

December 2014

parenting CHRISTIAN kids



through excellence in
ministry to children.

St. Luke UMC
www.stlukeumc.org

Anticipate Jesus' Arrival

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To bless your family's Christmas preparations and to prepare your hearts for his arrival.
2. To replace stress and busyness with peace and calm.
3. To help your family stay focused on Jesus and his joy during the holiday season.

The Advent season, which begins this year on November 30, offers four weeks to prepare our hearts for Jesus' birth. It's also a reminder to prepare for Jesus' second coming, when everyone who believes in him will go to heaven to live with God forever.

Advent's special meaning and purpose often get lost in the Christmas shuffle. But your family can take fun steps to focus on what the season truly means.

Pre-Christmas faith boosters needn't be elaborate or time-consuming. Instead, use material you have on hand to reinforce the good news the angels shared on that first Christmas Eve: Jesus, our Savior, is born!

In the weeks leading up to Christmas, you can engage in old and new traditions, make crafts, have discussions about Jesus' birthday, and worship him as your newborn King.

Look for ways to spread joy as a family. From caroling and delivering cookies to sending cards and inviting neighbors to church services or programs, there are many ways to let your light shine as you celebrate Jesus, the Light of the world.

One popular way to prepare for Jesus' arrival is to make and light an Advent wreath as a family. The symbols and colors will add meaning to your devotional time together. Turn the page for easy instructions to make a special wreath.

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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Follow the Star

Hang a trail of yellow construction-paper stars throughout your house, and near each star, place a nativity-scene figure. Hang the last, largest star over a cake with candles on it, and place the baby Jesus figurine by it.

As a family, follow the stars. Stop at each one and talk about that figure's role in the first Christmas. At the final star, light the candles on the cake.

Say: **These candles represent the star of Bethlehem that shone brightly over baby Jesus when he came to earth to save us.**

Read aloud John 8:12 and talk about ways that Jesus can shine brightly in our lives each day. Close in prayer: **Dear God, thank you for sending your only Son, Jesus, to be born for us on Christmas. Amen.**

Then sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus and share the cake!

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Christmas Adventures

As with any birthday celebration, much of the fun of Christmas is planning for—and awaiting—its arrival. Traditions are an important part of Christmas for many families. They provide opportunities to keep your unique legacy going, while focusing on the true reason we observe December 25. From the simple to the silly to the sentimental, traditions can impart key lessons and create meaningful memories. For example, you might buy a new ornament for each of your children each year. If you don't already have an Advent wreath, you can make the one described below.

Family Advent Wreath

By making this craft together, you'll have a cherished tradition for years to come. Using a low-temperature glue gun, secure a white tea candle in the center of a pie pan. Then glue four purple (or blue) tea candles around it evenly. Adults can use wire cutters to cut flame-resistant greenery to glue around the pan's lip. Use this wreath as the centerpiece of your family's Advent devotions.

The wreath's circular shape reminds us that Jesus has no beginning or end. The candles signify that he's the Light of the world and remind us to live—and shine—for him. Traditionally, each candle has a special meaning.

Week 1—The first candle is called the candle of hope. People in the Old Testament knew that God had promised to send a Savior. And we're filled with hope because we know that Jesus came to earth on the first Christmas to save us from our sin. Light one colored candle on your wreath and read aloud Romans 15:13. Then share some ways you're filled with hope because you know Jesus.

Week 2—The second candle represents preparation. Getting our

hearts ready for Christmas is more important than decorating our home or even our church. Light two colored candles, and read aloud Mark 1:3-4. As a family, brainstorm things you do to get ready for house guests. Talk about what you'd do differently if Jesus were coming to stay at your house.

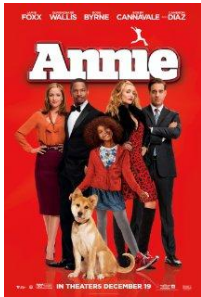
Week 3—The third candle, sometimes pink, symbolizes joy. Light three colored candles on your wreath. Read aloud Luke 2:10-11 and discuss the angel's big announcement. Then encourage each person to share one thing they're especially joyful about this Christmas.

