

This second week of Advent, as we get ready for Jesus, is all about peace. Peace doesn't simply mean being quiet or keeping things easy. Rather, God's peace helps make things right. It means telling the truth, helping others, and making room for love. Let's meet someone who helped people get ready for Jesus—and we'll learn that real peace takes courage, care, and action.

Close your eyes and imagine you're on a forest path. The trees are tall, and the trail is wild and messy. Twigs crunch under your feet. Low branches hang down, and vines twist across the way. It's hard to see where to step. You want to move forward, but the path is tangled.

Now, imagine someone clearing it. They invite you to help. Together, you lift branches, sweep away leaves, and open a path to walk. Step by step, the way becomes clear and welcoming. That's a little like what John the Baptist was doing—making room for something new to arrive.

Today, we meet John the Baptist and Jesus—not as babies, but as grown-ups! Even though we're getting ready to celebrate Jesus' birth, we also listen to stories from later in his life. These stories help us understand why Jesus came and how we can prepare to welcome him into our lives right now. And guess what? John and Jesus were cousins!

John didn't live in a city or wear fancy clothes. He wore itchy camel's hair and ate bugs and honey. He lived in the wilderness, and his voice rang out like wind through trees, shouting, "Prepare the way! Someone greater is coming!"

But getting ready for Jesus didn't mean cleaning houses or baking cookies. It meant clearing hearts. It meant turning from selfishness and turning toward God. It meant sharing, telling the truth, and treating others with love and fairness.

Some people listened. They stepped into the river to be washed clean, inside and out. Others wanted to look good but didn't want to change. John told the truth even when it was hard, because real peace needs real honesty.

Peace isn't just quiet. Sometimes peace is bold. It can mean standing up for someone who's been left out, sharing when it's hard, or saying sorry when you've made a mistake. It means helping make things right.

When we clear the way in our hearts and world—making space for truth, kindness, and justice—we're making a path for Jesus. That's how peace begins. That's how peace moves. That's how we get ready for the kind of love that changes everything.

Questions

1. What does it mean to prepare the way for Jesus?
2. How does being brave help us bring peace to others?
3. Why is honesty important when we're trying to make peace?

DREAM IT. LIVE IT.

These practices—Embodiment, Advocacy, and Joy—are woven throughout these resources, like the Advent Calendar. Returning to them helps build spiritual habits that ground us, strengthen us, and keep us connected to God's dream—even when life feels hard.

1

Embodiment Practice

OUR BODIES ARE PART OF HOW WE LIVE GOD'S DREAM—THESE PRACTICES HELP US SLOW DOWN, LISTEN, AND BE PRESENT TO WHAT WE BELIEVE.

Peace isn't just the absence of conflict—it's trusting that God is making us and the world whole. When you feel unsettled, try this simple practice to calm body and spirit:

1. Trace one side of the green box on this page with your finger as you breathe in for 5 seconds.
2. Trace the next side while holding your breath for 5 seconds.
3. Trace the third side as you breathe out for 5 seconds.
4. Trace the last side while you rest still for 5 seconds.

Repeat at least three times.

You can also trace the box in the air, on your hand or leg, or imagine it in your mind.

Whenever you're angry, sad, scared, or just need a pause—breathe, trace, and remember: God is with you, making all things whole.

2

Advocacy Practice

WORKING FOR JUSTICE IS PART OF HOW WE LIVE GOD'S DREAM—THESE PRACTICES HELP US NOTICE WHAT'S UNFAIR AND TAKE LOVING ACTION TO HELP MAKE THINGS RIGHT.

Peace isn't always quiet. Sometimes, peace looks like speaking up when something is wrong—together, with love and courage. This week, learn about peaceful protest as a family. Even if there's no protest happening nearby, now is a great time to prepare our hearts and minds to take action when the time comes. You can start by watching a short video that explains how peaceful protests work:

- For younger kids, look up Miss Katie Sings' "What is a Protest?" or read *If You're Going to a March* by Martha Freeman (also available as a read-aloud online). You might also read or choose a title from our growing book list: illstrtdm.in/picture-books-for-protest
- For youth and teens, look up "Is There a Right Way to Protest?" by PBS/KQED.
- For adults and older youth, look up and read the ACLU's *Know Your Rights: Protesters' Rights*.

Talk together about causes that matter to your family. What would you stand up for? What messages would you share on a sign?

3

Joy Practice

JOY IS PART OF HOW WE LIVE GOD'S DREAM—THESE PRACTICES HELP US CELEBRATE, CREATE, AND REMEMBER THAT DELIGHT AND HOPE ARE SACRED, TOO.

Peace is often felt deep in our souls. Joy helps us hold onto that peace, even when the world feels uncertain. Music can open us to joy, shift the energy in a room, and create a space that feels calm, hopeful, and safe. This week, create a peace playlist as a family. Think about the kind of music that helps you feel still, strong, or joyful. It might be songs that help you breathe deeply, dance freely, or rest quietly. Whether it's the perfect background for studying or playing, or something cozy to pair with candles, hot chocolate, and a good book, music can help you make room for peace in your everyday life. When you're done, consider sharing your playlist with a friend or another family member, and pass the peace along.

Prayer

God of peace, you call us to use words and actions to clear the way for justice. Fill us with courage to tell the truth, share freely, and advocate for others—so all may be safe, seen, and loved. Amen.

