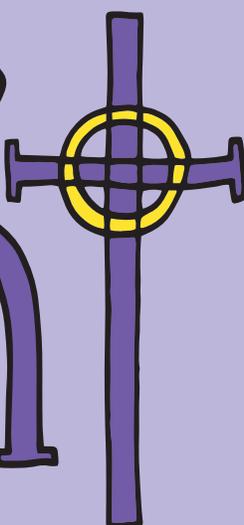


an illustrated  
advent



Engaging Practices for the Season  
2015 FAMILY EDITION

Written by Sarah and Adam Walker Cleaveland  
Illustrated by Adam Walker Cleaveland



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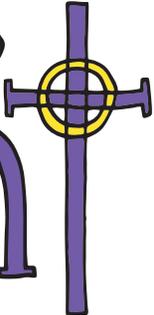
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# an illustrated advent



Engaging Practices for the Season  
2015 FAMILY EDITION

## **Welcome to *An Illustrated Advent: Engaging Practices for the Season.***

It can be difficult to find meaningful ways to engage your kids in faith formation at home. It can feel awkward, we don't always know what to do, and sometimes we have a hard time talking about our faith.

Seasons like Advent and Lent are great opportunities to say, "Hey kids... let's try something new for the next few weeks." Particularly during Advent, with our culture's desire to get to December 25 as soon after Halloween as possible, it's important to take time to stop. To wait. To have conversations and engage in intentional practices for the season.

An Illustrated Advent is one way to do just that—to slow down, ask questions, and try new things. There are coloring sheets that tell the story of Jesus' birth, scripture passages to read together, questions to spark family conversations, and suggestions for how to live out each week's theme. And we can't wait to hear about how you use the Advent calendar and the Flat Wise Men (more on them inside).

Since this is a brand new resource, we hope you'll share with us what worked well and any suggestions you have for future resources. We also hope you'll share with us stories about how you used the resources, pictures of your family engaging in the practices, details on the fun places you found to hide the Flat Wise Men, and more!

You can reach us at [awc@illustratedchildrensmoments.com](mailto:awc@illustratedchildrensmoments.com) or find us on the following social networks:

Facebook: [facebook.com/IllustratedCM](https://facebook.com/IllustratedCM)

Twitter: [twitter.com/IllustratedCM](https://twitter.com/IllustratedCM)

Instagram: [instagram.com/IllustratedCM](https://instagram.com/IllustratedCM)

Pinterest: [pinterest.com/IllustratedCM](https://pinterest.com/IllustratedCM)

Tumblr: [illustratedcm.tumblr.com](https://illustratedcm.tumblr.com)

When posting, be sure to use the hashtag, #anillustratedadvent, so we can be part of the conversation and you can be part of our online community.

Wishing you many blessings and a season full of engaging practices,

*Sarah* and *Adam*

# DEVOTIONS

## **A Word about the Devotions**

We **know** you are busy. We **know** your kids are busy. Adding one more thing to an already busy December schedule can feel overwhelming. That's why we designed these devotionals so that they could be done in one night or last the entire week. You can do it at the dinner table, driving to and from practice, before bed, or whenever you can find a moment together.

While there is only one devotion per week, the questions are ones you can ask throughout the week—you might even consider asking them at the beginning and end of each week to see if your answers have changed. In addition, the activities are designed to be done over the course of multiple days.

Also, please note that these devotions are meant to work for families of all shapes and sizes. So there are some questions that will work well with younger kids, and some that will work better with older kids. Choose the ones that work for your family or use them to spark questions of your own.

We recommend the following schedule (based on the Advent calendar below), but the weeks are independent and can be done in any order.

**Week 1 - Hope:** Either Sunday, November 29 (if you want to get in the habit of doing it on Sundays), or Tuesday, December 1.

**Week 2 - Peace:** Sunday, December 6

**Week 3 - Joy:** Sunday, December 13

**Week 4 - Love:** Sunday, December 20

# ADVENT DEVOTIONS \* WEEK 1 \* HOPE

## **Scripture: Isaiah 9:2**

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*

## **Questions:**

- Where did you see light today?
- What are you hoping for? (for Christmas? for the new year? for the winter break? as individuals? as a family?)
- How could we extend hope to (or be light for) others?

