

## Additional Activities and Ideas to Help Children Engage the Season of Advent in Preparation for Christmas Grades K-8

Please choose and adapt activities which will best suit the age of the children you are teaching.

### **Stocking for Jesus**

Provide each student with a small Christmas stocking. Ask them to hang it with all the other family stockings in their homes. Suggest that whenever someone in their family does a good deed that they write it down on a small sheet of paper and place it in the stocking. They should continue to do this throughout the Advent Season. When Christmas comes around, the family can read aloud the notes placed inside, or they might save the stocking and its contents until next year and read the good deeds at the beginning of next Advent as a reminder of their good deeds from this year. Teachers can write these for younger children, or have them draw a picture.

### **Visiting Guest**

At the start of the session, place an empty chair in the front of the room and tell the students that a special guest will join the group. Do not provide them with any additional information. A few minutes before the class ends explain that the special guest was Jesus Who was there all along.

### **Watching Star**

Provide each student with a large star-shaped cut out. Ask each to write “watching and waiting” in the middle of the star. On each point of the star, write a way to “watch and wait.” Think about how to prepare heart and mind for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. Looking out for others with good deeds is an excellent way to get ready for Jesus.

Another is a contribution to the group’s Holy Bucket. Craft items, including ribbons, glitter, etc., may be used to decorate the stars. Again, teachers can write these for younger children, or have them draw a picture.

### **Who Is Ready?**

Begin by asking the students what they did to prepare for school (or church) today. Allow for a few responses. Then ask what they do to prepare for another event such as a birthday or vacation. Again, allow for some responses. Finally ask the students to brainstorm ideas on what they can do to prepare for the coming of Jesus.

### **Stay Awake**

Ask everyone to close their eyes and put their heads down on their arms on top of their desks or laps, as if they are sleeping. Ask for two volunteers. Tell volunteers to walk around the room and lightly tap the head of one person each. After tapping a student’s head, the volunteer should go to the front of the room, making sure not to reveal whose head he/she touched.

Invite the two students who felt their heads being tapped to stand up and try to guess who tapped them. A correct guess enables that student to exchange places with that volunteer for the next round. An incorrect guess keeps the volunteer in the game for the next round.

Repeat this a few more times. Then, for the last round, let the students keep their eyes open and watch to see who taps their head. Discuss how this activity relates to the Gospel message of “staying awake.”

### **Let’s Get Ready!**

Divide the students into groups of three or four. Provide each group with a few sheets of scrap paper. Tell them you will call out a specific event, and each team will have 30 seconds to make a list of the most important things they would need to do to prepare for that event. The events are as follows: vacation, test, birthday party, going to church, and a special dinner. After the 30 seconds have two groups compare lists. For each duplicate idea, each team gets a point. Continue through the list until you have called out each one. Then as a final step call out “preparing for the coming of Christ.”

### **Special Guest**

Ask the students the names of some of their favorite heroes. Invite them to imagine that one of them is just outside the door waiting to enter the room. Discuss how they would feel if they actually were to meet their hero. Then ask them to imagine how they would react if Jesus had come into the room. Revisit the Gospel reading (Matthew 24:37-44) that reminds us that no one knows the day or time that Jesus will return. Start a list on newsprint with suggestions from students on getting ready for that day. What can we do to improve our relationship with God and others every day? Think about both Advent and mission in this discussion. Remember your relationship with and responsibility for our brothers and sisters half a world away.

### **Advent Blessings**

Invite the students to think about people in the community or elsewhere who need hope during the Advent /Christmas Seasons. Provide them with a few blank index cards to write down the names of a few of these people and then think of some ways the students can bless them during these times. Remind them to follow through on whatever they decide to do.

### **Be Prepared**

On small slips of paper write down ideas to prepare for the coming of Christ at Christmas (*pray, be kind to others, donate to the Missions, etc.*). Be sure you have at least one slip for each student. Hide the slips throughout the classroom. On a board or sheet of newsprint write the phrase, “Prepare the Way.” As students enter the class, tell them to find the slips of paper you have hidden. When a student finds one slip he/she can be seated. After everyone has retrieved the slips, ask each student to read his or hers, and then post it on the board or newsprint. Discuss ways the students can prepare for Christ’s coming.

