

# THE FIRST *Christmas*

Daily Activities for Advent

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## INTRODUCTION



*A*s we enter the 2020 Advent season at 15:5 Church, we encourage you to open your mind to the role generosity plays in the life of a follower of Jesus. It is interesting that Jesus spent more time speaking about money than any other topic. In fact, in the Gospels, one out of ten verses (288 in total) deal directly with the subject of money. Joseph Stowell once wrote: “God’s plan is simple—give to gain. In other words, give to the kingdom and God will take care of your needs.”

As we journey through Advent, we will be exploring various characters from the first Christmas, and you will see how each one shows generosity in their own way; with their time, with their resources, or with their abilities.

Stowell shares that “a generous believer once said: ‘I shovel out, and God shovels in, and He has a bigger shovel than I do.’ And while the return may or may not be monetary, you can be sure that your heart will overflow with the joy of giving generously and seeing His kingdom prosper.”

We realize that most of you won’t complete every activity in this guide. Please don’t feel you need to do them in order, although you may find it helpful to choose activities from the current week. Find the ones that work for you. Challenge your family or friends to join you for some activities that may be out of your comfort zone. Consider doing some of the activities with friends, if they can be done in a “Covid safe” way.

Whether you work through these activities as a family, as a couple, or with friends, it is simply our hope that these daily activities will help you to focus your heart and attention on Jesus through the Advent season. We also encourage you to take photographs of you participating in the various activities and share the photos with us on our 15:5 Church Facebook page – or if you don’t have Facebook, email the photographs to the church office. In this way we can engage with each other through these activities.

# FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

*Making Life out of the Barren Places*



## Day 1

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Around the dinner table discuss the question, "If you could keep only five Christmas activities this year, which five would you keep?" Unpack your Advent Log or Advent Wreath in preparation for Christmas. (If you don't have an Advent Log or Advent Wreath, take this day to make one.) If you live on your own, consider contacting someone by phone, text, Facetime or email to discuss these questions.

## Day 2

Begin putting together a Christmas Puzzle. Consider choosing a puzzle that in some way relates to the Nativity story and spend some time as a family assembling it. Sometimes the situations or opportunities God sends our way are like puzzle pieces: all by themselves, they may not make much sense. In fact, sometimes they don't seem like they fit in our lives at all. But when we trust God as Mary and Joseph did, He puts all the pieces together into one beautiful, complete picture making life out of the barren places. Take a picture of your progress and post it to our 15:5 Church Facebook page, or email the pictures to the church office.

## Day 3

Spend some time praying as a family how God is calling you to support the Great Commission Offering as part of our Christmas Giving goals at 15:5. The Great Commission Offering helps to create new life in barren places by empowering career missionaries, mission volunteers and church planters to bring the Gospel to the lost. Watch the video at [www.vimeo.com/466713050](http://www.vimeo.com/466713050) for more information about the ministries the Great Commission Offering supports. As a church, our goal is to raise \$10,000! It will mean sacrifice - but we can choose to honour God through our giving.

## Day 4

Go through your photo albums, digital photos, or old home movies. Laugh at the outdated clothing styles and remember the great stories about relatives and friends. If you are doing this with your family or a group of friends, talk about the places you used to live and evaluate what was special about those times, and try to incorporate those elements into this year's celebration. If you are doing this on your own, text a friend or family member some of your favorite photos, or setup a Zoom or Facetime call to remember together with them.

## Day 5

Take a few minutes to read the Christmas Story from Luke 2, and then spend some time creating a picture to represent one of the scenes from the Christmas Story. This is a great activity for all ages to participate in! Be creative – grab crayons, markers, or paints. Or, if you are feeling particularly adventurous, consider making a collage from pieces of colored paper. When you are finished, we encourage you to take a picture of your creation and email it to the church office or post it to the Facebook page as we celebrate the creativity God has given us, no matter of age or ability level.

## Day 6

Read Numbers 21:16-18. Did you notice the first thing the Israelites did after God promised them water? They sang praises to Him – even before they saw the water. They were thankful, even in the bareness of their situation. Christmas looks very different for most of us this year. Can we still sing praises to God even in the midst of this pandemic? Create a Thankfulness Jar and decorate it. Each day write something you are thankful for on a slip of paper and place it in the jar. Add to the jar each day until Christmas. Then, before you open your presents on Christmas Day – read through all of the slips in the jar and celebrate all you have to be thankful for.