## **Activity:**

Put out holiday lights this week, both inside and outside your home. Consider using a mix of electric lights and candles. Is there some place new you can put lights this year? Lighting our own houses and spaces is one way we bear witness to our hope in Christ that light will overcome darkness, even in the lengthening nights of the winter season. Brainstorm other ways you (individually or as a family) might bear witness to the coming light of Christ (either physically or through your actions).

As Teresa of Avila wrote, "Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless His people."

## **Prayer:**

*Holy God, as the weather changes and the nights begin earlier and last longer, help us to notice places of light and to be sources of light for others. Amen.*

# ADVENT DEVOTIONS \* WEEK 2 \* PEACE

## **Scripture: Isaiah 11:1–9**

*A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.  
The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.  
His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;  
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.  
The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.  
The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.  
They will not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord  
as the waters cover the sea.*

## **John 14:27**

*"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.  
Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."*

## Questions:

- Can you imagine a wolf living with a lamb?
  - What would happen if a wolf and a lamb lived together?
  - What would be different in a world where a wolf and a lamb could live with one another?
- The prophet Isaiah lived a long time before Jesus, and in this passage, he's imagining what the world might look like when Jesus comes. What do you think the world would look like if it was exactly the way God wanted it to be?
  - What would be different?
  - Do you think we can help mend the world? How?
    - What can we do to make the world look more like God wants it to look?
- Jesus tells the disciples that he is leaving them his peace. What do you think he meant?
  - Was peace a good thing to leave the disciples? Why or why not?
- Jesus says he doesn't give as the world gives—what do you think is different between how Jesus gives and how the world gives?
- What troubles your heart?
  - Can we prevent our hearts from being troubled? How might we try?

## Activity:

*"Peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart." -Unknown*

The practice of breath prayers is one way we can try to create calm or peace in our hearts, even when the world around us is full of noise and expectations. This week, try creating and practicing breath prayers, either individually or as a family.

To create your own breath prayer, pick two or three words that name God (e.g. Loving Creator, Holy Savior, Sustaining Spirit) and two to three words that express what you need most in this moment (e.g. be with me, show me life, give me strength).

To practice breath prayers, take your two phrases and silently say the first (e.g. Gracious God) as you take a deep breath in, and the second (e.g. show me how) as you breathe out. (It is often helpful to remain still and close your eyes while practicing breath prayers, but they can also be done while walking or driving, and thus with your eyes open!).

Repeat the process for five to ten slow breaths if you only have a moment, or for a set period of time if you have longer (setting an alarm on your phone is a good way to keep track of time without having to worry about it).

This is a particularly good prayer for young children, who will appreciate being able to do it by themselves after only a little help, and may even be able to create their own.

### Variations:

- Try creating a breath prayer as a family to use as a grace before dinner.
- Create a prayer in the morning and set an alarm on your phone to go off at various times throughout the day, reminding you to practice your prayer.
- Take a moment each evening to create a prayer that sums up, or brings closure to, your day; practice this prayer as you fall asleep.

- If you can find a set of religious magnetic poetry, use it to create new or unusual prayers on your fridge.
- As a family, take turns creating a prayer that everyone practices for the day and then check-in each evening to see how the prayer might have shaped, or intersected with, your day.

**Prayer:**

*Spacious God, help us to find and create moments of peace in the rush of this season. Still our souls and quiet our minds that we might be beacons of calm and love for those whom we encounter. In Christ's name, Amen.*

# ADVENT devotions \* WEEK 3 \* JOY

## **Scripture: 1 Peter 1:8-9**

*Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

## **Questions:**

- What's the difference between happiness and joy?
  - St. Francis is credited with saying that true joy is not the achievement of goals nor the fulfillment of wishes, but remaining patient in the face of trial and frustration. True joy, he argued, comes when we can see God as the source of all that we encounter. Put another way, true joy comes when we're able to find the good in all that we encounter.
- How hard is it to see God, or find good, in a bad situation?

