

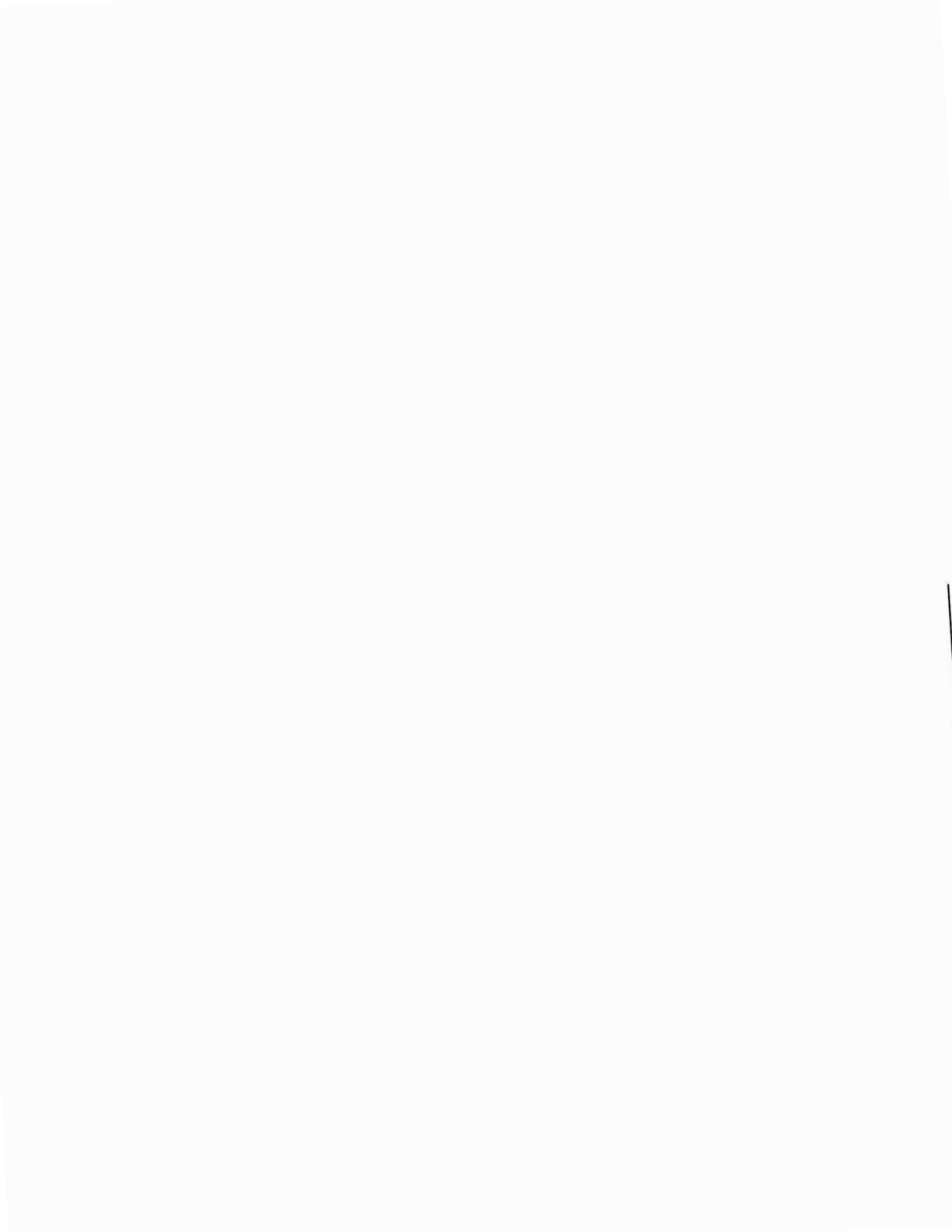


ADVENT ACTIVITY CALENDAR

The Azizi Life family celebrates Jesus' birth! We are excited to share with you these advent cards featuring ideas from Jesus' story, our cultural Christmas celebrations, fun facts about Rwanda, and questions or activities for you to share.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

