

Have you ever wondered what Advent rhythms would be like with young kids?

When Joanna and Caleb were two and four years old, respectively, Christine decided to make a giant Advent calendar out of fabric with pockets to stick things in. We used Nancy Guthrie's little book called [*Let Every Heart Prepare Him Room*](#) to prepare objects that would correspond with Scripture passages from each of the daily readings. The kids would take out the object from the pocket, tell us what it was, and guess how it connects to that passage. For example, when we read Mary's Magnificat, we would stick a magnifying glass in the pocket and ask them how that related to the Christmas story. Then we would explain how Mary magnified the Lord and what it means to magnify the Lord in our lives. Then we would pray. It was brief, memorable, and fun.

As the kids got older, we began to actually sit down and read the Scriptures and the devotional along with our Advent Calendar from *Let Every Heart Prepare Him Room*. Along with the Scripture and story, there is also a Christmas song to sing, and then a spot where you can write comments made and questions asked during your family's devotions during Advent. As we continued the tradition year after year, it was life-giving to record these comments and look at them each Christmas to see how our kids grew.

As the years went by, we began to alternate *Let Every Heart Prepare Him Room* with Marty Machowski's [*Prepare Him Room*](#) family devotional. It had only thirteen family Advent devotionals, three for each of the 4 weeks of Advent and one more for Christmas. Each week after a warm up activity, the first devotional explored a biblical prophecy from the Old Testament that points forward to Jesus, the second highlighted an announcement of the birth of Jesus or His mission, and the third explored how the earlier prophecy or announcements find its fulfillment in Christ. The kids absolutely loved the songs from Sovereign Grace Music's *Prepare Him Room* album, and really helped to see that the Christmas story connected to a bigger story.

This year to capture all of our kids ranging from ages 0-10, we are using a new Advent devotional called [*Tracing Glory*](#), which traces the story of Christmas looking back at the creation of the world in Genesis all the way to the end of the story of the new creation in Revelation, tracing the glory of Jesus Christ from start to finish. There are three questions to help you process what you have read and discuss, and there is a "Dictionary of Big Bible Words" in the back. We listed down the devotion titles and passages each day on a Word document, and took 15 minutes to brainstorm an activity that all the kids (especially the younger ones) can do while listening to the devotion (**See our list!**). For "The Son and the Sacrifice" that tells how God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19), our activity is to build an edible altar using marshmallows, pretzels, and gummy bears. For "Mother by Miracle" on the

announcement of the virgin birth, we will bring out some of our baby pictures. Then we'll connect it to the bigger story — for “The Son and the Sacrifice”, it points forward to Christ that God will not provide a ram, but His Son. For “Mother by Miracle”, it shows how the Old Testament prophecies points back to Christ. As you hit on the direction each story points to, your kids will see how everything in the Scriptures points to Jesus.

It has also been such a joy to sing Christmas songs with our children. We didn't do that when we were kids until we grew up and had our own families. The kids would mainly listen to the songs, and these songs would spark deeper questions (“Daddy, why does ‘O Come Emmanuel’ sound so sad?”). It has been sweet to see Caleb and Joanna start leading the way every Christmas Eve, practicing on guitar and piano so they can lead our family in a few Christmas songs.

It's been so lifegiving to develop a vision for our family and to best accomplish this through our Advent rhythms. What is your vision for your family and how could you see it come to life through Advent rhythms? Perhaps you have never had any meaningful Advent traditions growing up. Now is the time to be able to give your kids a chance to behold the mystery of the Incarnation and to stir their affections for Jesus. And yes, you may have to create space and do less during this Christmas season. But whatever you give up will never equal what your children will be left with — markers that will be indelibly imprinted in their memories forever.

Parents, take the lead as you discuss your family Advent rhythms. Here are some points to converse with your spouse:

- **Set theme:** What is our family theme for this year?
- **Set frequency:** How many times will we read per week?
- **Set time:** When will we read with our family?
- **Set reading:** Are our kids young and do we want to start off with a simple Advent calendar? Use *Tracing Glory* or *Prepare Him Room* as a guide?
- **Simplify readings:** For parents with younger children, make it simpler by focusing on just one Scripture verse from the daily readings, and drill home the main point.
- **Reflect after the reading, asking questions like:**
 - o What did we learn about Jesus' birth, ministry, or coming return? Why is this so important?
 - o How are we like the characters in this story?
 - o How should we respond?
- **Sing, sing, sing! Advent Calendar 2021**

- Tracing Glory: The Christmas story through the Bible
 - By Sarah Rice

- Start off with singing a Christmas song together. A great resource for music is The Gospel Coalition's Advent 2021 playlist on [Spotify](#).

Dec 1	Christmas Creation	Genesis 1:1-3	Play-doh earth
Dec 2	Glory Reflectors	Genesis 1:27-28	Mirror Drama Game (each person imitate the other person's body movements)
Dec 3	Glory Thieves	Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-7, 15	Steal something from their room, they guess
Dec 4	Judgment and Mercy	Genesis 6:9-22	Water play
Dec 5	The Tower of Pride and Glory	Genesis 11:1-9	Jenga
Dec 6	A New Family	Genesis 12:1-4; 15:1-6	Meaning of Names
Dec 7	Son and Sacrifice	Genesis 22:1-19	Build Edible Altar (marshmallows, pretzels, gummy bears)
Dec 8	Ladder to Glory	Genesis 27:41-44; 28:10-17	Tallest rung of the ladder contest
Dec 9	Evil for Good	Genesis 45:4-8	Sort grain/beans
Dec 10	Bought by Blood	Exodus 11:4-7; 12:3-7, 12-13	Fadi's (lamb shank); sign on doorposts
Dec 11	The Glory of the Law	Exodus 24:12, 15-18; 31:18	Clay tablets with Roman numerals
Dec 12	Shepherd King	2 Samuel 7:1-13	Tent Play
Dec 13	A House for Glory	1 Kings 6:11-14; 8:10-13	Build elaborate house, destroy
Dec 14	Roots and Shoots	Isaiah 11:1-2, 6-10	Pick out fruit tree/plant
Dec 15	The Suffering Lamb	Isaiah 53:2-6, 10-11	Review 3 Circles

Dec 16	New Hearts, New Hope	Jeremiah 17:9; 31:31-33; Ezek 36:26-28	Rocks/stones, sew felt hearts
Dec 17	His Name is John	Luke 1:13-17, 67-79	Eat locusts and honey (j/k) Serve crunchy roasted beans
Dec 18	Mother by Miracle	Luke 1:26-38	Look at mommy/daddy's baby pictures
Dec 19	Father by Faith	Matthew 1:18-25	Trace out our family tree
Dec 20	A Picture of Glory	Luke 2:1-7	DIY Barn scene or Living Nativity
Dec 21	Birth Announcement	Luke 2:8-18	Make a birth announcement
Dec 22	Guiding Star	Matthew 2:1-11	Stargazing
Dec 23	Glory Through Death	Acts 2:22-32	Read <i>The Donkey Who Carried a King</i> by R.C. Sproul
Dec 24	The City of Glory	Revelation 21:1-5, 9-11	Make a collage of your "Perfect city", Shepherd's meal
Dec 25	Come, Let Us Adore Him		Sing Christmas carols

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