## **Activity:**

This week, at breakfast or dinner or before you say goodnight, conduct an experiment in joy creation. Taking turns, have everyone share the worst moment of their day. Then, as a family, see how many possible ways you can find the good (or God) in that situation. (This exercise isn't designed to paper over hurts or losses, nor to provide quick fixes; rather, this exercise is a way to practice our "joy muscles.")

I highly recommend going over the top and being goofy—see who can come up with the most absurd explanation for how whatever happened was for the good. Be sure, however, to circle back with each person later in the day to make sure they feel heard and to acknowledge the sheer crumminess of whatever they shared.

## **Prayer:**

*Abundant God, let your presence bubble up within us and overflow in fits of giggles as we delight in the large and small joys of your creation. Help us to find the good in all that we experience, and help us to be that joy for others. In Christ's name, Amen.*

# ADVENT devotions \* WEEK 4 \* LOVE

## **Scripture: John 13:34-34**

*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

## **Questions:**

- Why did Jesus command his disciples to love one another? Why was loving each other so important?
- Can you love someone you don't like?
- If love is more than a feeling or emotion, what is it?
  - How do we recognize it?
  - How do we practice it?

## **Activity:**

Brainstorm a list of ways you could "practice love" this week. When you think you've run out of ideas, see if you can come up with three more. From that list, pick one to try each day this week. Treat it like an experiment and see what happens:

1. In the morning, hypothesize or wonder about what will happen, how it will feel, etc.
2. In the evening, evaluate:
  - What worked well? What didn't?
  - Would you do it again?
  - What would you do differently?

## **Prayer:**

*Patient God, you command us to love one another and it sounds so simple, and yet we know it can be so hard. Help us remember that love is a choice and we must practice. Inspire us, that we might be secret agents of your love this week. In Christ's name, Amen.*

# COLORING SHEETS U

SHE GAVE BIRTH TO HER firstborn  
child, a SON, WRAPPED <sup>H</sup><sub>M</sub> SNUGLY, &  
Laid HIM <sup>I</sup><sub>N</sub> a MANGER, BECAUSE THERE  
WAS NO PLACE FOR THEM IN the INN.



NEARBY SHEPHERDS WERE  
LIVING IN THE FIELDS, GUARDING  
THEIR SHEEP AT NIGHT.



DON'T BE AFRAID! LOOK!

I BRING GOOD NEWS TO YOU!

YOUR SAVIOR IS BORN TODAY.

