



'TIS *the* SEASON

Coordinator's Guide

'Tis the Season Coordinator's Guide: A Family Empowered Event for the Advent and Christmas Seasons

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Inspire

Years ago while serving as an American missionary in Europe, I discovered many cultural differences in how Christmas is celebrated. I found that gift giving happens on December 6th, not Christmas Day as it does in most English-speaking countries. Historically, on this day, most nations honor St. Nicholas, a man who gave his life and treasures to Jesus. Unfortunately, time and tradition have morphed him into a gift-giving magician.

When my wife and I began our family, we decided to make this European tradition of gift giving our own. Each year on the sixth of December, we take our kids out of school. We enjoy a special breakfast together and brainstorm ideas to share an act of kindness with those who may need a dose of random joy and care. We leave only a clue that says, “You’ve been St. Nicked” for the recipients. The day ends with a grand dinner and an evening of opening presents by the fireplace.

Then when we find ourselves one week into the Advent season, the hustle and bustle of shopping and gift giving is complete. The rest of the season can be filled with worship services, concerts, and shared time with family and friends. After Christmas Eve services on December 24th, we sleep under the tree and wake to read the Christmas story and have breakfast with family.


Once at a party with friends, everyone was asked which family traditions they loved the most. My 14-year-old daughter said that celebrating St. Nicholas Day helped her to be more intentional about Jesus’ birthday. She was able to give gifts to others and focus her attention on celebrating the arrival of the promised Messiah. Our hope is for your family to embrace new traditions that will allow you to experience the joy of giving and sharing like never before.

Ric Olsen
Lead Pastor, The Beacon
Orange, California

Equip

The Old Testament is full of traditions of feasts and festivals commanded by God in order to help His people remember the good things He had done for them. The early church brilliantly realized that we as a people need to be intentional, to mark the time, or else we lose opportunities to teach and celebrate. They created a calendar of spiritual seasons based on the significant events in Christ’s life that allowed His followers time to pause. Unlike the natural calendar with four seasons, there are six seasons on the Christian calendar. Two such seasons are Advent and Christmas. They’re distinct and hold unique roles in the life of a Christ follower.

Advent means “arrival.” As a holiday, it begins the Christian year and includes the four Sundays prior to Christmas Day. In some countries, Christmas begins December 25th and continues for 12 days, ending on Epiphany (or Three Kings Day), giving us “The Twelve Days of Christmas.” Regardless of the actual dates, this is a season of celebration for the birth of Jesus and the fulfillment of God’s promises. Combined, Advent (preparation) and Christmas (celebration) help us measure out the time so we may intentionally remember the fulfillment of God’s promise to send the Savior and celebrate with anticipation the fulfillment of His promises still to come.



While the exact meaning and the historical background of the song “The Twelve Days of Christmas” varies, we’ve chosen to use this song, along with some simple symbols for each day, to help us remember some of the key aspects of our Christian faith, the hope we have in Christ, and the season that celebrates His birth.

Support

Before Adam and Eve left the garden, God promised to send a Savior. The faithful waited in anticipation of the first advent of Messiah. God sent word to the people through prophets of His coming. "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14)."

When Jesus came, hope was born. Because of Him, we have been given the greatest gift.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

And now, dear friends, we wait once again in anticipation of the second advent of our Savior. Our God is faithful to keep His promises. So, we actively wait, knowing He is coming soon.

"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (Revelation 22:12-13).

Take some time to read through these verses again. What is God's Spirit teaching you about Himself? How might He want to use you and your family this holiday season to spread the joy and peace of His good news?

May you be filled with the love and hope of Christ these Advent and Christmas seasons.

Vision of the Family Empowered Event

The 'Tis the Season Family Empowered Event is a resource to help families prepare for the celebration of the advent and birth of Jesus Christ.

Values

Centralized: To gather together with the faith community to celebrate and worship.

Storytelling: To begin the seasons of Advent and Christmas by remembering all God has done from creation to the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Missional: To encourage families to extend an invitation of celebration to those in their neighborhoods and community.

Replicable and Family-Led: To empower and resource families with simple, spiritually forming ideas that can enhance their holiday family traditions.

Preparing for the Event

Getting Started: Create a Planning Team

The Family Empowered Event is a great opportunity to get key and developing leaders involved in the planning process. When choosing your planning team, consider the following:

- If your church has small groups, consider inviting a representative from each small group to come and be a part of the planning team. Encourage small groups to take responsibility for a portion of 'Tis the Season, either in planning or implementing the day of the event.
- Think about the new and potential leaders within your ministry. Invite six or seven of these people to be a part of the planning process. Use this event as a way to inspire and encourage them toward greater involvement and leadership within the ministry. Allow each person to take ownership of one area of the event and then coach them throughout the planning process.
- Have each member of your family ministry team (children, youth, etc.) choose a key leader from within his area of ministry to serve on the planning team.
- Invite members from all areas of ministry within your church family. Approach various groups including men's ministry, women's ministry, senior adult ministry, and so on, to choose a representative to participate in the planning team.

Facilitate a Brainstorming/Planning Meeting

Once you've chosen your planning team, plan a meeting to brainstorm and organize the event. This team should have their first meeting three to six months prior to the day of the event. This will allow ample time to prepare.

Things to discuss at your first meeting:

Purpose of the Event: Discuss the vision and values of 'Tis the Season. Encourage your team to think of Advent and preparing for Christmas. Do they typically take time to prepare for the season? In what ways? How does it help their spiritual life?