

# Surprised by Christmas — Advent Daily Practices (Nov 30–Jan 1)

## Series Introduction: *The Season of Surprising Grace*

Advent is a season of waiting — four weeks that prepare our hearts for Christmas and remind us that **God still surprises the world**. The word **Advent** means “arrival.” We pause to remember Jesus’ first coming in humility and to look forward to His return as King.

This year’s theme, “**Surprised by Christmas**,” invites us to rediscover the wonder of God’s ways. The first Christmas caught everyone off guard. **No royal parade. No palace. No headlines.** Just a quiet stable in Bethlehem where heaven met earth in the most unexpected way.

Maybe you’ve been surprised by life this year — its twists, turns, or delays. Advent whispers that **God’s surprises are always good ones**. His plans may not unfold the way we expect, but they always lead to redemption.

### Parent Guide (use nightly in 5–10 minutes)

*This guide is for everyone. Even adults with no children in the home can do the Family Activities! Below is a simple structure for engaging each day.*

1. **Light a candle** (add one each week to mark our longing for Jesus, the Light of the World).
2. **Read Scripture aloud.**
3. **Devotional Thought** (1–3 short paragraphs).
4. **Pray + Listen (60–90 seconds of quiet).** Coach kids to close eyes, breathe, and ask: “*Jesus, what do You want me to know or do?*”
5. **Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity:** add one item that fits the day’s Scripture. You may want to gather the simple supplies necessary to add to the nativity daily.
6. **Share Together:** one quick question to answer around the room.
7. **Sing a carol** (suggestions provided each week).

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## WEEK 1 — *Surprised by Salvation*

**Dates:** Nov 30–Dec 6

**Hymns for the week:** *Joy to the World* • *Mary Did You Know?* • *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

**Gather These Supplies (for the week’s build):** small box or paper “stable,” straw/tissue paper, small slips of paper + pen, strip of cloth (for “swaddling”), paper + string to make a tiny **scroll**, simple **Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus** figures or paper cutouts, 1 tea-light/candle, tape.

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### Nov 30 — Day 1: When the World Wasn’t Looking

**Scripture:** *Luke 2:10–12*

**Devotional Thought:**

For **400 years** God seemed silent, yet heaven hadn't forgotten. Then—angels in a field, a manger in the dark, **“a Savior... the Messiah, the Lord.”** Salvation arrived not with armies but with **presence**. God still loves to start His greatest work in places we'd never expect and in hearts that feel very ordinary.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Jesus, where are You quietly at work in **my** life right now? Surprise me with Your peace in **one specific place** I'm worried about.”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #1):**

Set out an **empty stable/box**. Light one candle. “We're waiting.”

**Share Together:** Where do you most want to notice Jesus this week?

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## **Dec 1 — Day 2: The Need We Didn't Expect**

**Scripture:** *Romans 3:23–24*

**Devotional Thought:**

People hoped Messiah would fix what was wrong **around** them—Rome, politics, pressure. Jesus came to heal what was wrong **within** us. The Bible names it **sin**—the bent that pulls us from God and from each other. Salvation is not self-improvement; it's **rescue** and **new birth** by grace.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Lord, I'm tired of trying to fix **(name the place you struggle)** on my own. What are You inviting me to surrender so I can receive Your grace?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #2):**

Place the **manger with straw/cloth** inside the stable. Each person tucks a slip of paper with a worry or mistake under the straw. Pray, “Jesus, we need Your forgiveness and help.”

**Share Together:** What's one way we can show grace to each other today?

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## **Dec 2 — Day 3: A Savior for Everyone**

**Scripture:** *Luke 2:30–32*

**Devotional Thought:**

Simeon called Jesus **“a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.”** From the start, salvation's **scope** was global. The manger is God's open door to **every** tribe, tongue, and story—no outsiders.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Father, who around **me** feels far from You—at school, work, or in my neighborhood? Show me one name and one way to love them this week.”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #3):**

Add a small **paper globe** or **people-chain** beside the stable. Pray for the name God brought to mind and for a nation you want to bless.

