

HOW TO ASSEMBLE YOUR CHAIN:

- Lay the links out in order starting with November 26th and ending with Christmas day.
- Form a loop with the first strip by inserting the half circle cut into the slot on the opposite end. For best results the end with the half circle cut should be overlapped on top of the slotted end and then inserted.
- Place the second strip through the first loop and fasten by inserting the half circle cut into the slot. Continue this process until the complete 30-day chain is assembled.
- It is recommended that you drape the chain several times so that one link is not supporting the weight of the entire chain.

IDEAS FOR USE:

- Make an appointment to meet together as a family. Pick a time where you can meet consistently (early morning, dinner time, bed time, etc.).
- Place the chain in a prominent place where you will see it daily (on the mantel, by the dinner table, by your child's bed, etc.).
- Start with the chain fully assembled and each day take a link off. You may want to create a different chain with the completed links.

THEMES, PROPS & SUGGESTIONS

Below you will find the theme for each day's devotional, the common household props needed for the daily game and suggestions to make your devotional time more meaningful. Keep this list handy as you do your daily devotionals. Use the information provided to have the necessary props ready in advance for each day's game and be sure to use the suggestions as they apply to your family. Most importantly have fun with your children as you Count Down to Christmas and learn about Jesus!

WARNING

Keep this product away from Christmas lights and candles. These and other hot surfaces may cause damage to the vinyl strips and may result in the inability to link your chain properly.

November 26th – 29 days until Christmas

Theme – Don't worry – pray.

Props – A notebook to use as a prayer journal.

Suggestions – Some smaller children may tend to fold up rather than staying stiff during the game. Have an older sibling or parent demonstrate how to fall. Parents may want to fall back from their knees. Date your nightly prayers and include requests, praises and answers.

November 27th – 28 days until Christmas

Theme – Act like Jesus.

Props – Christmas character names written out on pieces of paper.

Suggestions – Remind younger kids of the roles these characters played in the Christmas story to help them better act them out.

November 28th – 27 days until Christmas

Theme – Share your blessings (treasures).

Props – Small cups or plastic bags to collect coins in.

Suggestions – No matter how large or small your collection of coins, remind your kids that God can use their sacrifice.

November 29th – 26 days until Christmas

Theme – God is mighty.

Props – Shoes and hats from the kids' rooms.

Suggestions – Give several examples before you send your kids looking for their shoes and hats (i.e. a fishing hat, ballet shoes, baseball cap, swim shoe, etc.).

November 30th – 25 days until Christmas

Theme – God looks for people who really love Him.

Props – Any room in the house.

Suggestions – For smaller kids the changes have to be more obvious. You may want to use a nativity set and move one piece to simplify the search.

December 1st – 24 days until Christmas

Theme – Count your blessings.

Props – Paper, pencil and a large coffee can or plastic bowl to decorate.

Suggestions – Encourage the kids to decorate the bowl or can with pictures of God's blessings (i.e. their home, pet, friends, etc). Keep the blessing can on the table to help you remember to use it each night.

December 2nd – 23 days until Christmas

Theme – God's great plan.

Props – A coin to flip.

Suggestions – Let the kids know that this is just one of over fifty prophecies fulfilled by the life of Jesus.

December 3rd – 22 days until Christmas

Theme – Don't be surprised when God answers your prayers.

Props – None.

Suggestions – Be sure to keep track of answers to your prayers in your prayer journal.

December 4th – 21 days until Christmas

Theme – Remember what God has done.

Props – None.

Suggestions – Keep Count Down to Christmas in a prominent, visible place so it can serve as a visual reminder of your need to spend time with God each day.

December 5th – 20 days until Christmas

Theme – The "Good News" is for everyone.

Props – None.

Suggestions – Have a parent or older child on each team demonstrate the game for younger players. You may need to give the sound of the next letter for children who don't spell yet.

December 6th – 19 days until Christmas

Theme – Stay connected to God.

Props – Blindfolds for each family member.

Suggestions – If your kids can navigate your house blindfolded without help you can make it more difficult for them by placing pieces of paper on the floor to represent quicksand that they have to avoid.

December 7th – 18 days until Christmas

Theme – Reconcile (make friendly again) your relationships.

Props – None.

Suggestions – If your family is really small, you may want to try adding a stuffed animal to your circle. For larger families try to form one big circle. If you form two smaller circles, try again.

December 8th – 17 days until Christmas

Theme – Jesus' purpose for coming was to die for our sins.

Props – An unfamiliar tool or kitchen gadget.

Suggestions – When you are done sharing your items you can pick up the baby Jesus from a nativity set and ask, "What's this for?"

December 9th – 16 days until Christmas

Theme – God can use you even at a young age.

Props – Masking tape and a tape measure.

Suggestions – It may be necessary to inform young teens that it was customary at that time for Jewish couples to wed and start families at a young age. For the game – put a piece of tape on the ground as a take off point. Write each family member's name on another piece of tape and use it to mark their best jump.

December 10th – 15 days until Christmas

Theme – Together we can accomplish more.

Props – A deck of cards.

Suggestions – If you don't have a deck of cards you can use puzzle pieces or any other group of toys.

