

Families Can Enjoy an *Advent Alphabet!*

adapted by Phyllis Meshel Onest, M.Div.

We promised in the Fall 1996 issue of *Orthodox Family Life* to provide the Advent activity that my girls enjoyed so much during their elementary school years. As the girls got older they would take turns locating and reading the Scripture verses. As the days progressed, they would memorize and recite the words for the letters of the previous days.

"Advent Alphabet" first appeared in *Church Teachers* magazine [Sept./Oct. 1982] and was reprinted in *Newsletter*, [Vol. VIII, No.1, Fall/Winter 1983-84] published by the "Committee On Religious Education" of the Romanian Episcopate [OCA]. Although the activity only covers the last 26 days of Christmas Lent, it's a great way to focus on "the Reason for the Season."

DIRECTIONS: On the calendar below, each day corresponds to a letter of the alphabet. Each day we are given the letter, the Scripture reference(s) and specific clues. The task is to find the word of the day that starts with that day's letter. The word will always be in the Scripture reference.

The *Orthodox Study Bible* [NKJV] and the Revised Standard Version [RSV] are suitable for most days, but you will need to use the King James Version [KJV] for December 17, 21, 22.

26 letters, 26 days, 26 words!

A (Luke 1:26)

November 28/December 11: This word identifies one of the first persons to have anything to do with the Christmas story. This person announced to Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus. We are announcing the coming of Jesus in the days ahead. We are awaiting the celebration of His birthday. God used Gabriel to bring the Good News. He can use you to tell others the Good News of Jesus. Today's word is _____. Tomorrow, ask someone if he/she knows what Gabriel brought? (Good News)

B (Luke 2:10; Revelation 3:20)

November 29/December 12:

Knock! Knock!
Who's there?
Atch!
Atch who?
Bless you!

Today's word means "Hey! Pay attention." The angels used the word to get the shepherds to listen and then Jesus used it to get our attention. He wants to be part of our life. But we have to

ask Him in. The word is _____.

C (Matthew 2:9)

November 30/December 13: Today's word describes a kind of person. Have you ever wondered why Jesus did not come as an old man? What do you think? What is there about babies that people like? Everything! They don't hurt anyone, you can identify with them (because you've been a baby yourself), and they are a sign of love. God didn't want to come and force His way into our lives. He wanted to be loved and accepted as we are loved and accepted in our family. That's why He came as a _____.

D (Matthew 1:2, 2:12; 2:22)

December 1/December 14: Today's word is something we've all had. In fact, the poem that begins, "Twas the night before Christmas," includes this word. This word usually happens while you sleep. Sometimes it is good, and sometimes it can be frightening. In our Scripture verses, this word was good. God used it as a way to warn people about danger.

If you do this during the day, people think you're lazy. At night it's okay as long as you don't get scared. Tell one another about your last one. The word is _____.

E (Matthew 1:23 (spelled with an "I" in the NKJV))

December 2/December 15: The word for today is very special. The verse says it means "God-with-us." God came to visit us in person. God was no longer far away. God was right here with us. The people could see, touch, hear, talk, and walk with God who became a human being like us. That is what makes Christmas extra-special. God is with us. Today's word is _____.

F (Matthew 1:22)

December 3/December 16: Today's word has to do with a message the prophet Isaiah wrote (Isaiah 7:14). He said these words 750 years before Jesus was born. Our word today means that the words Isaiah said were coming true. If you take a cup and you put water in it till it is all the way to the top, you have filled it full. Nothing else can be put in. That's what Matthew was saying. The words of Isaiah were filled full or _____. They came true with Jesus.

G (Luke 2:20)

December 4/December 17: Our word today suggests a way we can express God's greatness. The shepherds did this at that first Christmas. It means to make someone (God) feel important. Do you do that? Do you make God feel important? If we ignore God's laws and commands, God wonders if we really do care for Him. The best way you can show God your love is to believe in Jesus. The is the way to _____ God.

H (Matthew 2:16)

December 5/December 18: Our word today is a man - a man who did a very bad thing. He wanted to get rid of Jesus so much that he had all the children in Bethlehem who were two years old and younger killed. That was terrible!