**Share Together:** How can our family welcome someone who may feel left out?

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## Dec 3 — Day 4: The Way of Salvation

**Scripture:** *2 Corinthians 5:21*

**Devotional Thought:**

The cradle and the cross tell one story. “**He who knew no sin became sin for us.**” Jesus didn’t just bring advice; He **became** our rescue. He took our place so we could receive His righteousness. We don’t climb to God—**God came down.**

**Pray + Listen:**

“Jesus, what shame or self-reliance am I carrying? I place **(name it)** in Your hands. What truth do You want me to receive instead?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #4):**

Lay a **swaddling cloth** in the manger. Say, “He was wrapped for us.” Whisper one sentence of thanks to Jesus.

**Share Together:** Where have you seen Jesus forgive or restore something in your life?

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## Dec 4 — Day 5: Heaven Wasn’t Surprised

**Scripture:** *Galatians 4:4–5*

**Devotional Thought:**

From Eden’s first promise to Bethlehem’s cry, heaven moved history toward “**the set time.**” God is never late, never scrambling. If the world’s surprise was loud, heaven’s confidence was louder. He is writing a story bigger than our delays.

**Pray + Listen:**

“God, I’m waiting for You in **(name a situation)**. What promise do You want me to hold while I wait?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #5):**

Hang a tiny **scroll** (rolled paper, tied with string) near the stable—**God’s promises**. Sing *Mary Did You Know?*.

**Share Together:** Tell about a time God kept a promise to you.

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## Dec 5 — Day 6: The Gift We Could Never Earn

**Scripture:** *Ephesians 2:8–9*

**Devotional Thought:**

Salvation is **gift**, not a wage. We don’t hustle for God’s approval; we **receive** it in Christ. Grace disarms our striving and frees us to live grateful, generous lives.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Generous Father, what gift of grace do I need to unwrap today? Who are You prompting me to bless?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #6):**

Add **Mary and Joseph**—people who said **yes** to God’s gift. Each person shares one small “yes” for today. Light the candle and sing *O Little Town of Bethlehem*.

**Share Together:** What’s one gift of grace we’ve seen in our family this week?

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## Dec 6 — Day 7: Surprised by Joy

**Scripture:** *Luke 1:46–47*

**Devotional Thought:**

Mary's song blooms in hardship. Joy is not denial of pain; it's the fruit of **God-with-us**. When salvation settles in our hearts, joy rises.

**Pray + Listen:**

"Lord, where do You want to plant **Your joy** in me today—especially where life feels heavy?"

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #7):**

Place **Baby Jesus** in the manger. Celebrate with a cheer or a cupcake. Sing *Joy to the World*.

**Share Together:** What brought you joy this week because Jesus was with you?

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## WEEK 2 — *Surprised by the Impossible*

**Dates:** Dec 7–13

**Hymns for the week:** *Angels We Have Heard on High* • *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* • *What Child Is This*

**Gather These Supplies:** paper **dove** cutout, **star** stickers, 1–2 **tea-lights**/battery candles, mini **doorway/Bethlehem sign**(paper/craft stick), **shepherd** figure, tiny **paper tool** (for Joseph), small **"YES"** banner (paper + string), tape.

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## Dec 7 — Day 8: "How Can This Be?"

**Scripture:** *Luke 1:34–35*

**Devotional Thought:**

Mary stands where faith meets mystery. Her question isn't defiance but wonder. God answers with Himself: **the Holy Spirit will come upon you**. The impossible is not a puzzle for us to solve; it's an **invitation to trust** the One who can do what we cannot.

**Pray + Listen:**

"Holy Spirit, here is my 'How can this be?' — **(name it)**. What step of surrender are You asking of me?"

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #8):**

Place a **dove** by the stable to symbolize the Spirit. Pray, "Come, Holy Spirit." Sing *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*.

**Share Together:** What's one thing that feels impossible for you right now?

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## Dec 8 — Day 9: Nothing Is Too Hard for the Lord

**Scripture:** *Genesis 18:14*

**Devotional Thought:**

Sarah laughed at God's timing; God turned her laughter into a lullaby. Our limits don't limit Him. He

makes **new beginnings** where we see dead ends.