Week 4—The fourth candle represents love. Christmas happened because of God's great love for all people. Light all four colored candles and read aloud John 3:16. Talk about why we give nice things to people we love—and why Jesus is the best gift ever. Close in prayer, thanking our loving God for sending Jesus as a baby on Christmas.

The white center candle is called the Christ candle. Light it on Christmas Day (along with the other candles in your wreath) to celebrate Jesus' birthday!

"I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!"—Luke 2:10-11

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *Annie*

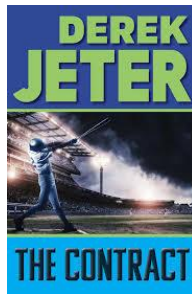
Genre: Musical comedy-drama

Rating: PG (for some mild language and rude humor)

Cast: Jamie Foxx, Quvenzhané Wallis, Rose Byrne, Cameron Diaz

Synopsis: This contemporary adaptation of the popular musical was produced by Jay-Z and Will Smith. The modern retelling adds racial diversity, as well as some new songs.

Our Take: After more than 30 years, this beloved movie receives a well-deserved remake. Kids will enjoy the story of a foster child and her encounter with Will Stacks, a Daddy Warbucks-type of politician. By the end, both of their lives are significantly changed for the better.



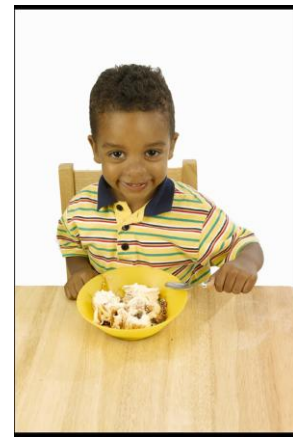
BOOK

Title: *The Contract*

Author: Derek Jeter

Synopsis: This middle-grade baseball novel is the first in a series by the recently retired New York Yankees shortstop. Jeter based the story on his childhood, when his parents gave him a “contract” promising rewards for good behavior and wise decisions.

Our Take: With lots of baseball action by a superstar author, this book is sure to be a homerun—especially with boys. *The Contract* contains positive messages about persistence and pursuing one’s dreams. It doesn’t acknowledge, however, the high level of physical talent required to make it in professional sports.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Comfort Food—Children as young as 5 seek solace in food when they’re stressed out. Research shows that the more stressful a child’s life is, the more sweet foods he or she eats. Girls are especially vulnerable to this habit. Kids said bullying, fights with friends, and sibling issues made them turn to food. (dailymail.co.uk)

Enjoying Creation—According to a study at Michigan State University, when children get time outside, they also have a greater belief in the creator God. (msutoday.msu.edu)

Games, Sites & Apps

Super Smash Bros.

This popular multiplayer “brawling” game is being released for Nintendo 3DS and Wii U. Characters are from various Nintendo franchises. Players try to launch opponents off a stage, so there’s lots of cartoon violence.

BrainBashers.com

On this site, older kids can take simple quizzes, complete puzzles, play games, view optical illusions, and more. The site is free but requires that cookies are turned on.

Grandma Loves Bugs

With this iOS app, preschoolers can practice coloring, counting, simple spelling, and letter matching. Children will enjoy catching virtual fireflies and using the app’s magnifying glass on photos of real bugs.

QUICK STATS

Birds & Bees—In a survey, 80% of parents blamed the Internet for spurring a “facts of life” talk with their kids at a younger age than when the parents received the same talk. Today, most kids hear that talk by age 10. Half of today’s parents remember hearing it themselves around age 15—if they heard it at all. (kvue.com)

Mainstreaming Perks—Language test scores of kids with disabilities who were placed in classrooms with the most highly skilled peers were about 40% better than scores of kids with disabilities who were placed with the lowest-ranked peers. (news.osu.edu)

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This page is designed to help educate parents and isn’t meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you’ll make informed decisions about what your children watch, read, listen to, and play.



December

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 K-5 th graders sing during the 9:45 and 11:10 services- Meet in Trinity Room at 9am to practice!	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Services 5:30 & 7:30	25 Happy Birthday, Jesus!!!	26	27
28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve			