation. In which aspect of parenting do you wish you could improve? How does God help you in that area? You can discuss this with other parents at [Facebook.com/ThrivingFamily](https://www.facebook.com/ThrivingFamily).

The Way

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

JOHN 14:6

DECEMBER

14

Help your child follow a maze puzzle, such as the *Clubhouse* magazine maze "Town of David." (Search "Only One Way" at [ThrivingFamily.com](https://www.thrivingfamily.com).) Discuss how there is one way to the end.

Just like there is only one way through the maze, there is only one way to enter a relationship with God. Jesus is called "the Way" because He is the only path to God. People have tried several other ways (following other gods, doing good things, giving money to charity), but none of these ways have helped them start a relationship with God. Jesus is the only way to God.

Truth

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

JOHN 14:6

DECEMBER

15

Ask your children to make three statements about a toy—two that accurately describe the toy and one that is inaccurate. Ask your kids to tell you which statements are true. Older kids can look for true and false statements in ads. Talk about why the writers of these ads may try to mislead people.

Jesus always tells the truth. He represents everything that is honest, good and true; but more than that, He is the Truth. He said that He came to die for our sins and one day we would live with Him and the Father. And that's a statement you can be sure is true.

Immanuel

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE


ISAIAH 7:14

DECEMBER

16

Read “The Parable of the Birds.” You can find this story by searching “Parable of the Birds” at ThrivingFamily.com.

Jesus has a special name—Immanuel—which means “God with us.” When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He was God in the flesh. We can't see God with our eyes or touch Him with our fingers, but people could see and touch Jesus. And because Jesus was human (while still being God), He completely understood what it was like to be human—to be tired, hungry, thirsty and tempted.

 **Serving others:** Download a list of opportunities for “Serving Neighbors and Your Community.” Search for it at ThrivingFamily.com.

Messiah

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

DANIEL 9:25

DECEMBER

17

Think of your children's abilities and spiritual gifts. Then gather your kids together and pray for them, specifically mentioning their gifts. Ask each child to think of one act of kindness that would use his or her gift. “Anoint” or task the child to perform the service this week.

Jesus was called “Messiah,” which means “the Anointed One.” God chose (anointed) Him for a special task on earth—to teach us more about God and to die for our sins. God gave Him the power and ability to help many people.

Holy and Righteous One

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

ACTS 3:14 AND JOHN 15:9-10

DECEMBER

18

Read through the moral dilemmas in “What Will You Do? Scenarios.” (Search “Scenarios” at ThrivingFamily.com.) Ask your children what they'd do in these situations. For example, if their friends tease an unpopular child, how would they react? When they choose well, explain that Jesus may have done the same thing. If they choose poorly, explain that Jesus felt pressure to make wrong choices when He was on earth, but He chose to do what was right—even as a child.

Jesus is called the “Holy and Righteous One” because His heart is pure and everything He does is right. When we're motivated to do what is right because of our love for God, we are doing what Jesus did. His desire to do what the Father wanted far outweighed any temptation.

Son of God

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

LUKE 1:35 AND MATTHEW 16:15-17

DECEMBER
19

Have your children write a simple announcement (in their own words) about Jesus. Roll up the paper like a scroll and allow them to read it aloud to you and your family. If possible, let them dress in all white, like an angel.

The first time Jesus was referred to as the “Son of God” was by the angel Gabriel. God sent Gabriel to Mary to tell her that she was going to have a baby and that the baby’s Father was none other than God.

Jesus had His Father’s special qualities: He loved all the people on the earth, had power to work miracles and had supernatural knowledge. When Jesus healed the blind man or multiplied the fish and bread, He was behaving like His heavenly Father.

f Join the conversation. What are some signs that your children’s behavior shows similarities to Jesus’ attitudes and actions? Share your experiences with other parents at [Facebook.com/ThrivingFamily](https://www.facebook.com/ThrivingFamily).

Son of Man

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

DANIEL 7:13-14 AND MATTHEW 24:30

DECEMBER
20

On slips of paper, write five miracles of Jesus and five things Jesus did that humans do. Ask your children to take turns drawing the slips out of a bowl and answering, “Was Jesus doing something that most humans do or something only He could do?”

Even though Jesus was God’s Son with all His heavenly qualities, Jesus was also human. That’s one of the reasons He was called the Son of Man. Jesus also understood what the prophet Daniel was talking about when he described someone “like a son of man, coming with the clouds.” This prophecy was talking about Jesus’ divine glory, which would be revealed at His Second Coming. So when Jesus declared himself the “Son of Man,” He was telling people His identity as both God and man.

Redeemer

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

JOB 19:25

DECEMBER
21

Hide coins around the house. Next, create a “jail” by cutting openings in a box or turning a laundry basket upside down. Place one of your child’s favorite stuffed animals or toys in the jail. Then have your child search the house for the coins. Give clues to find the coins, if necessary. When he finds all the coins, he can choose to buy freedom for the toys or keep the money.

As a result of sin, we became prisoners to our evil desires and behaviors. Jesus came to offer himself in exchange for our freedom. He gave His life to buy us out of our prison of sin—to become our Redeemer. His life turned out to be exactly what was needed to redeem us.

King of Kings

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

REVELATION 19:15-16

DECEMBER
22

Ask your kids who is in charge of your home, their sports team, their school. Who makes the final decisions? Then ask them to think of a couple of rules that, if broken, bring certain consequences.

When kings make rules, there is no tolerance for disobedience. There have been lots of kings. Each king ruled for a while, and then another king took his place. Jesus is different. He is the “King of kings,” and He will rule forever. All other leaders are under His authority.

Good Shepherd

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

JOHN 10:1-18

DECEMBER

23

Ask your children how turtles protect themselves from predators. How do horses protect themselves? Explain that sheep have no way to protect themselves. They would die if someone stronger and wiser weren't caring for them. Have your children draw pictures of sheep with the defense mechanisms of other animals, such as the powerful kicking legs of a horse.

Long ago, shepherds had a difficult, but important, job. A shepherd lived with his sheep to keep them safe from wild animals. He traveled with the sheep to places where they could find food and water. If a sheep was lost, the shepherd rescued it. Jesus called himself the "Good Shepherd" because He protects and rescues His own sheep—you and me—from harmful things that separate us from God.

Light of the World

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

JOHN 8:12

DECEMBER

24

Set up simple activities in an uncluttered space. Include tasks such as tying a shoe, writing a word and sorting blocks by color. Dim the lights or use flashlights in a dark room and let your children attempt to complete these tasks. Younger children might want to hold a parent's hand. Turn on the lights, and let them try again.

Ask your children to compare how it felt to work in darkness versus in the light. Jesus is called the "Light of the World." He helps us understand things about God in a way we couldn't clearly understand before, and He makes it possible for us to do the work God wants us to do.

Advent officially ends on Dec. 24 because on Dec. 25 the waiting is over! But here's one additional activity for the name above all names—Jesus—to help you celebrate the birth of our Savior.

Jesus

BEGIN WITH SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 1:21

DECEMBER

25

Ask your children if they know who picked their names. Explain that names are special, and when we hear our names spoken, it grabs our attention. Some people are named after family members. An angel told Joseph that the baby who would be born to Mary should be called "Jesus," which means "the Lord saves." God picked the name Jesus to show that He would save people from their sins. Today is a day of celebration after waiting all the days of Advent.