**Pray + Listen:**

“God, revive hope in **(name a ‘barren’ place)**. Show me one practical way to cooperate with what You’re doing.”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #9):**

Stick **stars** over the stable—God’s promise to Abraham. Pray, “Nothing is too hard for You.”

**Share Together:** Tell a story when God surprised you with an answer.

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## **Dec 9 — Day 10: God Can Do Anything**

**Scripture:** *Luke 1:37*

**Devotional Thought:**

Angels declare it; creation proves it: **nothing is impossible with God**. He is not constrained by our past or our power. His strength is made perfect in weakness.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Mighty God, where am I relying on my strength? I give You **(name it)**. What do You want to do in me today?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #10):**

Add a **tea-light** by the manger. Turn off the room lights: “God’s power brings light into dark places.”

Sing *Angels We Have Heard on High*.

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## **Dec 10 — Day 11: God Can Be Anywhere**

**Scripture:** *Matthew 1:23*

**Devotional Thought:**

**Immanuel** means there are no God-forsaken places. Stables, classrooms, break rooms, hospital rooms—He chooses the ordinary and the messy.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Jesus, meet me today in **(name a specific place you’ll be)**. What do You want me to notice with You there?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #11):**

Make a small **Bethlehem sign/doorway** for the stable. Pray over each room in your home for Jesus’ presence.

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## **Dec 11 — Day 12: God Can Save Anyone**

**Scripture:** *Luke 19:10*

**Devotional Thought:**

From **shepherds** to **tax collectors**, Jesus seeks and saves. Grace erases the line between “good people” and “bad people”—leaving only **people Jesus loves**.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Jesus, who are You seeking through **me** this week? Put one name on my heart and show me how to join Your rescue.”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #12):**

Add a **shepherd**. Pray by name for someone who needs Jesus' love.

**Share Together:** What might loving that person this week look like?

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**Dec 12 — Day 13: God Can Use Anybody**

**Scripture:** *1 Corinthians 1:27–29*

**Devotional Thought:**

God delights to use the “foolish” and the “weak”—a **young girl**, a **carpenter**, **shepherds**, **foreign wise men**. He isn't impressed by résumés; He empowers **availability**.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Lord, I offer You my gifts **and** my limitations. What simple act of obedience are You asking of me today?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #13):**

Make a tiny **paper tool** (hammer/saw) and place it by **Joseph**. Choose one family service act to do before the week ends.

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**Dec 13 — Day 14: ‘Let It Be to Me’**

**Scripture:** *Luke 1:38*

**Devotional Thought:**

Mary's surrender didn't remove risk; it reoriented her life around God's promise. **Faith steps are the doorway to the impossible.**

**Pray + Listen:**

“Father, I say yes to You in **(name one area)**. What courage or next step are You giving me?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #14):**

Create a small **YES banner** and hang it by **Mary**. Pray, “We are Your servants.”

**Share Together:** What “yes” are you offering Jesus this week?

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**WEEK 3 — Surprised by Love**

**Dates:** Dec 14–20

**Hymns for the week:** *Away in a Manger • Lowest of Lows • What Child is This • O Holy Night*

**Gather These Supplies:** paper/ornament **hearts**, **donkey** figure, **wise men** + three tiny gift boxes, cotton balls/toy **sheep**, several **stable animals**, small **cross** (two craft sticks + string), paper for **footprints/path**, extra candles.

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**Dec 14 — Day 15: He's What?!**

**Scripture:** *1 John 4:9–10*

**Devotional Thought:**

The most surprising line in Scripture may be this: **“God is love.”** Not mere affection—**self-giving action**. He sent His Son, took our place, and made us alive. The world expects performance; Christmas announces **belovedness**.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Jesus, show me where I’m unsure of Your love. What do You want me to hear from Your heart today?”  
(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)

**Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #15):**

Place a **heart** near the manger. Each person names one way Jesus shows love. Sing *Away in a Manger*.

