

the ultimate Advent activity list for families

by Adriel Booker

Serving others:

1. Shop for a gift to put under the Tree of Joy (or another charity).
2. Fill a shoebox for Operation Christmas Child.
3. Visit an elderly home and hand out homemade cookies.
4. Take a few small gifts to a shelter for women and children.
5. Write a letter to a family friend or some troops stationed overseas.
6. Drive to a store that has a Salvation Army bell ringer just to donate (without going into the store to buy anything!).
7. Buy a small gift for a child in the long-term care wing of the children's ward, and bring a bouquet of flowers for his/her mother.
8. Serve a meal together as a family at a local homeless shelter.
9. Clean out your toy boxes and donate good quality items to an opportunity store.
10. Raid the pantry for canned goods to donate to a charity.
11. Take a plate of cookies and a homemade Christmas card to your doctor's office, library, church office, and/or dentist office.
12. Anonymously pay for the Santa photos of the person behind you in line at the mall.
13. Wear Santa hats and take some doggie treats to your local shelter.
14. If you go to the woods to chop a Christmas tree, buy an extra license and bring one home for a neighbor who may not have the resources to get their own.
15. Wear Santa hats and take a garbage bag to clean up garbage from your neighborhood.

In the kitchen:

16. Make Christmas cookies.
17. Serve a red and green themed meal.
18. Make homemade caramel corn.
19. Make chocolate-dipped pretzels with red and green sprinkles.

20. Eat "reindeer droppings" for breakfast (donut holes!).
21. Make gingerbread cookies.
22. Make edible Christmas trees out of up-side-down ice cream cones, green frosting, and sprinkles.
23. Make snicker doodles.
24. Decorate a gingerbread (or graham cracker) house.
25. Invite a few friends over for a cookie decorating party.
26. Melt chocolate into Christmas molds.

Faith-based activities:

27. Visit a "live" nativity scene.
28. Go to a candlelight church service.
29. Read the Christmas story in the Bible.
30. Make and decorate a birthday cake for Jesus.
31. Spend time on your bellies playing with the family nativity scene and acting out the story.
32. Cut your lunch sandwiches into the shape of stars and talk about the original Christmas star.
33. Write a letter to Jesus, thanking him for the gifts you received throughout the year.
34. Attend Christmas Eve Mass at a beautiful cathedral.
35. Make a manger with twigs you collect from outside and talk about Baby Jesus and the type of place he was born into.
36. Make paper crowns and talk about the wise men and the gifts they brought Jesus.
37. Visit a local farm and talk about what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph to have a baby in a stable.
38. Read one story from the Jesus Storybook Bible each day starting December 1st.
39. Use "The Truth in the Tinsel" – an Advent experience for little hands.
40. Use "What God Wants for Christmas" – Christmas in their hands, in their hearts, and out of the box.

Decorating:

41. Decorate the tree.
42. Deck the halls with boughs of holly.
43. String a popcorn garland for the tree.
44. Make origami ornaments for the tree.
45. Decorate a wreath together.
46. Hang some mistletoe and give out kisses.
47. Make a paper garland to hang on the tree, over a door, or in the kids' bedroom.

48. Decorate the windows with spray snow.

Outings:

49. Cut or pick a Christmas tree.
50. Visit a few friends' houses to sing Christmas carols and hand out candy canes.
51. Hop in the car in your jammies and drive around to look at the Christmas lights.
52. Visit Santa for photos.
53. Attend a Christmas parade (or watch on TV/YouTube).
54. Watch the Nutcracker Ballet on stage (or on DVD).
55. Go to a tree-lighting ceremony.
56. Attend a Christmas concert or Christmas program at a school or church.
57. Check out books from the library about how people celebrate Christmas in other nations.
58. Attend a holiday craft bazaar with grandma.

Craft and create:

59. Write (or color on) Christmas cards.
60. Decorate a Christmas card for your teacher, Sunday School teacher, or favorite babysitter.
61. Make a handmade Christmas ornament for someone else in the family.
62. Color a Christmas picture or make a Christmas craft.
63. Make paper snowflakes to hang from the kids' bedroom ceiling.
64. Write letters to Santa.
65. Make and mail a Christmas card to a family member or friend who lives in another state or country.
66. Make a silly Christmas video to email to friends (or post on facebook) on Christmas day.
67. Make (or draw inside) thank you cards that are ready to be filled out after Christmas.
68. Make thumbprint snowmen.
69. Make homemade play dough in red and green.
70. Make play dough snowmen.
71. Make a video of each family member singing his or her favorite Christmas song.
72. Make glitter snow globes out of baby food jars. (Secure the lids with a hot glue gun!)
73. Paint pinecones to make a centerpiece for the table or to display in a clear vase or string on a bunting.
74. Make a bouquet of poinsettias out of felt or construction paper and pipe cleaners.
75. Make a pinecone bird feeder and attach a little note that says, "Merry Christmas birdies!"

Fun at home:

76. Have a living room dance party to a fun Christmas album.
77. Let everyone in the family choose a country and then google to see how they celebrate Christmas there.
78. Unwrap and read a new Christmas book.
79. Wrap grandma and grandpa's gifts.
80. Pull out mattresses and have a family slumber party under the tree.
81. Have a family story night and read all your Christmas storybooks while enjoying a plate of cookies and milk.
82. Snuggle up in mom and dad's bed and read *The Night Before Christmas*.
83. Have a funny Christmas photo shoot (80's Christmas sweaters?!).
84. Make popcorn and watch home movies from the year.
85. Choose your favorite photos for a family yearbook.
86. Make some personal and family New Years goals.
87. Wrap daddy's gift with mommy (or mommy's gift with daddy).
88. Wrap up your holiday books for the kids to open and read together as a family (include one new book for the year).
89. Read *Elf on the Shelf* (and let the fun begin!).
90. Make a "pillow bed" on the living room floor and watch some classic Christmas cartoons (Rudolf, Frosty, etc.) together.
91. Send a small Christmas care package to a missionary or foreign exchange student.
92. Give each family member a shoebox and tell him or her to collect and fill it with red and green things from around the house or yard.
93. YouTube funny Christmas caroling videos together.
94. Use only Christmas mugs for all of your drinks for an entire day.
95. Draw the kids a bubble bath by candlelight with Christmas tunes playing on the stereo.
96. Interview each family member on video asking a short list of questions (favorite memory from the year, etc.).
97. Celebrate Saint Nicolas Day (December 6th) by doing a secret act of kindness.
98. Let each child choose a friend to invite over for a Christmas-themed morning tea.
99. Draw names and write a love note for a family member. Leave them out on Christmas Eve for Santa to distribute into their stocking.
100. Have a "fancy dress" code for dinner one night.
101. Check your shoes on Saint Nicolas Day – December 6th. [Leave the kids a few pieces of candy.]
102. "Help" dad put up the outdoor Christmas lights.
103. Write a "new" Christmas carol, personalizing (re-writing) the words to one of your favorites.

104. Invite another family to come over in their jammies to watch a favorite Christmas movie and share a favorite Christmas treat.
105. Get out a Christmas songbook and sing a few carols before nap time and bedtime. (We actually do this for the entire month, but thought I'd include it for families who are a bit less gung-ho about the all-month caroling. Ha!)

Winter-specific activities:

106. Make snow angels.
107. Go sledding.
108. Build a snowman together.
109. Get bundled up and go ice-skating.
110. Have hot chocolate and candy canes.
111. Make hot apple cider.
112. Bundle up and go on a sleigh ride.
113. Make eggnog.
114. Have a snowball fight.
115. Roast marshmallows inside over the fireplace.
116. Make snow cones out of real snow.

Summer-specific activities:

117. Make sand angels.
118. Take a wagon ride or bike ride after dark around a neighborhood that's known for lots of Christmas lights.
119. Have fish and chips on the beach.
120. Play backyard cricket.
121. Stay up past bedtime and go swimming after dark.
122. Spread out blankets in the yard and do some stargazing.
123. Have a fondue night with summer fruit and chocolate.
124. Go for a wagon ride with Santa hats and squirt guns.
125. Roast marshmallows outside over a bonfire.
126. Make root beer or coke floats.
127. Go out for snow cones (or ice cream cones).
128. Have a red and green themed BBQ.

129. Go for a "moon walk" in your jammies.
130. Go to the beach and use shaving cream to make Santa beards on each other before jumping in for a swim.
131. Attend "Carols by Candlelight" in the park.
132. Wear your swimmers for an outdoor bubble bath in the wading pool.
133. Take a family bike ride with Santa hats on.

Watch your favorite Christmas movies:

134. Miracle on 34th Street (Definitely the original... but in color for the kiddos.)
135. White Christmas
136. How the Grinch Stole Christmas (I prefer the original cartoon version!)
137. Charlie Brown's Christmas
138. It's a Wonderful Life
139. The Nativity Story
140. Elf
141. Home Alone
142. The Muppet Christmas Carol
143. The Nutcracker Ballet
144. The Polar Express
145. Mickey's Christmas Carol
146. National Lampoons Christmas Vacation
147. The Christmas Story
148. A Christmas Carol (the Jim Carrey version)
149. The Snowman
150. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer & the other cartoon classics

**Please note that some of these movies aren't appropriate for young children.*

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