HE IS CHRIST

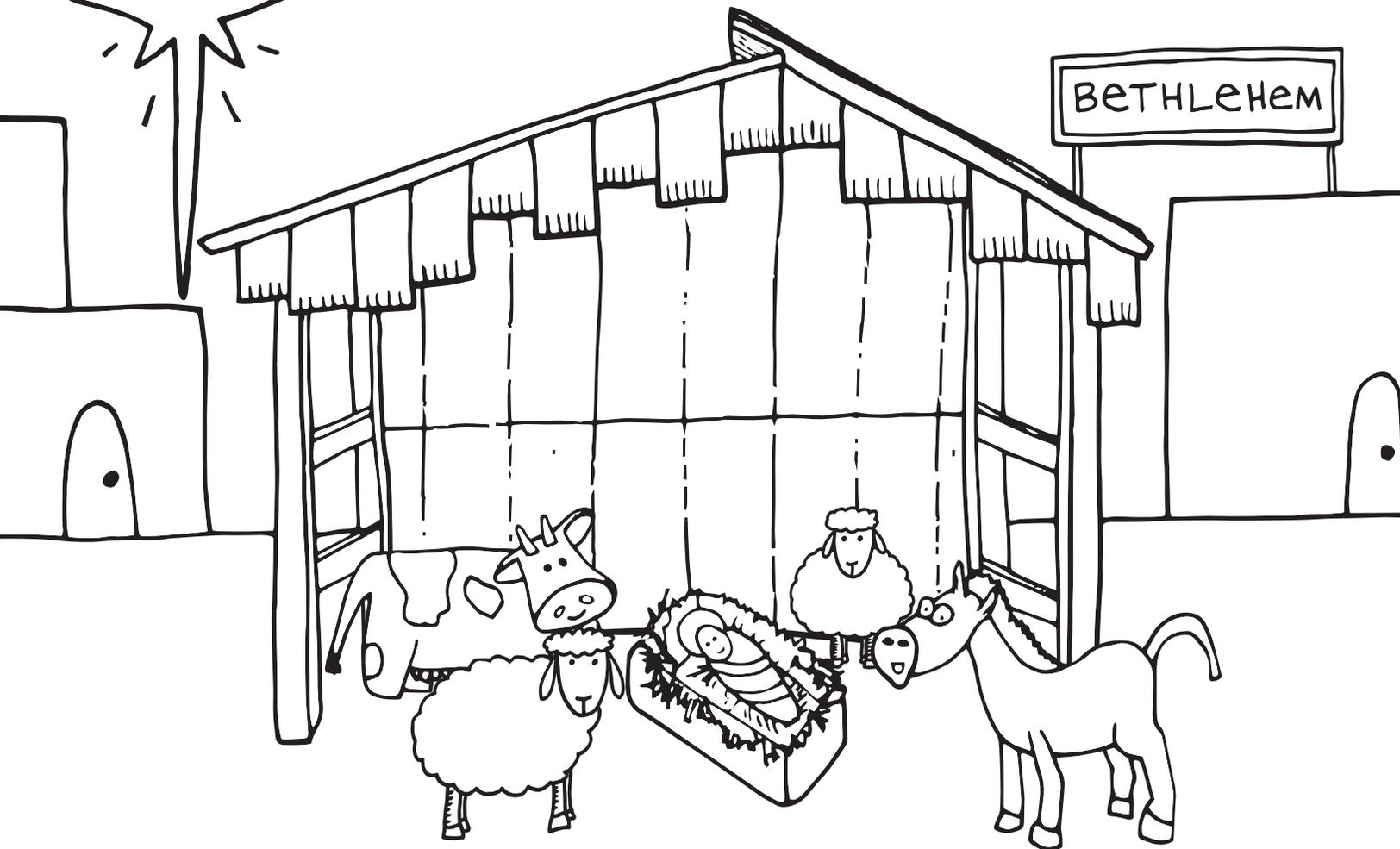
THE LORD.



after jesus was born, MAGI  
CAME FROM THE EAST TO JERUSALEM:  
"We've seen HIS star & WE've  
COME TO HONOR him."



AND LOOK, THE Star They Had Seen  
STOOD OVER WHERE THE CHILD WAS  
& THEY WERE FILLED WITH Joy!



# ADVENT CALENDAR

## **A Word about the Advent Calendar**

I'm *sure* you probably have an Advent calendar. In fact, I'd guess you probably have multiple Advent calendars.

Well, here's another one.

When I (Adam) was a kid, I didn't get chocolate in my Advent calendar. It was simply filled with verses that told the story of the birth of Jesus. I'm not saying there is anything wrong with the story of the birth of Jesus, but "Advent calendar time" wasn't something I necessarily looked forward to as a kid.

This Advent calendar is more of an activity calendar—activities that can help you get into the Christmas spirit. Some of these activities will be great for your kids to do by themselves—others will require the whole family. And there are some activities that require you to get out of your house and into your community.

Many of these activities would make great opportunities to share online using the #anillustratedadvent hashtag. The list of activities is below, and then you can either have your kids color the B&W calendar, or go ahead and use the color version.

## **Advent Calendar Activities**

**December 1:** Do Week 1's "Hope" Devotion together

**December 2:** Color the first coloring sheet

**December 3:** Make Christmas cards for people at a local nursing home

**December 4:** Watch a favorite Christmas movie as a family

**December 5:** Put up some lights or Christmas decorations

**December 6:** Do Week 2's "Peace" Devotion together

**December 7:** Color the second coloring sheet

**December 8:** Visit an elderly neighbor who isn't able to get out much

**December 9:** Do a Christmas craft together (don't know what to do? Go to [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com) and type in "Christmas Crafts." You're welcome.)

