

FAMILY DEVOTIONS
FOR ADVENT

Light Shines ^{in the} Darkness



KARLA MANTERNACH

Let There Be Light

In the beginning..., the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep... Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. **Genesis 1:1-3**

Thousands of years ago, some ancient people thought that the sun was a god. As Christians, we know that God isn't the sun. God *made* the sun. God made every living thing—people, plants and animals.

In some ways, though, God is *like* the sun. Sometimes, the sun shines brightly, bathing us in warmth and light. We often feel God's presence as strongly as that. When we are counting our blessings, for instance, we may feel very close to God.

Other times, the sun hides behind a cloud, and it disappears from us every night, leaving us in darkness. Sometimes it might seem like God does that too. When we are lonely or hurting, for example, God might feel very far away from us.

The truth is, God is *always* with us—when we're happy and when we're hurting, when we're sinful and when we're sorry. Even when we're not aware of God, he is watching over us, just like the sun is always shining, even when we cannot see it.

See the Light Fill in a new star section of your Advent coloring sheet. Talk about how God is like the sun. How can you tell the sun is out when it's cloudy? How does God show his love for us, even when we're not paying attention?

Be the Light Pray the following prayer together. If you don't know it by heart, see if you can learn it:

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. **Amen.**

Dear Jesus, help us to know that
God is with us, now and always. Amen.

Sharing the Light

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision... [God] brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." **Genesis 15:1, 5**

Imagine a lamp. When you flip its switch, light appears immediately. Now think about the sun. Did you know that it takes sunlight more than eight minutes to reach Earth? That's because the sun is so far away. The stars are even farther. It takes *years* for their light to travel across space to reach us.

Our faith is a little like that. Long ago, Abram believed in God. He followed God's commands. Because of this, God gave him a new name, Abraham, and promised that many believers would come after him. Many have! Over thousands of years, countless people have come to believe in God. They have shared their faith all over the world—even handed it down to us. Today, believers are as numerous as the stars in the sky. May we shine just as brightly.



See the Light Fill in a new star section of your Advent coloring sheet. Talk about a tradition your family shares during Advent or Christmas. How did it get started? How was it passed down to you? How will you pass it on to others?

Be the Light Start a new tradition. Make a family plan to show someone kindness this season. Make a visit, give a gift or find some other way to lend a helping hand.

Dear Jesus, our faith comes from long ago and far away.
Help us to share it with others. Amen.

God's Holy Fire

There the angel of the LORD appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ...When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" ...And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. **Exodus 3:2, 4, 6**

If you've ever seen a campfire, you know how flames burn away the wood until it is nothing but smoke and ash. Imagine Moses' surprise, then, when he saw a bush on fire but not burning up. It didn't make sense. Moses felt so overwhelmed that he had to look away.

God is like this too. God is so great that our minds can't completely make sense of him. We'll never fully understand God's thoughts or even his love for us. He's like the sun blazing on the horizon, so bright that we can't look directly at it, so far away that we could keep walking toward it forever and it would stay out of reach.

Yet even though God is greater than us in every way—all knowing, all powerful, all good—he loves *us*. He's interested in *us*. He's always reaching out to us, trying to get our attention in the beauty of nature and in the way that people love or need us. It's like he's lighting holy signal fires everywhere, all the time revealing to us: "Here I am!"



See the Light Fill in a new star section of your Advent coloring sheet. Spend a few minutes talking together about your day. Reflect on what you did, who you met, how you felt. Talk about how God might have been trying to get your attention.

Be the Light One of the ways God loves us is through other people. He loves through *us* too. How can you let someone in your family know that you love them today?

Dear Jesus, help us to see how God
is present all around us. Amen.

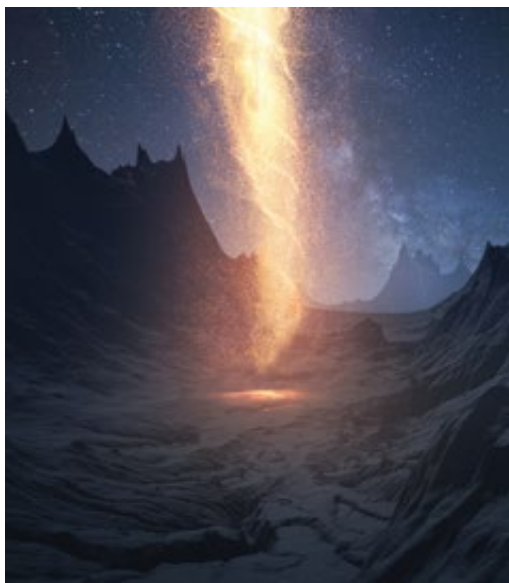
Led by the Light

The LORD went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. **Exodus 13:21**

Have you ever had to make a new start? Maybe you changed schools or joined a team you'd never played on before or welcomed someone new into your family. What was it like? Was it exciting? Scary?

The people of Israel had to make a new start. It wasn't easy. When Moses led them out of slavery, they didn't even know where to go, so God sent a pillar of fire to guide them.

God guides us too. He gives us his commandments and the teachings of Jesus. He directs us through our parents, our teachers and our church. God doesn't just lead us forward, though. He also reaches out to us, right where we are. That's what light does, after all. It spreads out in every direction at once. The pillar of fire led the Israelites forward, but it also shone back across the desert to them. God travels across the darkness to be with us even as he lights our way home.



See the Light Fill in a new star section of your Advent coloring sheet. Talk about some of the ways God helps us to know what he wants us to do.

Be the Light Choose someone to hold a flashlight and shine it on each member of your family, one at a time. When the light falls on someone, have each person say how they will take one small step toward God today.

Dear Jesus, help us to follow wherever God leads us. Amen.

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This Advent family devotional offers a Scripture verse for every day, plus prayer, conversation and activities for families. Advent is a season of light. And God's light shines all around us in our family, our church and our world—even in times of darkness! This booklet explores how God has shone that light from the first moment of creation, through the birth of Jesus and the early church, to today. It also considers our call to live as children of the light.



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