2020 has been a year immersed in many things: the pandemic, the fires, changes in work or school. We at Grace invite you to immerse this last month of 2020 in Jesus, the Glory of God!

We often think the solution for finding that idyllic inner peace is having more time. But what we need more than time is to slow down and identify God’s presence in our midst.

We want to help you do that with this spiritual practice of Advent. Choose to set aside time to focus on Christ and His coming as a means of bringing grace and truth into everything else we do this season.

Fight against discouragement as you attempt to gather as a family. Children bicker, candle wax spills, and meltdowns happen. The point isn’t a perfect time together; the point is simply time together focusing in on Jesus. If you end up focusing on Jesus’ forgiveness for unruly children or unruly parents, well, that works too! We pray these simple ideas can help your family make the most of this Christmas Season.

**Week 1: THE ETERNAL**

**Week 2: THE LIGHT**

**Week 3: THE GIFT**

**Week 4: THE GLORY**
Immersion ideas

Each week contains a short scripture reading in John 1, Illustration ideas ranging from youngest to oldest, implications for discussion, and “as you go” ideas to reinforce the truth to your children as you move through your week. For younger children: use your child’s Bible (page options from the Jesus Story book Bible are given.) For older children: have them take turns leading the family.

The lighting of the Advent candles is a fun and meaningful way to begin! Of course you don’t have to have a wreath to share the scriptures, stories, and ideas in this booklet. You can use any 4 candles you have on hand. The point of it all is to pause and refocus on Christ, the Glory of God among us!

Another idea is setting out your nativity as you go. Get as elaborate or as simple as you need, given the season your family is in! If you don’t have a nativity, you could build it with Legos or items from around the house; find a cardboard box to use as the stable, Legos, stuffed animals, etc...

Plant paperwhites or grass seeds. Over the next 4 weeks use this to illustrate waiting. (it looks like nothing is happening but....)

Visit the library and check out Christmas books and videos. Then keep these gathered together in their own section. For older ones, try collections of short stories by Louisa May Alcott, Norman Rockwell, or Charles Dickens

For Elementary age, be sure to initial this guide or your Family Devotion Log (draw a star to indicate advent).

Advent

AN ARRIVAL OR COMING, ESPECIALLY ONE WHICH IS AWAITED

World English Dictionary
The Eternal

JOHN 1:1-3

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.”

Jesus Storybook Bible reading p. 18

ILLUSTRATIONS

✴ Circles and Wreaths—where is the beginning? The end?
✴ Evergreen vs. deciduous trees: though not eternal, they contrast green needles vs bare branches.
✴ Perspective of creation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kpr-bnJ_K78 (or search Cosmic Eye Remastered Version)

IMPLICATIONS

✴ Compare and contrast the definitions of eternal vs. temporal
✴ From the definitions, list what in your life is temporal, and what is eternal.
✴ What comfort do you receive from the truth of Jesus always existing.
✴ What aspect of eternal life gives you hope for today?
✴ What aspect of Jesus’ presence at creation fascinates you?

AS YOU GO

✴ count the wreaths and circles you see—maybe keep a running total all season long.
✴ Look for other things that seem to have no beginning or ending.
“What’s the best thing you’ve learned about storms?”

ASKED THE HORSE

“That they make us kinder.”

SAID THE BOY

“and that they end.”

CHARLIE MACKESY

THE BOY THE MOLE THE FOX AND THE HORSE
The Light

JOHN 1:4–9

“In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.”

Jesus Storybook Bible reading: The Light of the World! P.184

ILLUSTRATION

★ Using candles, glow sticks, or flashlights, shine them first with the lights on. Then turn off the lights. What is different? The same? Talk about the ways Jesus is the light of the world.
★ Poke holes in a box and place a light inside. Turn off the lights, what do you see? What does the light do? How is the darkness from inside the box cast out?

IMPLICATIONS

★ Think about the darkness in your world, school, neighborhood, home, and heart? How can the light of Jesus make a difference?
★ How have you misunderstood the life Jesus offers?
★ What counterfeit forms of “life” have you pursued instead?
★ What comfort do you receive knowing Jesus, the true light, has come into the world to bring light to every man. Who can you share that comfort with this season?

AS YOU GO

★ Take the long way home this week to look at Christmas Lights.
★ Create luminaries: Place sand in a paper lunch sack; add a real or led candle. Line your walkway with them. Older kids could punch designs in the sacks for the light to shine through.
★ Hang Christmas lights in your child’s room. At bedtime, lie with them looking at the lights, talking about Jesus.
“There are dark shadows on the earth, but its lights are stronger in the contrast.”

CHARLES DICKENS
THE PICKWICK PAPERS
The Gift

JOHN 1:10-13

“He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

Jesus Storybook Bible reading: p.176

ILLUSTRATIONS

✶ Include your child in wrapping presents in disguise. (Using ugly wrapping, placing a desired gift inside a boring gift (gift card inside socks,) etc.) Talk about how the receiver will probably think of his or her gift at first, and how we often don’t recognize God’s gifts because they come in mysterious wrapping.

✶ The manger: a feeding trough for a King’s bed!!

✶ We see gifts all throughout this season, pointing us back to the greatest gift that Jesus gave to us of His glory and forgiveness

IMPLICATIONS

✶ What rights do we have as children of God?

✶ How do these rights compare/contract to the rights we feel entitled?

✶ What does it mean to be born of God? (see also John 3)

✶ What practical steps can you take to insure you recognize Jesus when He shows Himself to you?

AS YOU GO

✶ Keep your eyes open to various messages of what the world is communicating about Christmas. Where is the temporal being promoted, where the eternal? How is the world not recognizing Jesus?

✶ Watch an age-appropriate nativity story movie: The Nativity Story, The Star of Bethlehem, Veggie Tales The Star of Christmas, etc. The Grinch is a good illustration of not recognizing the Gift of Christmas from the gifts of Christmas!
“The Son of God BECAME A MAN to enable men TO BECOME SONS OF GOD.”

C.S. LEWIS
The Glory

JOHN 1:14

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Jesus Storybook Bible reading: p.200

ILLUSTRATIONS

* One way to think of our Christmas trees is as a metaphor: Jesus died and rose again in splendor in the same way a tree was cut down to its own death to be placed upward again in glory and splendor.
* Glory indicates worth, praise, honor, and magnificence. The Heavenly host of Angels singing before the shepherds is a good illustration!

IMPLICATIONS

* What difference does it make that Jesus is who we are celebrating this year? How are our Christmas celebrations different from those who don’t know Christ?
* John has been giving us a comprehensive picture of Jesus as both God and man. What comfort do you take from Jesus’ deity? What comfort from His humanity?

AS YOU GO

* Join us for our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on Tuesday Dec 24th at 4, 5:30, or 7 pm.
* Set aside time to reflect on the past year and list all the ways you have seen Jesus’ glory.
* As a family, gather and pray these back to God in thanksgiving!

*If it’s hard to think back, determine to move forward into the new year with a plan for recording glimpses of God’s glory.*
“Who can add to Christmas?
The perfect motive is that God so loved the world.
The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son.
The only requirement is to believe in Him.
The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life.”
Corrie Ten Boom
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices

Sundays @ 8:30am & 10am
Christmas Eve @ 4, 5:30, & 7pm
gracecomm.org