

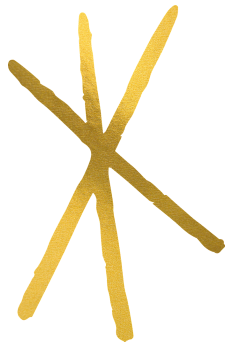


# Family Advent Candle Readings

Christie Thomas | Little Shoots, Deep Roots



# Week 1: Prophets



*Turn off most of the lights in the room.*

SAY: God made some promises to his people a very long time ago. He promised that they would never be alone, that he would protect them and give them a future. But the greatest promise of all was that he would send someone to save them. So God's people waited for the promise to come true. They waited for a Saviour. They waited, and waited, and waited some more.

The people who shared God's promises with his people were called "prophets". One prophet, named Isaiah, had this to say:

"But the Lord will still give you proof. A virgin is pregnant; she will have a son and will name him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14 CEV)

ASK: Do you know what pregnant means? It means to have a baby. So the promise from God that Isaiah shared was that a young woman was going to have a baby boy.

*As you light the first purple candle, teach your children the following line. It will show up each week.*

**God's people waited for the promise to come true.**

SAY: Another prophet had this message from God:

"Bethlehem Ephrath, you are one of the smallest towns in the nation of Judah. But the Lord will choose one of your people to rule the nation - someone whose family goes back to ancient times." (Micah 5:2 CEV)

ASK: Have you heard of Bethlehem? That's where Jesus was born! Different prophets told us that God promised that in Bethlehem a baby boy would be born. A baby boy that would be named Jesus and be the Saviour.

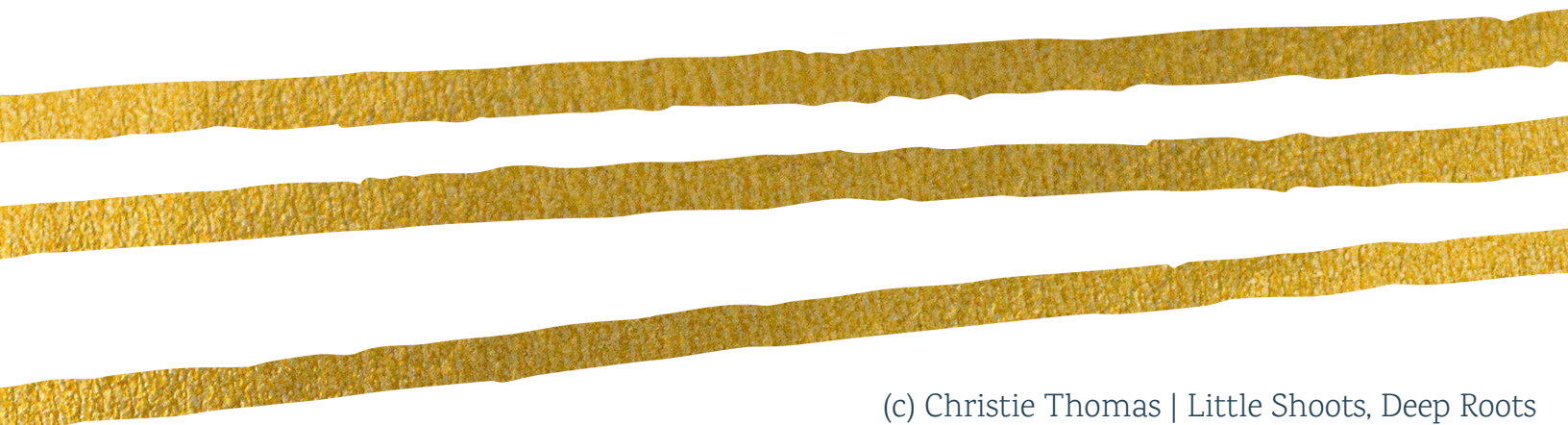
ASK: Do you think that God was going to keep his promise? Yes! But it took a very long time. That's why we're only lighting one candle today. We have to wait to light all our candles, just like God's people had to wait for their Saviour.

