

Family Time at Christmas

Alongside all the present-giving and festivities, Christmas is all about spending time with the family. Hopefully, by the time the big day arrives, that's exactly what your family will be able to do.

But the run-up to Christmas Day can be so busy – buying presents, writing cards, planning the dinner, attending school plays and nativities, visiting family, decorating the Christmas tree and so on – that often we have even less time to spend with the children than usual!

Wouldn't it be lovely to have a few special 'quiet times' with the children amid all the rush and busyness? In the church calendar, the season of Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day and ends on Christmas Eve. The word 'advent' means 'coming', and it's a time when we can reflect on and prepare to celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus.

Here are four things you could do with your family to countdown to Christmas. Perhaps you could do one a week during the four weeks of Advent.

A Christmas sing-a-long hour

Sing some Christmas songs together. If you don't feel confident about starting up or leading the singing, put on a CD and the children will soon join in. Let everyone choose one or two of

their favourite songs and sing solos and duets if they want to. There are some great CDs available to purchase from www.eden.co.uk.

Christmas craft-time

Children love doing crafts so making a Christmas-themed item with you will be a very special time for them. How about making a Rudolph handprint?

- Paint your children's hands and wrists with brown paint.
- Make handprints on a clean sheet of paper, one hand at a time, with the thumbs next to each other.
- Paint the reindeer with brown paint.
- Add two sticky dots for the eyes and a pom pom for the nose.

(Why not turn this into a Christmas card for friends or neighbours?)

Children's Christmas Service

Take your children and family to a Christmas children's service at church where they can dress up, sing carols and hear the Christmas story. (Ask your toddler group leader or one of the team to suggest a church if you don't know where to go).



A Christmas bedtime prayer

A lovely way to end the day during Advent is to tuck the children up in bed and say a Christmas prayer with them:

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for coming to earth as a baby so many years ago. Thank you that at Christmas time we can remember your birth and enjoy this special time with our families and friends.

Help us to think of children who won't receive presents, eat a Christmas dinner or sleep in a nice comfy bed. Thank you for all that you give to us, especially this Christmas.

Amen.

Have a very happy Christmas!

In *The Sixty Minute Family*, Rob Parsons will help you to discover:

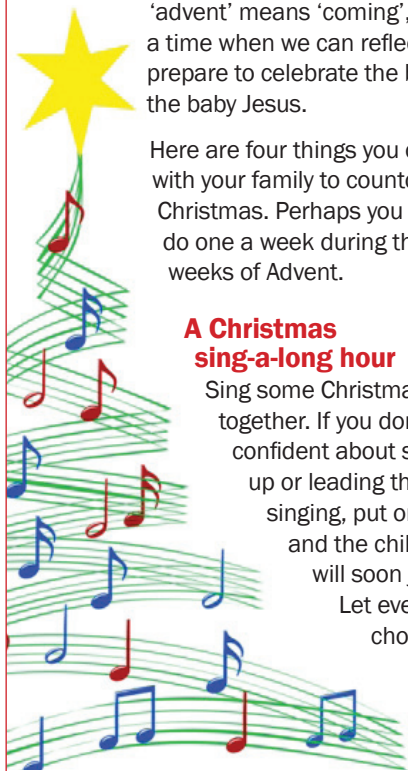
- How to find the most effective parenting style
- How to discover the magic of traditions
- How to appreciate your extended family

"Reading this may be the best sixty minutes you will ever spend." Suzie Hayman, BBC radio agony aunt.

Order your copy online from www.careforthefamily.org.uk/ sixty-minute-family or call (029) 2081 0800

Care for the Family, Garth House
Leon Avenue, Cardiff CF15 7RG
Tel: (029) 2081 0800
www.careforthefamily.org.uk

Care for the Family – A Christian response to a world of need. Care for the Family is a charity registered in England and Wales (no. 1066905) and in Scotland (no. SC038497).



Your *Family* Charity

Care for the Family has been supporting and encouraging families in the UK since 1988. Its family-building events have been attended by over 320,000 people and many more have been helped through special initiatives - including stepfamilies, bereaved parents and those parenting alone. Founded by best-selling author and speaker Rob Parsons, the charity is committed to strengthening family life and helping those who face family difficulties.