

NaturExplorers

Educational Journeys into God's Creation

Nature Study

Through the Holidays

*A mini book of
nature studies for
Advent*

by Cindy West and Melissa Leach

Celebrating Advent

Traditionally, those celebrating Advent (the four weeks prior to Christmas) prepare a wreath holding three violet colored candles and one rose colored candle in the circle of the wreath, with one white candle in the middle. Over the course of the month before Christmas, you spend time lighting the candles and reading Scripture with your family. The candles each represent one aspect of the Christmas story with all of them symbolizing Jesus as the coming Light of the World.



During the first week of Advent, one of the violet colored candles (called the “prophecy candle” or “hope candle”) is lit each evening. In our home, we use this time to read one or more of the Scriptures related to prophecy about the Messiah.

Some families choose to only light the candle one time during the week (typically Sunday evening) and complete the Scripture readings all at once. That’s okay, too.

The second week of Advent you light two of the violet candles – the “prophecy candle” and the “Bethlehem candle” (sometimes called the “peace candle” or “preparation candle”) and read Scriptures on the topic of Bethlehem.

The third week of Advent you light two violet candles and the rose candle – the “prophecy candle”, the “Bethlehem candle” and the “shepherd candle” (sometimes called the “joy candle”) and read Scriptures on the topic of the shepherds.

The fourth week of Advent you light all the violet candles and the rose candle – the “prophecy candle”, the “Bethlehem candle”, the “shepherd candle” and the “angel candle” (sometimes called the “love candle”) and read Scriptures related to the message of the angel.

And finally, on Christmas Eve you light all the candles, including the white candle in the middle. This candle is known as the “Christ candle” and is white to represent His purity. You read Scriptures on this night of Christ’s birth.

Within each weekly theme in this unit, you will find Scripture references that you may choose to use with your family as you light the candles. If you choose not to fool with the Advent wreath and candles, we hope you’ll still find time to incorporate several of the Scriptures into your nature time. Our goal with nature study is always to bring our children closer to their Creator through His creation.

Week 1: Prophecy/Hope

Scripture References

Isaiah 11:1-10
Isaiah 7:10-14
Isaiah 9:2-7
Jeremiah 33:14-16
Luke: 1:26-38
Matthew 1:18-24

Hymns to Sing

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
The First Noel

Topic: Evergreens

Jeremiah 23:5-6

The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.



Since the wreath is such a big part of the Advent celebration, this is the perfect week to focus on evergreens.

The wreath itself, being in the shape of a circle, represents Christ's eternity – with no beginning and no end. It also symbolizes that He is “ever” with us. Adding red berries to the wreath can symbolize his blood that was shed for our sins.

- Find an area where several evergreen trees or bushes grow. Cemeteries or arboretums are good places for finding many varieties in one place. Choose one or more of the following aspects of an evergreen to compare from tree to tree in your nature journal. (You could also use this list to compare an evergreen tree to a deciduous tree.)

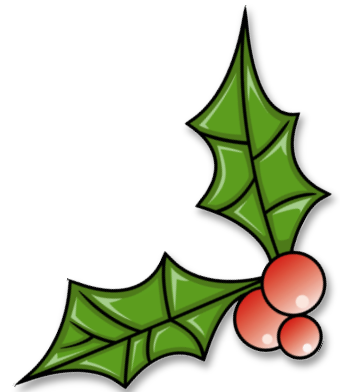
cones
flowers
leaf shape
leaf arrangement
leaf placement on branch
bark
sap

fungi
tree shape
tree size
visibility of roots
branch angle
where branches begin on trunk
variety of life on or in the tree

A Red and Green Walk

Take a nature walk and note below all the **reds** and **greens** that you find in nature.

Sample



A Candlelight Walk

Sample

Take a nature walk in the dark using only candlelight to “light your path”. Make note of the things you observe on your walk and how things look in the dark versus by candlelight.