Can you think of any ways that we try to get rid of Jesus today? Every time we do something that Jesus would not want us to do, we are putting Him out of our lives. Let's do our best not to be like the evil man _____.

I (Matthew 2:21)

December 6/December 19: The word for today is the name of a special people / land / nation. They had their beginning a long time before Jesus came. God had promised these people that one day there would be a special person to save them. Jesus loved this special people and He is the one we call Savior. Today's word is _____.

J (Matthew 1:21)

December 7/December 20: Our word today is someone's name. His name in Hebrew is the same as that of an Old Testament person, Joshua. The name means "Savior." What does Savior mean? If you were swimming and you started to drown, the lifeguard who saves you would be your savior. Our sins would keep us from reaching God, but this person is able to make a bridge for us. This person is _____. He is the one whose birthday we are going to celebrate soon.

K (Matthew 2:2,3)

December 8/December 21: Our word for this day is found several times in the Christmas story. It is used to describe a number of special people in history. One was mean and ordered babies killed. Three of them were wise. The Bible does not call them by today's word, but a song about them does. David, of the Old Testament, was one of these, too. And one of David's descendants would come to rule the heart, not the government. Someone who rules and wears a crown is called a _____.

L (Matthew 2:9 [not in NKJV])

December 9/December 22: Here are some other words you might want to use in place of today's two-letter word: "Sure enough," "before you know it," "to their amazement"...(you think of others). Our simple little two-letter word is used to express wonder or surprise. Think how excited you would have been if you had seen that star moving or had seen the angel of God appear.

Jesus used this little word another time to help us remember that He is with us (Matthew 28:20). That is exciting! Our word is _____.

M (Matthew 2:11)

December 10/December 23: Our word today rhymes with purr, fur, her, and sir. It was one of the gifts given to Jesus by the Wise Men. Have you ever wondered what, exactly, this gift was? It was a very expensive, nice-smelling perfume used for many different purposes. Jesus was offered this again later in life (Mark 15:23). See if you can discover when and where that time was. Our word for today is _____. Have you given Jesus the gift He really wants for Christmas?

N (Matthew 2:14)

December 11/December 24: Today's word is about the dark part of the day, the time when we sleep. In our verse we read that Joseph took Mary and Jesus and fled into Egypt. They did not want to be seen, so they traveled in the dark. It was also dark when the angels came to the shepherds. Can you think of other Bible stories when nice things happened in the dark? (Nicodemus)

Why are some people afraid of the dark? Look at the stars and the moon. God has done some of His greatest work for that time. And it makes a great time to sleep. Yawn! Good _____.

O (John 3:16)

December 12/December 25: Our verse is not found in the Christmas story, but it tells the Christmas story. It tells us how special Jesus was. God had no other Son but Jesus. When God sent Jesus, and Jesus died, God gave us a lot. God gave Jesus to the world to save it. There was one Jesus, and no one can ever do what He did again! He was the one and _____ Son of God.

P (Luke 2:19)

December 13/December 26: The word for today means "to think about." The verse says Mary kept all the things that were happening to Jesus in her mind and thought about them. Does someone have a baby book that tells about your early days on this earth? See if you can look at it. In that baby book are some of the things your family thought about as you grew up.

Mary knew Jesus was special. She also knew that there would be a time when He would show everyone how special He was. But the time was not yet. She would have to wait and think. She _____ these things in her heart.

Q (Luke 2:46)

December 14/December 27: For today's word we move ahead to when Jesus was twelve years old. He was sitting in the Temple asking today's word. He was also listening to the teachers, and they were amazed at His understanding.

What do you think Jesus was asking these men? Where did all this happen? Was Jesus standing or sitting? How many days had Jesus been missing?

All of these are not answers but _____. Do you have any to ask your parents?

R (Matthew 1:5)

December 15/December 28: Today's word is another person. She was married to Boaz, and they had a son named Obed. As you can see in this Scripture verse, she would have been the great-grandmother of David. We wonder if this woman ever thought that she would be related to the Son of God - Jesus. This part of the Bible lists the family tree of Jesus. He had a lot of important people as His relatives. Some followed God, and some didn't.

