

Reverse Advent Calendar: Serve Wholeheartedly

Today, when kids think of “**Advent**”, they might think of advent calendars that are filled with chocolate. They open one each day starting December 1st and ending on Christmas Day. Instead, **Reverse Advent** is a tangible, overt way to make our invisible faith visible to our kids and community. Our kids can practice giving instead of getting and learn about compassion and serving others. Of course, there are many wonderful and different opportunities to display care and serve with your family, your church, and your community.

Ephesians 6:7-8 says that we are to “serve wholeheartedly, as if we were serving the Lord.”



What you need:

1. Four plain brown paper bags (one for each week of Advent)
2. Decide as family when and how you will practice this act of service. You may choose to fill your bag all at once or add one item each day of Advent. The choice is yours.
3. Drop off your donation at a local food bank, community care center, or church. Take your family along so that they know where these community buildings are. Many of these organizations don't allow visitors, so please check what the best dropoff arrangements are.

In this Advent season, we remember that Jesus came down to earth to be our Servant King (**Matthew 20:28**). Part of that story is Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. They gathered what they had and traveled to be counted in a census. They were without a home and uncertain what might happen on their trip.

Read **Luke 2** with your family each week. Memorize verses and ask wondering questions together. “What would they eat?” “Would they be warm?” “What did they need for themselves and for the baby that was coming?”



Week 1

What food would Mary and Joseph need for their journey to Bethlehem?

Place non-perishable **food items** in bag #1 for those living with food insecurity.

Talk about the role of food in your family's own life. **Pray** for the families in the community who are living with food insecurity. \$10 value.

Week 2

What did Mary and Joseph need for warmth?

Place **warm clothes** (hats, gloves, scarves, socks) in bag #2 for local street survivors. Talk about the clothes your family wears to stay warm in the winter. **Pray** for the street survivors who have little or no shelter from the cold. \$20 value.

Week 3

How would Mary and Joseph care for themselves?

Place **basic toiletries** (wet wipes, toothpaste, toothbrush, nail clippers, deodorant, soap, hand sanitizer, maxi pads), **first aid kit and two hand towels** in bag #3. Talk about the things your family needs each day to care for themselves. **Pray** for those who often have to choose between food and self care. \$10 value

Week 4

How would Mary and Joseph care for the baby?

Place **baby items** (diapers, diaper cream, bottles, wet wipes, hand sanitizer) in bag #4 for infants and toddlers. Talk about the many ways that babies depend on their caregivers for their needs. **Pray** for those who need the help of women's shelters and family food banks. \$20 value

We pray that this practice of participating in Advent helps your family celebrate how God the father sent his son Jesus to be our Servant King. May God bless your family and the people that you serve during this special season.