### **God’s Way or Your Way?**

Invite students to brainstorm ways they can choose to follow Jesus instead of following what the rest of the world is doing. This means keeping to a straight path instead of going down a crooked path. Here are a few examples to get the group started: attend church weekly rather than sleeping in, offering a prayer of thanks before each meal, saying a kind word to a brother or sister rather than teasing him or her.

## **Repent!**

Invite the students to discuss the many challenges that stand in the way of “repenting” or of turning our lives totally to God. These may include, not having enough time, being too preoccupied with school or home life, finding it difficult to let go of habits, or even admitting something is wrong. Ask each student to write down one challenge on a sheet of paper. Collect the papers and then redistribute them randomly. Ask the students to reflect on the challenge and write down a possible way to address it. Continue to redistribute the papers until there are a few strategies for each challenge. Then collect the papers and share with the students.

## **Gifts of...**

Invite the students to discuss the ways they could give the following gifts this Advent Season: the gift of listening, the gift of a compliment, the gift of showing love, the gift of laughter, the gift of joy, the gift of kindness, the gift of fun, the gift of time, the gift of prayer. Another option would be to ask them to identify one person with whom they can share each of these gifts. This should be a person they feel needs the gift. You might reference the mission stories provided in these sessions. Discuss how prayer and sacrifice can support missionaries who bring love, laughter, kindness and joy to our mission family.

## **Time to Rejoice**

Tell the students that this week of Advent follows Gaudete Sunday, a day when we rejoice in knowing that the Christ Child will soon arrive. Ask them to think about some fun ways they can rejoice this week.

## **Advent Gospel Shuffle**

Print out the Gospel reading for the third Sunday of Advent (Matthew 11:2-11). Then cut out each sentence in the reading. Distribute a complete set of the sentences to each group of three or four students. Have them put the reading in the correct order.

## **Messengers of God**

Invite the students to sit in a circle for a variation of the game “telephone.” Whisper a message about Jesus’ coming to the student sitting to your right. Consider using a portion of this Sunday’s Gospel. Then ask that student to whisper the message to someone else. Continue the process until everyone has heard and passed on the message.

Then ask the last person who heard the message to share it aloud. Note whether the final message was accurate. Then discuss why it is important to give the true message of Jesus to others.

## **What Matters Most**

Talk with students about what really matters in life to them. Ask them to identify what or who matters and also why. Then ask: *“Do you live your life in such a way that others know what is important to you? Or do your words and actions reflect a different set of values?”*

Invite them to reflect on areas where their beliefs and actions do not match. Then ask them to reflect on what changes they can make to turn their beliefs into actions.

## **What is Joy?**

Divide the participants into groups of three or four. Provide each group with a sheet of newsprint and a marker. Challenge them to come up with at least 30 words that describe the ways in which

people can experience joy. For example: laugh, listen to music, be a friend, celebrate, enjoy nature, or be thankful. You can make the activity more challenging by asking for 50, 75, or even 100 words or phrases.

### **Go Tell It Too!**

Ask the students to brainstorm with you seven ways – one for each day in the upcoming week – that they can tell others about Jesus. Make sure that prayer is included in the list. For example, pray for missionaries who bring the *Good News to people half a world away*.

### **A Year of Sharing the Message**

Provide each student with a small calendar or a computer-printed one. Together, brainstorm ideas for sharing the story of Jesus with others. Once you have a good number of ideas, ask students to choose one idea for each month, writing each on the calendar.

### **Birth Announcement**

Provide students with a variety of craft materials to create a birth announcement for Jesus. Invite them to send out the announcement any time after Christmas day.

### **More than a Word**

Provide each student with sheet of paper, and a pen or pencil. Challenge them to come up with as many words as possible from the letters in the word “Christmas.” To make their efforts more challenging tell them they can only list words that can be associated with the Advent or Christmas Seasons.

### **Christkindl Brief**

“Christkindl Brief” is German for “letter to the Christ Child.” Provide the students with a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil. Invite them to write a letter to the Christ Child sharing their joy and their anticipation of His arrival. In the letter, they can also speak to ways they are preparing for His birth at Christmas.