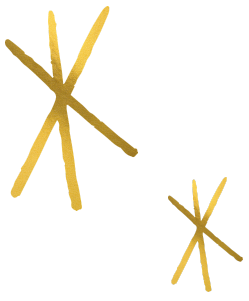
*Sing or listen to "O Come O Come Emmanuel". Your children probably won't understand the lyrics, but they can understand the haunting melody that just oozes expectant waiting!*

O Come O Come Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel

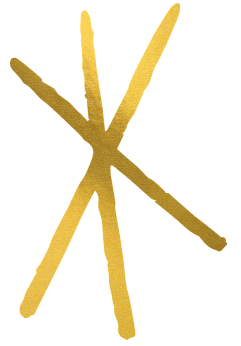
SAY: The people were waiting and waiting for their Saviour, and then finally they got to rejoice that God had kept his promise! What can we rejoice about today?

FINAL PRAYER: Thank you God for keeping your promise to send a Saviour. Help us to wait for you this season, and to rejoice in what you do in our lives. Amen.





# Week 2: Angels



*Turn off most of the lights in the room.*

SAY: Last week we learned that God's people were waiting, and waiting, and waiting for a Saviour. Then some prophets came and told them about God's promise to send a baby that would be born in Bethlehem.

*As you light one of the purple candles, SAY together:*

**God's people waited for the promise to come true.**

SAY: Finally, it was time for the promise to come true. God was ready to send the baby Saviour into the world, but he wanted to make sure the baby was going to have the right mother! He chose Mary.

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a [young woman] pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The [young woman's] name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

..."I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. (Luke 1:26-33, 38 NIV)

SAY: Mary was supposed to get married to Joseph, but when he found out she was going to have a baby, he decided he didn't want to marry her anymore. So God sent another angel to Joseph.

An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

..When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. (Matthew 1:20, 21, 24 NIV)

SAY: The angel had to tell both Mary and Joseph not to be afraid. What are you afraid of? (take time to pray with your children)

SAY: God had figured out who was going to be the mother and the father of the Saviour, but they still had to get to Bethlehem. So he gave the king an idea to count all his people. Everyone had to go to the town where they were born to be counted. Where were you born?

SAY: Joseph and Mary had to take a journey all the way to Bethlehem, because that's where Joseph was born.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:6, 7 NIV)

*As you light the second purple candle, SAY together:*

**God's promise came true though Jesus.**

*Sing or listen to "Away in a Manger".*

Away in a manger, no crib for His bed  
The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head

The stars in the sky look down where He lay  
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay

FINAL PRAYER: Thank you God for sending Jesus to be born. Thank you for setting him up with the best parents and for keeping the promises you made so long ago to have him born in Bethlehem. Help us to know you better this Christmas. Amen.

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# Week 3: Shepherds



*Turn off most of the lights in the room.*

SAY: Two weeks ago we learned that God's people were waiting, and waiting, and waiting for a Saviour. Then some prophets came and told them God's plan for sending a baby to be born in Bethlehem.

*As you light the first purple candle, SAY together:*

**God's people waited for the promise to come true.**

SAY: Last week we learned that God sent angels to Mary and Joseph, telling them about the baby that Mary was going to have. The baby named Jesus!

*As you light the second purple candle, SAY together:*

**God's promise came true through Jesus.**

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests." Luke 2:8-14 (NIV)

SAY: Let's close our eyes and rest for a minute. How would you feel if suddenly a bright and shiny angel popped into this room and started talking to us? Let's pretend that we are angels and sing a song together!

*Sing "Angels We Have Heard on High".*

*(in case you are wondering, "in excelsis Deo" means "Glory to God on high")*

Angels we have heard on high	Glo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-oria
Sweetly singing o'er the plains	In excelsis Deo
And the mountains in reply	Glo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-oria
Echoing their joyous strain	In excelsis Deo

SAY: Let's find out what the shepherds did after hearing from the angels!

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Luke 2:15-20 (NIV)

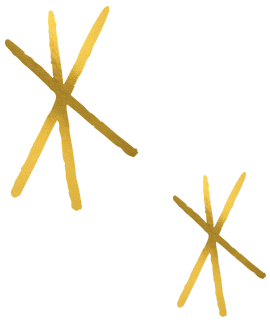
*As you light the pink candle, SAY together:*

## **Shepherds visited Jesus, God's promise made true**

*If you have any candy canes in the house, grab one now. If you don't, you can draw one, or just have your children imagine one.*

SAY: The candy cane is in the shape of a shepherd staff. A shepherd uses his staff to take care of sheep. When we see candy canes this Christmas, let's remember that the shepherds were the first people to visit baby Jesus! And guess what? If you turn a candy cane upside down, it looks like a letter. Do you know which one? A "J"! And "J" is for Jesus.

