

*Celebrating Advent
with Students*

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THE SEASON OF ADVENT, A TIME OF PREPARING OUR HEARTS TO RECEIVE CHRIST AT CHRISTMAS, IS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO INVITE STUDENTS INTO DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. HERE ARE 5 IDEAS TO EXCITE AND INSPIRE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS DURING THIS ADVENT SEASON.

1

STICK WITH TRADITIONS

Incorporate an Advent wreath in your teaching or prayer space. Discuss or review with students what the wreath symbolizes and what each candle means. Light the candles each week, and lead the students in a simple prayer service. (Battery operated candles are suggested for classroom use.)

2

GET SOCIAL

Our student's worlds are infiltrated with social media and the presence of the Internet. Help students get a handle on what life was like for the expectant Joseph and Mary in Nazareth by having them design a mock social media page for Mary or Joseph during the time leading up to Jesus' birth. Share the completed profiles and discuss as a class what can be learned from the holy family about inviting Jesus into our hearts and homes this Advent.



3

ENGAGE THE SCRIPTURES

The Scriptures during the season of Advent are incredibly beautiful. Sit with students and slowly dissect passages like the Visitation or the Birth of Christ. Have students share with a partner something that struck them and use their thoughts and reactions as an opportunity for class discussion.

4

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Invite students discuss to imagine how Mary and Joseph must have felt, and what decisions they were being asked to make as they prepared for Jesus' birth. Helping our students appreciate the context will also expose them to just how radical God's love in the Incarnation is.

5

MAKE A GAME PLAN

While Advent doesn't hold the same penitential themes as the season of Lent, this is an important time to encourage introspection and reflection in our students. Ask students to reflect on what in their lives is "unprepared for Jesus' arrival." Then, ask them to develop a spiritual game plan for how they can prepare these areas of their lives before the end of the Advent season



Advent Social Media Lesson

MINI
LESSON

GOAL TO HELP JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE STORY OF MARY AND HER CIRCUMSTANCES IN AGREEING TO BECOME THE MOTHER OF THE SON OF GOD.



MATERIALS NEEDED

Poster paper
Markers
Pens/pencils
Bible

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, help us to understand the life of your Mother. Help us to understand how she prepared for your birth so that we may better prepare for you this Advent season. Amen.

DISCUSSION Review Luke 1:26–38 and allow students time to look over the Scripture passage. When they have finished, ask them to partner with a classmate to share the two lines that struck them the most, and discuss why. Then, come together as a group to pose the following questions to the students.

- What is happening in this story? (*The Angel is telling Mary that she is going to be the Mother of Jesus.*)
- How do you think Mary felt in this moment? (*Scared; Excited; Nervous; Confused; Happy?*)
- Remember that Mary was an unmarried, young woman. What do you think Joseph thought of all this? (*Nervous; Frustrated; Angry; Confused; Excited?*)
- In today's world, when we have big things happen in our lives what are the first things we do? (*Share the news with a friend or family member, post to social media*)

ACTIVITY Assign students into groups of 3, giving each a piece of poster board and markers. Invite students to use the materials to design a social media profile for Mary and Joseph. Students can write or draw the things they would have hypothetically posted from the time they found out about Jesus' coming and the time he was born. Allow time for groups to complete and present their profiles.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, Mary and Joseph spent time preparing their hearts for your coming at Christmas. Help us to make a home for you in our lives as they did in Nazareth. Help us to grow into the people you want us to be. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Advent Prayer Service for Junior High

LEADER: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen.

READER: In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-38)

The Gospel of the Lord

ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

At this time, the leader should give each student a sheet of paper and invite students to write a prayer asking God for help preparing their hearts for Jesus during Advent. Students may write something specific like, "Please help me prepare a place for Jesus by being more respectful of my mom," or something more general. They should then fold the papers and place them in an offering basket.

LEADER: Lord, please accept our offerings and help us to prepare our hearts for your coming this Advent.

At this time, the leader should light the appropriate candle(s) in the Advent wreath.

LEADER: As we light this Advent candle, let us be reminded of God's Son, the Light of the World. Let's close with a Hail Mary, that we may invite Jesus into the world, as she did.

ALL: Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with you!

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,

pray for us sinners,

now and at the hour of our death.

Amen.