Advent Reading Plan for Families

24 days, 5 minutes a day, December 1-24.
One passage, one question, one candle.
A free printable from Christian Faith Web.

How to use this

1. Light a candle (or turn on one lamp) before you read. Keep the same light for all 24 days if you can.

2. Read the day's passage out loud from your own Bible. It takes 90 seconds.

3. Read the short note on the plan. Then ask the day's question - one question only.

4. Let the answer be short. Nobody has to perform.

5. On Sundays, name the week's theme (Hope, Peace, Joy, Love) before you blow out the candle.

What you need

A Bible, one candle, this printed plan, and five minutes. No craft supplies, no preparation. If a night gets skipped, skip it and pick up the next day - the plan is not a test.

Four weeks at a glance

Week 1 (Dec 1-6) - Hope: the light promised before it arrives. Isaiah.

Week 2 (Dec 7-12) - Peace: fear addressed before the answer. Luke 1.

Week 3 (Dec 13-18) - Joy: the announcement given to night workers. Luke 2.

Week 4 (Dec 19-24) - Love: the child who came anyway. Matthew 2 and John 1.

The 24 days

Readings are listed by reference only, so you can use any translation. The note tells you what to notice. The question is for the table, not for a quiz.

Week 1 - Hope (Dec 1-6)

Day 1 | Isaiah 9:2 - A people walking in darkness see a great light. Notice who does the lighting.
Day 2 | Isaiah 40:3-5 - Someone is clearing a road. Ask: what gets in the way of our road?
Day 3 | Isaiah 7:14 - A sign is promised before anyone is ready for it.
Day 4 | Isaiah 11:1-2 - A shoot from a stump - small things God grows.
Day 5 | Isaiah 35:3-6 - Weak hands, steady knees: what hope does to a tired body.
Day 6 | Micah 5:2 - The smallest town gets the biggest visitor.

Week 2 - Peace (Dec 7-12)

Day 7 | Luke 1:5-13 - Zechariah is old and the answer is late. Ask: what are we still waiting for?
Day 8 | Luke 1:26-33 - Mary is told not to be afraid before she is told anything else.
Day 9 | Luke 1:39-45 - Two pregnant cousins, one loud greeting. Joy arrives before the baby does.
Day 10 | Luke 1:46-55 - Mary's song turns a prayer into a policy for the hungry and the proud.
Day 11 | Matthew 1:18-21 - Joseph chooses mercy in the gap between the law and love.
Day 12 | Matthew 1:22-25 - A name that says what God is doing: with us.

Week 3 - Joy (Dec 13-18)

Day 13 | Luke 2:1-5 - A census moves a family across the map. Ask: what has moved us this year?
Day 14 | Luke 2:6-7 - The delivery room is a stable. God arrives without asking for better conditions.
Day 15 | Luke 2:8-12 - The announcement goes to night workers first.
Day 16 | Luke 2:13-14 - A crowd of angels says peace out loud, in the sky, at night.
Day 17 | Luke 2:15-18 - They run, they see, they tell. Joy moves feet.
Day 18 | Luke 2:19-20 - Mary keeps it. The shepherds say it. Both are worship.

Week 4 - Love (Dec 19-24)

Day 19 | Matthew 2:1-6 - Foreign scholars travel far for a Jewish child. Love crosses borders early.
Day 20 | Matthew 2:7-11 - Gold, frankincense, myrrh - gifts for a king, a priest, a burial.
Day 21 | Matthew 2:12 - They go home another way. Real encounters change the route.
Day 22 | John 1:1-5 - The light shines in the dark and the dark does not win.
Day 23 | John 1:9-14 - He came to his own and was not received - and stayed anyway.
Day 24 | John 3:16-17 - The verse most of us know by heart, read slowly, on Christmas Eve.

Questions by age

Use the age group that fits the youngest child at the table. Older kids will answer the younger question anyway - let them.

Ages 3-5

- Who lit the light in the dark?
- Who did the angel talk to first?
- What did the shepherds do when they heard?
- What can we give Jesus this year?

Ages 6-9

- Why do you think God chose a small town?
- What does 'peace' look like in our house?
- Why were the shepherds the first to hear?
- Which gift would you have brought?

Ages 10-13

- Isaiah promised a light before there was one. What are you waiting for?
- Mary said yes before she knew the cost. Is that faith or recklessness?
- The angels announced peace to workers, not leaders. Why?
- What would change if we treated Christmas as the end of Advent, not the start?

The four Sundays

Week 1: Hope - the light promised before it arrives (Isaiah).

Week 2: Peace - the fear addressed before the answer (Luke 1).

Week 3: Joy - the announcement given to night workers (Luke 2).

Week 4: Love - the child who came anyway (Matthew 2 and John 1).

Scripture references only; read them in your own translation. Notes and questions by Christian Faith Web. Free to print, copy and hand out at church or at home.