## Day 7

As a family, or with a group of friends, go for a walk through a park. Take notice the bare trees around you, and how barren the landscape looks. How will things look different in the spring or in the summer? What can the cycles in nature teach us about the cycles in our own lives? Pray a prayer of thanksgiving that God is already preparing to bring new life out of the barren places in our lives. Take some pictures during your walk and post them to our church Facebook Page or email them to the church office.

# SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

## Recognizing When God Chooses You



### Day 1

**A**round the dinner table discuss the following questions: What has been happening this past week that has kept you from remembering that Christ's birthday is coming up? Is there anything that you should cut out of your schedule in the next two weeks? Is there anything important that you haven't made time for this Christmas season? If you live on your own, consider contacting someone by phone, text, Facetime or email to discuss these questions.

### Day 2

**S**tand outside with a night sky guide in hand and point out the constellations you haven't stopped to observe for a long time. If you have a telescope, take it out with you, and examine the night sky through that lens. Talk together about the wise men who, in order to worship Jesus, followed through on what they knew was important. Some scholars say that it was probably a two-year journey. Let the night stars be a constant reminder for you to be like the Magi and acknowledge that God has chosen you and you need to follow through with what He has called you to do. Take some photos of you and your family or friends outside under the stars and share them on our 15:5 Church Facebook page or email them to the church office.

### Day 3

**"Y**ou don't know what God can do with your broken pieces, until you give Him your broken pieces." Watch the video of Nick Vujicic's testimony which was posted on our Facebook page, or you can view it at [www.youtube.be/SYuVx2LU5QM](http://www.youtube.be/SYuVx2LU5QM) Nick was born with no arms and no legs – but God is using him in amazing ways. Sometimes we wonder if God could use us in our brokenness or in our weakness – but God still chooses us. Pray that God would encourage you with the truth that you are a chosen one of God – you are His child. Pray that God would show you how He wants to use you – and that you would have the courage to follow.

### Day 4

**R**ead Isaiah 64:8 and Jeremiah 18:1-6 and then watch the video we posted today on our Facebook page, or you can view the video at [www.youtube.be/F8tMR-mUE5s](http://www.youtube.be/F8tMR-mUE5s) Purchase some modeling clay from the dollar store or make a batch from the recipe at the back of this guide. Spend some time making something out of the clay. As the potter, you get to decide what you want the clay to be. Spend time talking about the fact that God is the "potter" of our life. He chose how we were made – and is molding us in our life. Will you yield your life to the hands of the potter? Place the item you made from clay somewhere in your home as a reminder to yield your life to the Potter's Hand. Share a photo of you creating or of your finished piece on our 15:5 Church Facebook Page.

### Day 5

**Q**uest at Christopher Lake does an amazing job of helping children and youth realize that God has chosen them. Countless boys, girls, teens, and adults have either found Jesus there or grown deeper in their relationships with Him because of the ministry of The Quest. Due to COVID, and other issues, the camp is experiencing serious financial need. Watch the video posted on our Facebook page, or view it at [www.youtube.be/t-dvsLzN1mI](http://www.youtube.be/t-dvsLzN1mI) Would you consider making The Quest a part of your Christmas and year-end giving this year? You can see more details at [www.questnet.ca](http://www.questnet.ca).

### Day 6

**R**ead Psalm 139:13-16. Find some yarn and create the finger knitting craft which can be found posted today on our Facebook page or you can view it at [www.youtube.be/SFIKgiBVUy8](http://www.youtube.be/SFIKgiBVUy8) Place your finger knitting butterfly somewhere in your home and, every time you see it, be reminded that you were created for a purpose - God chose you. Share a photo of the process or what you have created on our 15:5 Facebook Page or email us the photographs at [contact@15-5.ca](mailto:contact@15-5.ca)

### Day 7

**G**o skating or tobogganing as a family or with a group of friends. Afterwards, have a cup of hot chocolate and treasure the gift of family and friends. Ask some good questions such as: What was the best Christmas gift you've ever received? A favorite Christmas memory? Your favorite holiday food? Most disappointing Christmas? What is one thing you're really looking forward to this Christmas? Share some photos on our Church Facebook Page.



# THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

*Making Room for Others and for God*



## Day 1

**D**iscuss the following questions around your dinner table: What part of Christmas do you enjoy celebrating most? What circumstances are you facing this year that are less than ideal? How can you make certain you celebrate Jesus' birth anyway?

## Day 2

**C**onsider adding an extra character to your nativity scene this Christmas to remind you to make room for others this season. Maybe add a small child's toy or other small character to the scene. Each time you look at it, remember that advent is about making room for each other and for God at Christmas – even those that may not appear to fit in. Share a photo of your updated nativity scene on our 15:5 Facebook page.

## Day 3

**D**ecide to invite someone who will be alone at Christmas to join you for one evening of your Christmas celebration. Reach out to a widow, a student, or someone who has recently been divorced. Welcome strangers, the weary, the less fortunate, or the hungry. Help them celebrate by giving them the gift of friendship and love. If Covid restrictions make an in-person gathering unwise, this could involve setting up a Zoom or Facetime call with them or dropping off a meal or care package at their house.

## Day 4

**P**urchase a gift that has spiritual significance – an angel ornament, Bible, nativity set, or a book that tells the story of the first Christmas. Wrap the gift you've chosen in a special bow. Then ask God to show you the "special someone" He has in mind to be the recipient. This may be a person who needs to hear about Jesus or simply to see God's love and care this Christmas Season. This year, go outside your usual giving to bring a godly surprise into someone's life.

## Day 5

**O**ne way we can make room for others this Advent season is to purchase an item or two for a resident of Porteous Lodge. This is a way for us to bring joy and happiness in Jesus' name to those who are alone or needy. Many of the residents at Porteous Lodge have no family, and the gifts that we give will be all that they receive this Christmas. It is our understanding that 15:5 Church is the only organization or ministry partnering with them. Watch the short video we posted to our 15:5 Church Facebook page, or you can view the video at [www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1736039923337534](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1736039923337534) and spend some time praying for the residents of the lodge. If you can't shop, you are welcome to give a cash donation to help us purchase items on their Christmas Wish-List.

## Day 6

**G**ather the family or a group of friends together and plan a special trip to a nearby farm. Pause to reflect on the conditions and complications Joseph and Mary had to face when giving birth to their first child. How did they keep focused on what was most important during that time? Also consider the protection, quiet, and shelter the stable provided away from a noisy, crowded inn. While in a barn read together Luke 2:4-7. Consider what Jesus had to give up in order to become our Saviour. Share some photos of your outing on our 15:5 Church Facebook page. If you are unable to go to a barn, look at some pictures and ponder the same questions.

## Day 7

**G**ather YOUR "Swaddling Clothes." Sort through your closets and gather clothes you haven't worn this year and probably won't wear again. Help your children do the same. Place them in a festive bag and donate them to The Bridge. Pray over the bag for the people who will receive these items and consider them to be garments given in the name of Christ.

# FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

*Declaring the Good News is for ALL People*



## Day 1

**C**hoose a favorite Christmas carol and learn how to sing it in another language. Work on memorizing the words— before bedtime, around the breakfast table, or while running errands. Alternatively, you could search YouTube and see in how many different languages you can find your favorite Carol. In this way, you can open their heart to the arrival of the King of all nations with a song in another language.

## Day 2

**C**ontact the Saskatoon Open Door Society or the Newcomer Information Centre and ask them what their greatest need is. Pray as a family or with a group of friends about how you might be able to meet that need by giving of your time or resources.

## Day 3

**P**urchase an inexpensive world map or print maps off the internet and create Christmas tree ornaments by cutting out sections of the maps. Cut out circles of various sizes out of stiff cardboard. Then trace the circle base over a country from the world map, cut it out, and carefully glue it on the ornament base. Punch a hole for a Christmas ribbon hanger. Then complete the ornament by gluing a copy of John 3:16 on the back. The ornaments can remind that God so loved **the whole world** that He gave the gift of His only Son. Share some pictures of your ornaments on our 15:5 Church Facebook Page.