**Share Together:** Finish the sentence: “Because God loves me, I can....”

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## Dec 15 — Day 16: Love That Lasts

**Scripture:** *Ephesians 3:17–19*

**Devotional Thought:**

Human love can fade; **Christ’s love is wider, longer, higher, deeper** than our failures. He doesn’t give up; He abides. Let His settled affection steady your soul.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Lord, where do I doubt Your staying love—**(name a relationship or fear)**? Wrap me in Your faithful presence.”

(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)

**Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #16):**

Add the **donkey**—love that keeps going. Pray for travelers, missionaries, and those far from home.

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## Dec 16 — Day 17: Love That Reaches Everyone

**Scripture:** *John 3:16*

**Devotional Thought:**

God’s love crosses every border. The **Magi** from far away knelt at a Jewish child’s cradle. Love moves us toward those unlike us.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Father, who is my ‘far away’ today—someone different from me? Show me one step to bridge the gap.”  
(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)

**Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #17):**

Add the **wise men’s gifts** (three tiny boxes). Pray for another nation or neighbor from a different background. Sing *We Three Kings* or *What Child Is This*.

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## Dec 17 — Day 18: Love That Values Everyone

**Scripture:** *Luke 19:10*

**Devotional Thought:**

Jesus called the overlooked **by name**. In His kingdom, no one is beyond reach and **every soul is priceless**. Our

churches and homes become places of welcome because His love found us first.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Jesus, who near me needs to know they matter? How can I show Your value to them?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #18):**

Glue **cotton-ball sheep** near the shepherd. Make one **encouragement note** for someone who may feel left out.

**Share Together:** Who encouraged you this week? How did it feel?

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## Dec 18 — Day 19: Love That Stoops Low

**Scripture:** *Philippians 2:6–8*

**Devotional Thought:**

The manger was **God’s chosen address**. The High King bent low, taking the form of a servant. True love kneels, shares power, bears burdens, and **gives crowns back to Jesus**.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Humble King, where are You asking me to lay down my ‘crowns’—my rights, pride, or preferences—for someone’s good?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #19):**

Add **stable animals** around the manger. Do a hidden act of service for someone at home today.

**Share Together:** How did serving change your heart? Sing *Lowest of Lows*

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## Dec 19 — Day 20: Love That Changes Everything

**Scripture:** *Romans 8:38–39*

**Devotional Thought:**

At the manger we see the **trajectory** of love—toward a cross and an empty tomb. No power—sin, shame, or death—can separate us from Christ’s love.

**Pray + Listen:**

“God, speak Your inseparable love over **(name a place of pain or regret)**. What promise should I carry into it?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children’s Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #20):**

Place a small **cross** near the manger. Sing *O Holy Night* or *How Deep the Father’s Love for Us*.

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## Dec 20 — Day 21: Where Love Leads

**Scripture:** *Luke 2:11–12*

**Devotional Thought:**

The angel’s word ended with an action step: **“Go and see.”** Loved people become **sent** people—toward worship, generosity, and reconciliation.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Jesus, where are You sending **me/us** to love today? Give us someone to bless and the courage to do it.”

*(Pause & listen.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #21):**

Lay **paper footprints/path** leading to the manger. Do one simple act of generosity as a family today (deliver cookies, text encouragement, donate food).

**Share Together:** Where did love lead us? What happened? Sing *Use Me* by Josiah Queen

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## **WEEK 4 — *Surprised by Joy***

**Dates:** Dec 21–25

**Hymns for the week:** *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* • *O Come O Come Emmanuel* • *Joy to the World*

**Gather These Supplies:** paper **music notes/bells**, paper **crown**, small **"Immanuel—God With Us"** tag, small **mirror or shiny ornament**, **"Joy to the World"** banner supplies (paper/markers/string), matches/tea-lights.

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### **Dec 21 — Day 22: Experiencing Joy**

**Scripture:** *Luke 2:10*

**Devotional Thought:**

The angel's first words cut through fear: **"Do not be afraid... great joy."** Joy is the surprised discovery that God is here and His rescue is for **you**. It blooms even when life is noisy or uncertain.