**December 10:** Have a Christmas Music Dance Party

**December 11:** Play a board game together as a family

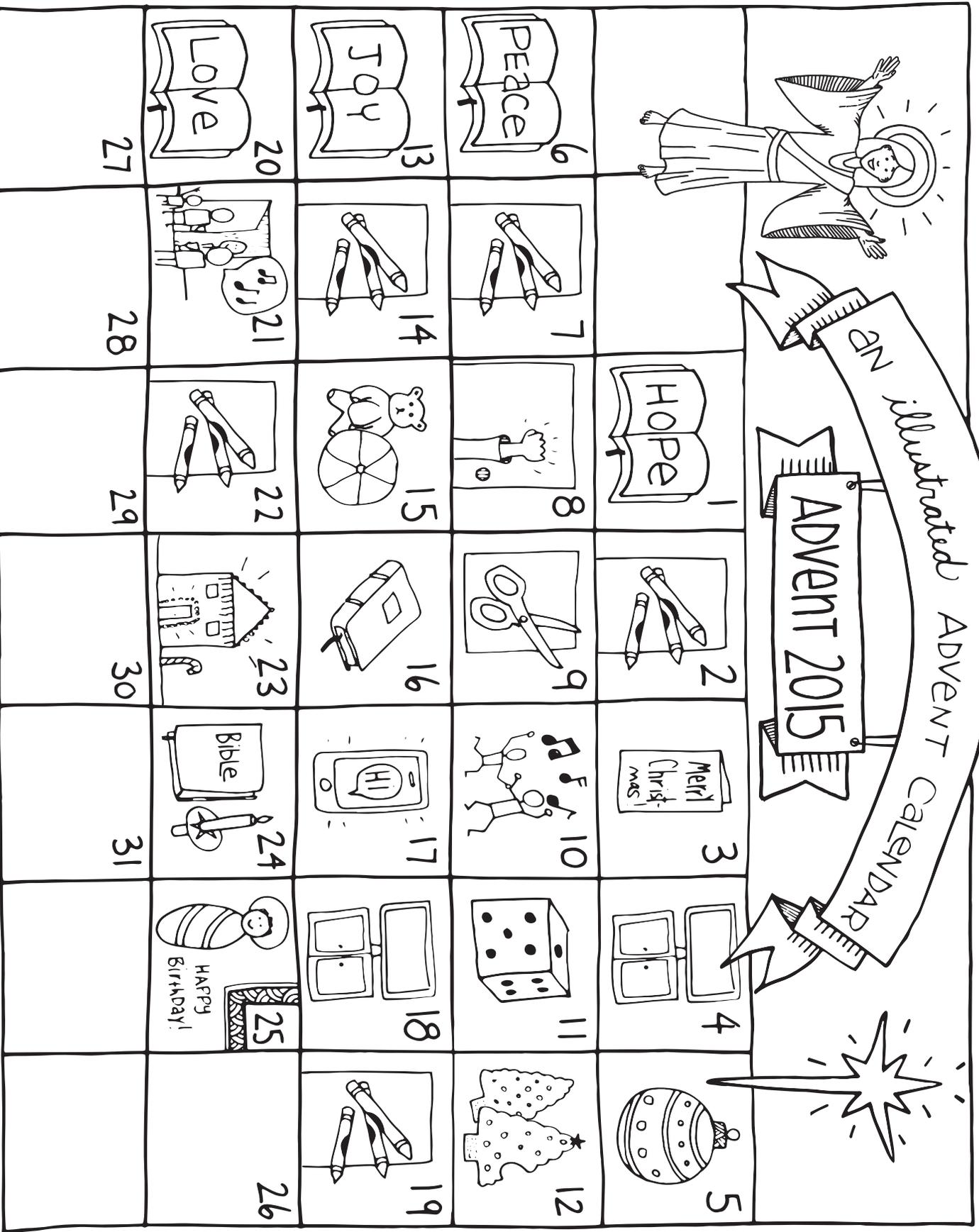
**December 12:** Make Christmas cookies for some friends (but keep a few for yourselves - that's allowed)