December 11th - 14 days until Christmas

Theme – God is with us always.

Props – A ball to toss.

Suggestions – Try tossing the ball without calling the person's name. Then see how much easier it is when you call their name.

December 12th – 13 days until Christmas

Theme – Be happy with what you have.

Props – None.

Suggestions – To help kids get into their commercials you can share some general catch-phrases such as, "It's new and improved," "But wait, there's more," "Every one will want one," etc.

December 13th – 12 days until Christmas

Theme – Trust God, not your own wisdom.

Props – Paper, pencils and a mirror.

Suggestions – For younger children you can write the numbers and letters out on a piece of paper and have them try to copy them just as you have written them.

December 14th – 11 days until Christmas

Theme – Praise God through song.

Props – Paper, pencils and crayons.

Suggestions – Older kids can choose their own songs, younger ones may need you to give them a song title to draw.

December 15th – 10 days until Christmas

Theme – Love each other.

Props – Cut out paper hearts (at least three per family member) and masking tape.

Suggestions – Write words of love and appreciation on each heart and encourage the kids to “lovingly” put the hearts on other people. As you have additional hearts stuck on you, try to get them off your body and on to someone else.

December 16th – 9 days until Christmas

Theme – Tell others about Jesus.

Props – A book or video.

Suggestions – If the story or video is familiar, challenge the kids to listen/look for things they haven’t noticed before.

December 17th – 8 days until Christmas

Theme – It’s Jesus’ birthday, so buy Him a gift.

Props – Coins you’ve collected from your treasure hunt.

Suggestions – Take a family outing to a store to buy something special for a needy family.

December 18th – 7 days until Christmas

Theme – Children obey your parents.

Props – None.

Suggestions – Let your kids know that even as an adult you are called to honor and obey your parents.

December 19th – 6 days until Christmas

Theme – Be quick to listen.

Props – None.

Suggestions – Start by having each family member identify a favorite topic to talk about. Once everyone has a clear topic let the game begin.

December 20th – 5 days until Christmas

Theme – Get excited about seeing Jesus.

Props – A doll or stuffed animal to represent baby Jesus.

Suggestions – You can make Jesus easier to find by shining a flashlight on Him. This also ties in with the star that led the wise men.

December 21st – 4 days until Christmas

Theme – Listen for God.

Props – None.

Suggestions – If your kids won’t, or can’t, stay quiet, have one go to a separate room and whistle or sing a song. Try to identify the song. Then try again with the TV or radio on.

December 22nd – 3 days until Christmas

Theme – God’s word guides us.

Props – Red and black checkers (or other objects with similar shapes but different colors) and flashlights.

Suggestions – If you don’t have a flashlight for each child, have a parent hold the flashlight high and move it around the room.

December 23rd – 2 days until Christmas

Theme – What present would you bring Jesus.

Props – The child’s favorite present from the past year.

Suggestions – Showing the kids something gold, sweet smelling and spicy can help them remember the special gifts Jesus received.

December 24th – 1 day until Christmas

Theme – Jesus offers us a free gift.

Props – A wrapped Christmas gift from under the tree.

Suggestions – Pre-pick a present that you know the kids can shake and not damage.

December 25th – Christmas Day!

Theme – Receive Jesus’ free gift today.

Props – A Bible.

Suggestions – The devotional for Christmas day includes a prayer of commitment you and/or your child may want to pray. Some children will be too young to fully understand the meaning of this prayer. Please prayerfully talk to your child about this important decision and always give them praise for the growth you’ve seen in them over these 30 days!

Dedication:

To my children Aaron, Faith & David

&

The amazing woman known to them as “Mom”.
Thanks for inspiring me to share Jesus creatively.

Special thanks to:

- My friends at Betenbough Ministries, especially Holly, Tiffany & Jon, who helped expand my little dream.
- Tracy Collins for her countless hours of artwork, layout work and design consultations.
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- Luann Curry for capturing the heart of this project in pictures (curryphotography.com).
- The Count Down to Christmas design team.
- Friends and family who helped edit and revise.

Contact Us

For additional copies of Count Down to Christmas contact us on our website:

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WELCOME TO COUNT DOWN TO CHRISTMAS

Count Down to Christmas is an interactive, family devotional designed to encourage your family to meet together consistently for Bible study, prayer and fun. These devotionals are designed for grade-school-age children, but can be easily adapted for younger or older children. Younger children may need concepts explained or terms defined, while older children may need the questions reworded to challenge them more deeply. In either case, adapt and adjust each devotional to best fit your family’s particular needs.

As you embark on this adventure, know that we have been praying for you and will continue to pray for you over the thirty days leading up to Christmas. Here is our prayer for you:

“Lord Jesus, use these devotionals to draw this family closer to You and to each other. Help them to carve out time each day in their busy schedule to truly make You Lord of their Christmas season. Leave a lasting impression on each member of this family as to Your great love, devotion and sacrifice for them personally. We pray this in the powerful name of Jesus! Amen.”

As you prepare to start **Count Down to Christmas**, please gather your family and pray for God’s presence, power and guidance for your daily devotional time.

The following pages of this book are designed to help you make the most of your time together. Please take time to review their content.