## Day 4

**I**t's easy to let our personal to-do list distract us from the global significance of Christmas. One way to remember that millions around the world are celebrating the incarnation of Jesus is to make a meal from another country. Plan to try cooking an Asian, Italian, Indian, Indigenous, or African meal. Do a little research, and then discuss some of the traditions, foods, and clothing styles from your country of choice. Close the meal with a prayer for the people in your chosen country, thanking God that He sent His Son as a gift **to all people**.

## Christmas Eve

**T**ake a family drive tonight and view the many lights of Christmas throughout Saskatoon or through the Enchanted Forest at the Forestry Farm. When you get home have a cup of hot chocolate and read John 8:12 and Ephesians 5:8-10. Talk about how we can be lights. Close by singing "This Little Light of Mine."

## Christmas Day

**S**tart the day by reading through the slips of paper in the Thankfulness Jar that you started during the first week of Advent. After reflecting on all of the things we have to be thankful for – read through the Christmas story below from Luke 2 – and spend time thanking God for His indescribable gift!

## Luke 2

### *The Birth of Jesus*

During those days, the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, ordered that the first census be taken throughout his empire. (Quirinius was the governor of Syria at that time.) Everyone had to travel to his or her hometown to complete the mandatory census. So Joseph and his fiancé, Mary, left Nazareth, a village in Galilee, and journeyed to their hometown in Judea, to the village of Bethlehem, King David's ancient home. They were required to register there, since they were both direct descendants of David. Mary was pregnant and nearly ready to give birth.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, Mary went into labor, and there she gave birth to her firstborn son. After wrapping the newborn baby in strips of cloth, they laid him in a feeding trough since there was no available space in any upper room in the village.

### *An Angelic Encounter*

That night, in a field near Bethlehem, there were shepherds watching over their flocks. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared in radiant splendor before them, lighting up the field with the blazing glory of God, and the shepherds were terrified! But the angel reassured them, saying, "Don't be afraid. For I have come

to bring you good news, the most joyous news the world has ever heard! And it is for everyone everywhere! For today in Bethlehem a rescuer was born for you. He is the Lord Yahweh, the Messiah. You will recognize him by this miracle sign: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a feeding trough!"

Then all at once, a vast number of glorious angels appeared, the very armies of heaven! And they all praised God, singing:

"Glory to God in the highest realms of heaven!

For there is peace and a good hope given to the sons of men."

When the choir of angels disappeared back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go! Let's hurry and find this Word that is born in Bethlehem and see for ourselves what the Lord has revealed to us." So they ran into the village and found their way to Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in a feeding trough.

Upon seeing this miraculous sign, the shepherds recounted what had just happened. Everyone who heard the shepherds' story was astonished by what they were told. But Mary treasured all these things in her heart and often pondered what they meant.

The shepherds returned to their flock, ecstatic over what had happened. They praised God and glorified him for all they had heard and seen for themselves, just like the angel had said.

# Merry Christmas!

## *Self-Hardening Clay*

For the activity on Day Four of the Second Week of Advent

### What you need:

- 4 cups of flour
- 1 1/2 cups of salt
- 1 1/2 cups of water

### What you do:

1. Mix the salt and flour in a bowl.
2. Add water gradually to form a ball.
3. Knead until it no longer falls apart.
4. Create your project and allow it to dry at room temperature for 2 day (more for thinker projects) before painting.

# THE FIRST Christmas

**Christmas is often referred to as a Season of Generosity. It is a time of year where people give sacrificially both to their friends and families - but also to support people in need. We believe that God is the source of generosity: as God gives to us it allows us to give to others. But God has called us to live generously throughout the year - not only at Christmas.**

**Our Advent theme for 2020 is The First Christmas...**

**Making Life out of the Barren Places**

**Recognizing when God Chooses You**

**Making Room for Each Other**

**Declaring the Good News is for All People**

**As you reflect on each theme, may you enter the Christmas Season with a heart overflowing with the love and generosity of God. Wherever you find yourself, we pray these Advent activities will bring you into the presence of Christ. We trust you will find this journey to Christmas meaningful!**