**December 13:** Do Week 3's "Joy" Devotion together

**December 14:** Color the third coloring sheet

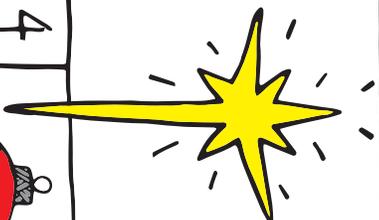
**December 15:** Choose 3 toys (for each child) to give away and donate

- December 16:** Read a favorite Christmas story as a family
- December 17:** Call a relative (or friend you haven't talked to in a long time) just to say "Hi" and tell them that you love them
- December 18:** Watch another favorite Christmas movie as a family (I know you have more than one favorite)
- December 19:** Color the fourth coloring sheet
- December 20:** Do Week 4's "Love" Devotion together
- December 21:** Go Christmas Caroling
- December 22:** Color the fifth coloring sheet
- December 23:** Drive around and look at Christmas lights
- December 24:** Read the Christmas Story from Luke
- December 25:** Merry Christmas! Baby Jesus is Born!

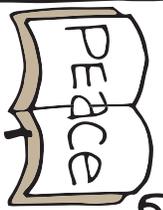




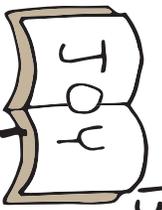
Illustrated ADVENT 2015 CALENDAR



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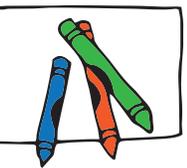
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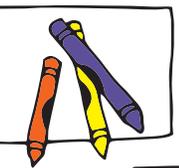
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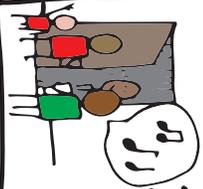
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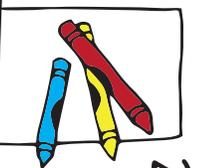
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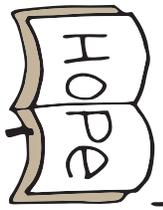


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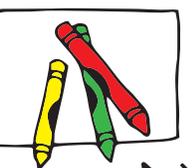


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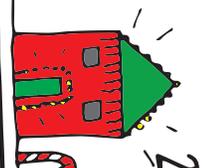
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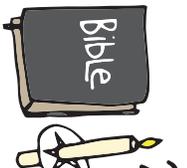
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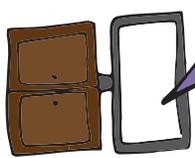


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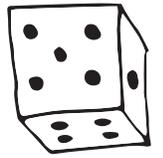


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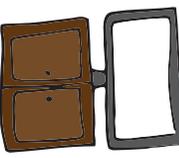
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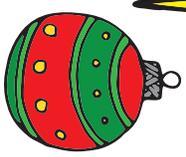
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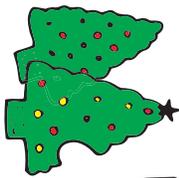
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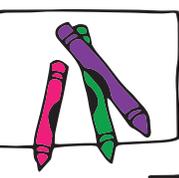
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# FLAT Wise Men

## **A Word about the “Flat Wise Men”**

I know, I know what you’re thinking.

*“How did I make it through life without the Flat Wise Men? These are JUST what I’ve been looking for to make Advent and Christmas meaningful again!”*

Okay, maybe that wasn’t *exactly* what you were thinking, but here’s the deal. On the next few pages, you will find the Flat Wise Men. Consider these wise men to be hybrid versions of Flat Stanley and the Elf on the Shelf. They are flat, lightweight, and very portable, and so they can travel easily (like Flat Stanley). And they like to move around your house (like the Elf on the Shelf) and find fun places to camp for the night.

Among the many people on journeys in the Christmas Story, the wise men probably traveled the longest distance. And if you choose to use them this Advent, they will be traveling around your home. There is a lot of flexibility with the Flat Wise Men. If you’d like them to journey, with their gifts, to your Christmas tree and arrive on Christmas morning— that’s an option.