FINAL PRAYER: Thank you Jesus for being born to be our Saviour. Thank you for letting shepherds be the first to meet you. Help us to meet you too this Christmas. Amen.



# Week 4: Magi



*Turn off most of the lights in the room.*

SAY: Three weeks ago we learned that God's people were waiting, and waiting, and waiting for a Saviour. Then some prophets came and told them God's plan for sending a baby to be born in Bethlehem.

*As you light the first purple candle, SAY together:*

**God's people waited for the promise to come true.**

SAY: Two weeks ago we learned that God sent angels to Mary and Joseph, telling them about the baby that Mary was going to have. The baby named Jesus!

*As you light the second purple candle, SAY together:*

**God's promise came true through Jesus.**

Last week we learned about some shepherds that had a pretty wild night! They met angels and babies, and told the whole town what they had seen.

*As you light the pink candle, SAY together:*

**Shepherds visited Jesus, God's promise made true.**

SAY: It wasn't only people that lived close by that got to meet the baby Jesus. There were some men that lived far far far away. They were men who studied the stars, and were called Magi. One day they discovered a new star in the sky. They knew it meant a new king had been born, so they packed up for a long journey and went to find the baby king.



After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11 (NIV)

ASK: If you were a Magi, what gift would you bring to baby Jesus?

*As you light the last purple candle, SAY together:*

**Wise men searched for God's promise, and found it in baby Jesus.**

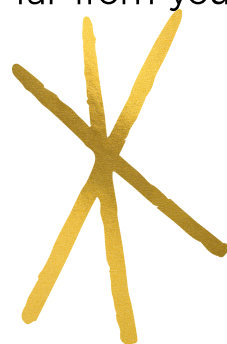
*Sing "We Three Kings".*

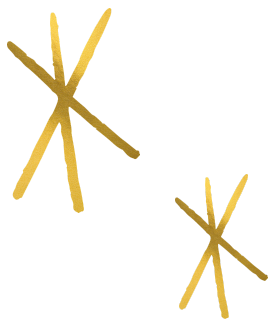
We three kings of orient are bearing gifts we traverse afar  
Field and fountain,  
Moor and mountain  
Following yonder star  
O-oh



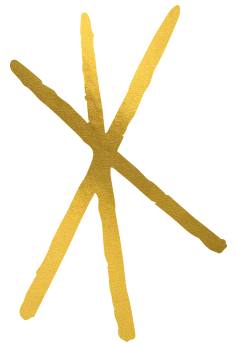
Star of wonder, star of night  
Star with royal beauty bright  
Westward leading, still proceeding  
Guide us to thy perfect Light

FINAL PRAYER: Thank you God that you allowed strangers from far away to meet baby Jesus. Thank you that you are still drawing in those who seem far from your love. Help us to always seek you and worship you. Amen.





# Christmas Eve



*Turn off most of the lights in the room.*

SAY: Tonight we finally get to light all the candles, because tonight is Christmas Eve! Let's review what each candle means.

SAY: God's people were waiting, and waiting, and waiting for a Saviour. Then some prophets came and told them God's plan for sending a baby to be born in Bethlehem.

*As you light the first purple candle, SAY together:*

**God's people waited for the promise to come true.**

SAY: God sent angels to Mary and Joseph, telling them about the baby that Mary was going to have. The baby named Jesus!

*As you light the second purple candle, SAY together:*

**God's promise came true through Jesus.**

SAY: Then there were some shepherds that had a pretty wild night! They met angels and babies, and told the whole town what they had seen.

*As you light the pink candle, SAY together:*

**Shepherds visited Jesus, God's promise made true.**

SAY: Finally, we learned that God wanted everyone to meet Jesus - from the poor shepherds who lived nearby to the rich and smart Magi who lived far away.

*As you light the last purple candle, SAY together:*

**Wise men searched for God's promise, and found it in baby Jesus.**

Tonight we get to light the last candle, because we celebrate that Jesus was born, and that he is with us always.

*As you light the centre candle, SAY together:*

**Jesus, the promise, is here with us.**

ASK: Since Jesus is with us today, tomorrow, and forever, how will you celebrate this Christmas?

FINAL PRAYER:

*(have children repeat after you)*

Our Father,  
who is in heaven,  
holy is your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
and forgive us our debts  
as we forgive our debtors.  
Do not lead us into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For yours is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory  
forever and ever,  
Amen.

