

WEEK 1: HOPE

**** If your family is doing the weekly Advent candle lighting, go ahead and light 1 candle, symbolizing the Hope Candle.**

SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 7:14; Colossians 1:14

REFLECTIONS:

What do you love most about Christmas? Is it the lights, the music, the food, the gatherings? Most of us say, PRESENTS! And probably all the grown-ups will laugh and want us to say something more spiritual.

But actually, do you know what? You're right. That IS the best, most important thing about Christmas. Because, Christmas is all about a present. The greatest, most magnificent gift there's ever been...

Christmas is very hard to wait for, isn't it? Waiting to open all those presents - it's so difficult. Especially when you're a kid. We count down the days. We can't wait.

But do you know how long God's people had to wait for Christmas? How long they had to wait for the gift God promised them?

Weeks? No.

Months? Um. Longer.

Years, then? Even longer than that.

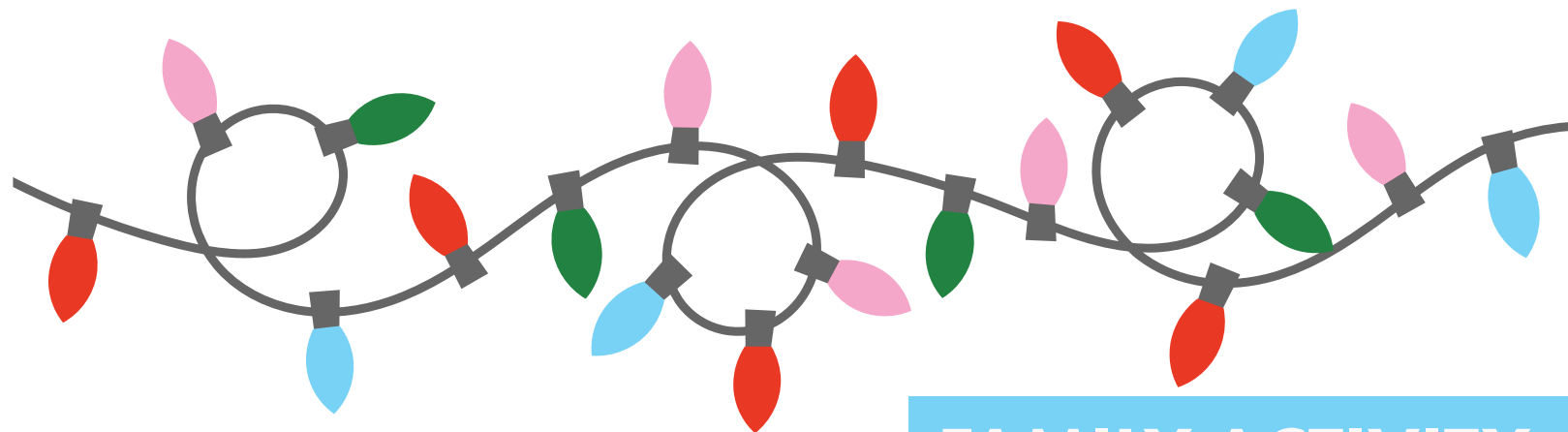
God's people had to wait for centuries and centuries. That's HUNDREDS of years!

When the prophet Isaiah wrote the words we read in our scripture today, God gave a message of hope through him that one day their Rescuer would come. And, God's people waited. And waited. And waited.

All through the Bible, all through the long years, God had been waiting for exactly the right time to send his great gift. Can you imagine the excitement when at last the most magnificent Christmas gift came?

The season of Advent starts with hope. Hope in the coming of God's greatest gift - Jesus. As we wait for the arrival of Christmas day and the excitement builds in us for those presents we get to tear in to, remember that in this season - in ALL seasons - Jesus is our only hope. God promises to bring restoration to our world through His Son, Jesus. That's something to celebrate!

What are you hopeful for this season? Maybe that amazing new toy or gaming device you've had your eye on, or hopeful to go on a great trip, or see someone special. While all of those things are fun, they only fill our "hope tank" for a short time. Jesus brings great hope that lasts forever!



FAMILY ACTIVITY

Christmas Charades

SUPPLIES NEEDED: none

WHAT TO DO:

The goal is to have players identify within one minute what the person who is it is acting out without saying any words. Make sure to explain it things or items from Christmas. When it is each person's turn, they will come up and you will whisper in their ear (or write down on slips of paper) what they are to act out. Below is a list of ideas to use, and you can add your own!

- Baking cookies
- Kissing under the mistletoe
- Little Drummer Boy
- Opening presents
- Singing Christmas carols
- Wrapping Christmas presents
- The Nutcracker Ballet
- Decorating the tree
- Jingle Bells
- Building a snowman
- Drinking hot chocolate
- Shepherds
- Shopping
- Eating a candy cane
- Angel
- Baby Jesus
- Donkey
- Wise Men

Pray Together

Talk about your upcoming week, and any specific prayer requests that each of you have. Pray together (either one person can pray, or each family member) for the requests. Also pray that God would fill your hearts with hope in Him this season, and that you each would find a way to share that hope with someone at school or work this week.