*Quick Theological Note:* We are aware that contrary to most drawings of the Nativity, the wise men were not at the stable in Bethlehem on the day Jesus was born; most churches don’t celebrate the coming of the wise men until Epiphany (which technically falls on Wednesday, January 6, 2016).

You may also not want the three wise men to arrive at their final destination until Epiphany. And perhaps it would be more meaningful for you and your family if their final destination was your Nativity set, rather than the Christmas tree. All of this is up to you. We just encourage you to allow the wise men to journey around your home this Advent.

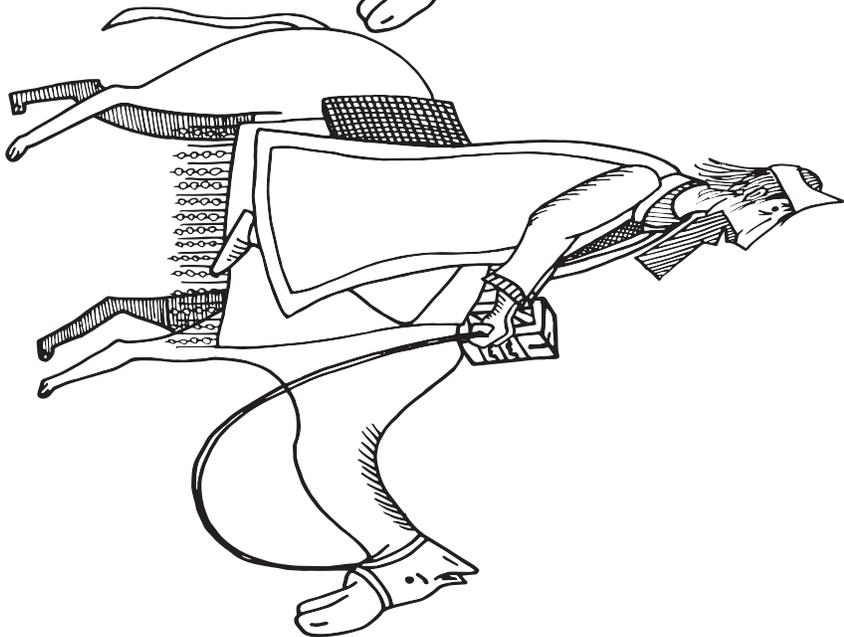
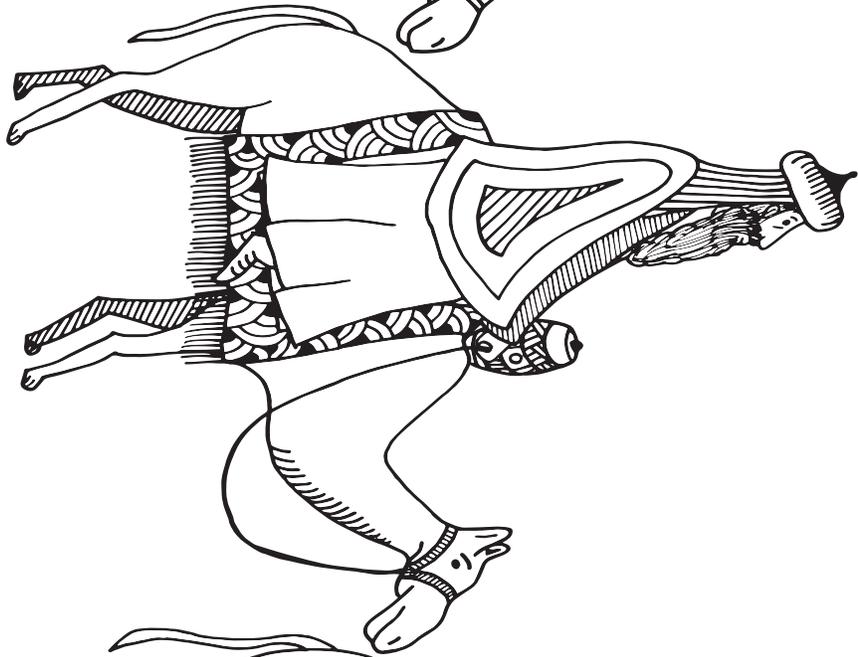
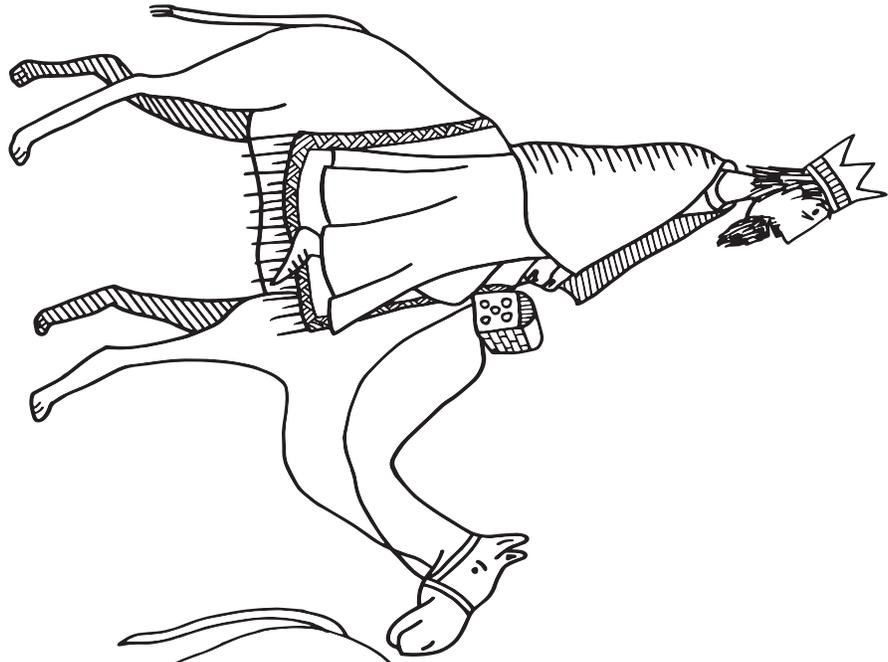
Additional suggested directions are below:

## Flat Wise Men Suggested Directions

1. Cut out the image of the three wise men together, or the individual illustrations.
2. On the evening of November 30, set the wise men off on their journey toward Bethlehem. You can hide them together or separately. Don't forget that like the Elf on the Shelf, the Flat Wise Men do have a sense of humor, and have been known to be found in quite silly locations.
3. When your kids get up on December 1, remind them about the three wise men, and the journey they took to Bethlehem. Let them know that the Flat Wise Men are going on their own journey as well this Advent, and your kids may see them around the house in different places, as they make their way to your Christmas tree, Nativity set, or location of your choosing.
4. On Christmas or Epiphany morning, end the Flat Wise Men's journey with your kids and pack them away for next year!

We'd love to see lots of fun and creative Flat Wise Men photos on Pinterest and Instagram.

And be sure to use the #anillustratedadvent hashtag.









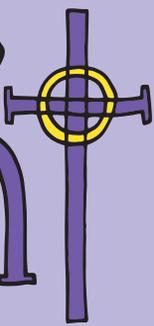
**Please share with us!**

Thank you so much for purchasing the Family Edition of *An Illustrated Advent*. We hope you've found it to be meaningful and fun!

Don't forget to share with us all of your #anillustratedadvent moments on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and beyond.

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# an illustrated advent



Engaging Practices for the Season  
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## **About the Authors**

**Sarah Walker Cleaveland** is a pastor and spiritual director living and working outside of Chicago. She loves spending time with her almost four-year-old son, woodworking, and giving Adam grief. Learn more about Sarah at [sarahwalkercleaveland.com](http://sarahwalkercleaveland.com).

**Adam Walker Cleaveland** is a pastor and artist. After doing youth ministry for over 15 years, Adam is taking a break from full-time parish ministry and recently started his own illustration business, [AWC Illustrations](http://awcillustrations.com). You can be in touch with Adam through his website, [awcillustrations.com](http://awcillustrations.com).