**Pray + Listen:**

"God, where am I afraid? Speak Your good news into **that** place and let Your joy rise in me."

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #22):**

Hang **paper music notes or bells** above the scene. Ring a bell and shout, "Jesus is here!"

**Share Together:** What good news do you need to remember tonight?

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### **Dec 22 — Day 23: God Is Above Us**

**Scripture:** *Psalms 47:2*

**Devotional Thought:**

Joy takes root when we remember who reigns. **The Lord Most High** rules over calendars and crises. Our lives are not at the mercy of chaos; they're held by a King.

**Pray + Listen:**

"King Jesus, I place **(name your worry)** under Your rule. What truth should I cling to today?"

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #23):**

Add a **crown** above the stable. Pray, "You are our King." Sing *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*.

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### **Dec 23 — Day 24: God Is With Us**

**Scripture:** *Matthew 1:23*

**Devotional Thought:**

From the first cry in Bethlehem to His Spirit with us now, Jesus is **Immanuel**. You are never unseen or alone. Joy grows where presence is practiced.

**Pray + Listen:**

"Immanuel, meet me in **this** moment. What comfort or courage do You want to give me tonight?"

*(Pause 1–2 min & listen.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #24):**

Place an '**Immanuel—God With Us**' tag near the Baby. Light all your candles; sit in quiet; sing *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*.

**Share Together:** Where did you notice God with you this week?

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## **Dec 24 — Day 25: God Is For Us (Christmas Eve)**

**Scripture:** *Romans 8:31*

**Devotional Thought:**

Bethlehem declares it; Calvary guarantees it: **God is for you**. He doesn't stand against you; He's moved heaven and earth to bring you home. That's the secret of unshakable joy.

**Pray + Listen:**

"Father, thank You that You are for **me**. What blessing or assignment are You giving me today?"

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #25 — Final Touch):**

Set a small **mirror or shiny ornament** near the manger. Let each person look in and say, "God is for me in Jesus." Sing *Joy to the World*!

**Share Together:** How will we carry today's joy into the week?

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## **Dec 25 — Day 26: Expectant Joy (Christmas Day)**

**Scripture:** *Revelation 21:3–4*

**Devotional Thought:**

Christmas joy points ahead: the King who came will **come again**. On that day, "no more death, sorrow, or pain." Until then, we live as people of **resurrection hope**—praying, serving, and shining His light.

**Personal Prayer + Listen:**

"Lord, as this day closes, what new hope are You planting in **me/us** for the year ahead? Show us how to join Your work."

*(Pause 1–2 min & listen.)*

**Family/Children's Activity — Surprise Nativity (Add #26 — Send):**

Stretch a '**Joy to the World**' banner across your completed scene. Pray blessings over each person by name and ask Jesus to make your home a light in the neighborhood.

**Share Together:** What surprised you most this Advent? Where do you sense Jesus leading us next?

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## **Week 5 — Surprised into the New Year**

December 26 – January 1

## For Parents

This week bridges *celebration* and *calling*. Keep your candles or lights near the nativity. Each night, relight one and say, “Jesus, You are still here.”

Encourage every person to bring a journal or paper for **listening prayer**.

## Gather These Supplies

Scissors, crayons or markers, glue/tape, blank paper for reflection, one envelope or small box labeled “**God’s Surprises 2026.**” Keep your completed nativity ready.

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## Dec 26 — Remembering the Story

**Scripture:** Luke 2:19

*“Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.”*

### Devotional Thought:

After the visitors left, the stable grew quiet again. Mary held memories like treasures — angel songs, shepherd stories, God’s promises whispered in the dark. Reflection is how joy sinks deep. Advent’s surprises don’t end; they turn into **remembrance** that shapes the year ahead.

### Pray + Listen:

“Jesus, what do You want me to treasure from this Advent season? What are You inviting me to remember and keep?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

### Family Activity — “Memory Stars”:

Cut small paper stars. Write or draw one surprise or joy from December on each. Hang them above the nativity or tape them on a window.

**Share Together:** What memory or surprise do you want to carry into 2026?

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## Dec 27 — The God Who Still Saves

**Scripture:** Philippians 1:6

*“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.”*

### Devotional Thought:

Salvation is not a single moment; it’s a lifelong rescue mission. The baby who saved us keeps forming us. God finishes what He starts — even when growth feels slow or hidden.

### Pray + Listen:

“Savior, what work are You continuing in me right now? Show me one area You want to grow this year.”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

### Family Activity — “New Year Scroll”:

Unroll a long strip of paper. Across the top write ‘**God’s Good Work in Us.**’ Each person draws or writes one area they want Jesus to grow in them this year. Roll it like a scroll and place near the nativity.

**Share Together:** What part of your life do you want Jesus to keep shaping?

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## Dec 28 — The God Who Makes the Impossible Possible

**Scripture:** Ephesians 3:20

*“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine...”*

**Devotional Thought:**

Every year brings unknowns. Faith looks at what seems impossible and remembers Christmas — a virgin birth, angels singing, sinners redeemed. The God who spoke galaxies can still surprise us with “immeasurably more.”

**Pray + Listen:**

“Lord, where am I afraid to hope? What impossible thing are You inviting me to pray for in 2026?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family Activity — “Hope Lights”:**

Light a candle or small flashlight for each family member. As each light shines, name a hope or dream for the new year.

**Share Together:** Where do you need God to do the impossible?

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## Dec 29 — The God Who Loves Us Still

**Scripture:** Romans 5:8

*“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

**Devotional Thought:**

Love did not fade when the decorations came down. God’s love is steady, daily, and personal. It meets us in ordinary routines — dishes, homework, commutes — just as He once met the world in a stable.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Father, how do You want me to experience and express Your love in this season?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family Activity — “Heart Chain”:**

Cut out paper hearts, connect them into a chain. On each heart, write one person or group you want to love better this year. Drape the chain around the nativity.

**Share Together:** Whom will you show love to this week?

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## Dec 30 — The God Who Brings Joy into Tomorrow

**Scripture:** Psalm 16:11

*“You make known to me the path of life; You fill me with joy in Your presence.”*

**Devotional Thought:**

Joy is not optimism; it’s orientation. It’s choosing to face tomorrow with Jesus. As the calendar turns, we can face uncertainty with laughter and peace — because our Shepherd goes before us.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Jesus, what joy do You want to give me for the days ahead? Show me how to carry Your presence into the new year.”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family Activity — “Joy Jar”:**

Find a jar or box. Label it ‘**Surprised by Joy 2026.**’ Throughout the year, place notes of answered prayers or surprises inside.

**Share Together:** What makes you excited about a new year with Jesus?

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## Dec 31 — The God Who Sends Us (New Year's Eve)

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:19–20

*“Go and make disciples... and surely I am with you always.”*

**Devotional Thought:**

The shepherds went back glorifying God; the wise men went home by another route. Christmas always ends in **movement**. We carry light into the world that still waits.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Lord, where are You sending me/us in 2026? Who needs Your light through me?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family Activity — “Star Send-Out”:**

Take the paper stars from earlier. Choose one each to keep and one to give away (to a friend, teacher, neighbor) as a sign of hope.

**Share Together:** Who might need the light you carry?

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## Jan 1 — The God Who Makes All Things New

**Scripture:** Revelation 21:5

*“Behold, I am making all things new.”*

**Devotional Thought:**

A new year begins — but it’s still God’s story. The same Jesus who surprised the world at Christmas is writing new chapters through you. Lift your eyes; He is already ahead of you.

**Pray + Listen:**

“Creator God, what new thing are You beginning in me this year? What do You want to grow, heal, or start?”

*(Pause & listen 60–90 seconds and then pray.)*

**Family Activity — “New Beginnings Scene”:**

Take down your nativity slowly. Before putting each piece away, thank God for what it represents — His presence, power, love, joy. Then gather the figures into a small box labeled ‘**God’s Surprises 2026.**’ Pray, “Lord, surprise us again with Your goodness.”

**Share Together:** What do you hope Jesus writes into our story this year?