Tonight would be a good time to take a sheet of paper, draw a tree with many branches, and recall your family's history. Find out about some of your cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Who knows, you may have a _____ in your family.

S (Matthew 2:2)

December 16/December 29:

Twinkle, Twinkle, little _____,

How I wonder what you are.

Our word today was something that was seen by the Wise Men. They followed it to Jesus. Do you think the Wise Men said the little poem printed above? For sure they wondered what that was in the sky. God has all kinds of ways to lead us today. It might be your parents telling you. It could be your priest or teacher. Sometimes good friends can give us the right answers. God uses them all. He also uses the Bible and prayer. The next time you look at the sky at night and see a _____ twinkling, think of God and the different ways God guides our lives.

T (Luke 2:10 (KJV and NKJV))

December 17/December 30: Here's a word for you today! It may sound like a laundry detergent. Today's word means "news," and the verse says "good news." And the great thing about this "good news" is that it can make us clean and new and fresh. It is the good news that Jesus has come. Today's word is _____.

U (Matthew 1:23)

December 18/December 31: This word is short. This word is you and me together. It really tells for whom the Gospel was given. Of course, Jesus came for "them," and he came for "those." He came for "others," and He came for "all." But in all of this we must remember the He came for "you" and "me"; for _____. Did you notice that the last two letters in the name of Jesus spell our word for today? How about that!

V (Luke 1:27)

December 19/January 1: (Note to parents: Please interpret this passage in a way that is

comfortable to you. Some children may not be ready for this concept.)

Today's word is a hard one to understand, but it is very important to the Christmas story, for it describes Mary. Mary was going to have a baby, but God would be the father. Joseph took care of Jesus, but God was the true father. It had to be that way for Jesus to be the special person He was. This special birth makes the story of Christmas mean so much more. Today's word is _____.

W (Matthew 2:11)

December 20/January 2: This word describes something we do every Sunday and other days at the Divine Liturgy. It really is a way of showing how important God is. The verse says the Wise Men did this. As soon as they had come into the house, they dropped to their knees and let Jesus know He was special. Do you ever do that? Do you take time to tell God that you really think He is someone special? For sure you enjoy it when your parents tell you that you're important to them. God has done so much for us, we need to let God know how we feel. In Liturgy and at other times we tell God how special He is to us; we _____.

X (Luke 2:1-5 (only in KJV))

December 21/January 3: Today's word has the letter "x" in it. It does not start with "x." How many times can you find it in the verses?

Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be registered and counted. As they went through the long line, nobody thought this couple was very important. But surprise! surprise! You can't tell by looking at people just how important they are. That could be true of some people you know. They may not look and act like you, but God still thinks they are important. In God's record book we all count. Today's word is _____.

Y (Luke 2:12 (only in KJV))

December 22/January 4:

Not a tree and not a knee; not a boat upon a sea.
Not even an iced cold glass of tea.
This word tells the world, this word tells me.
That Jesus was sent for people like thee.
Though only two letters it has, you see.
Those two letters can important be.
Those two letters, not one, not three,
Say that God loves the world and especially _____.

Z (Luke 1:5)

December 23/January 5: Today's word is a man. He was the father of John the Baptist. He was a priest. And he was unable to speak for nine months. Why? Because he did not believe God when

he found out that he was to be a father. If we could not talk every time we doubted God, there would be a lot of quiet people around. Could you be quiet for nine months? nine weeks? nine days? nine hours? nine minutes? nine seconds? nine eye blinks? Spend some time this evening quietly watching the Christmas tree and thinking about God's promise of Jesus. We don't have to doubt it because His promise is here. Today's word is _____.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

December 24/January 6: Can you list all the words of the "Advent Alphabet" by memory?

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

ANSWERS: *Angel, Behold, Child, Dream, Emmanuel, Fulfilled, Glorify, Herod, Israel, Jesus, King, Lo, Myrrh, Night, Only, Pondered, Questions, Ruth, Star, Tidings, Us, Virgin, Worship, Taxed, Ye, Zacharias.*

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