1. Print this PDF as two sided and select "Fit" under Page Sizing. We recommend printing on card stock or brown paper.
2. Cut out on each black line.
3. Fold each card in half with the day number on the outside.
4. Place all the cards in your favorite Azizi Life basket, we recommend a Peace Basket!
5. Starting December 1, pull out Advent Day 1 card and read with your family, housemates, or as a personal reflection
6. Read the corresponding card for each day until Christmas.
7. Share your experience with us on social media with the hashtag #AziziLifeAdvent or by emailing us at info@azizilife.com.



Mary Traveling on a Donkey

We read in Luke 2: 4-5 that Mary traveled with Joseph to Bethlehem on a donkey.

In Rwanda, there are no animals used for riding or as beasts of burden. There are some farm animals, as well as elephants, zebras, giraffes and gorillas- but none of those would be very helpful on a journey! A mama in labor, she might be carried on a stretcher by four strong neighbors to the health center to have her baby.

Bethlehem is about 80 miles from Nazareth. What town is 80 miles from your home? What mode of travel might you use to get there?

The Path of Peace

Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, came to prepare the way for him. Read some of the song that John's father sang by the Holy Spirit. It tells us wonderful things about Jesus, too! Luke 1:77-79.

The Rwandan Peace basket also commemorates a path of peace. The traditional stripe pattern on the basket symbolize a journey taken by two friends who are traveling with their own basket filled with a gift for their friend. They walk together, stop together, and continue on together over the hilly paths to their friend's home.

When you look at your Rwandan peace basket, remember also Jesus' path of peace- that because of the tender mercy of our God, came to us from heaven "to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

How will you celebrate Christmas this year?

Will you celebrate Christmas with gifts, meals at several family members' houses, making cookies, volunteering with an organization, or going to church? No matter how you will celebrate, your celebration may look different than those happening around the world!

In Rwanda, families celebrate Christmas by going to church together, and then sharing a family dinner.

Why do you think that worship and family are central to the Rwandan Christmas celebration?

O Christmas Tree

In Rwanda, there are no Christmas trees, but there is one tree with purple flowers that looks beautifully festive! The Jacaranda tree not only looks beautiful, but is used by wood carvers to make products like wooden bird ornaments. The tree is extra special because after a branch is cut off- or even if the whole tree is cut down- it regrows!

Google a photo of the Jacaranda tree to check out the beautiful flowers.

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In the Barn

When there was no room in the inn, Mary and Joseph took shelter in a barn. Maybe there were cows in that barn!

In Rwandan culture, cows are very important. They are not worshiped, but are well-loved, and every family hopes to own at least one. In the wedding dowry ceremony, the groom's family gives cows to the bride's family. And in the time of the kings, there were royal poets whose job it was to recite poems about the cows—and to the cows!

If you were to write a poem to a cow, what would it say?

Stockings Hung with Care

Tradition tells us that a kind young man named Nicholas secretly saved three girls from a poor family by dropping bags of gold into their stocking socks which were drying by the fire.

In Rwanda, it's not chilly enough to wear socks, but perhaps gifts could be dropped into the rubber boots that farmers wear in their fields.

Choose someone this week to show a secret kindness to.

O Holy Night

In the Kinyarwanda language of Rwanda, the word holy is translated *wera*. So if you want to say, "God, you are holy," you could say, "Mana, uri Uwera." Try it out! God speaks Kinyarwanda, too.
:)

No Room in the Inn

Jesus was born in a stable because there was no room in the inn.

In Rwanda, even unexpected guests are welcomed to drop by, to share meals, and even to spend the night.

What would you do if a guest stopped by unexpectedly to spend the night? What is one thing you can do this week to show hospitality?

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And They Shall Call His Name

How did Jesus receive his name? Read Matthew 1:20-24 and Luke 1:26-33.

In Rwanda, about two weeks after a baby is born, family and neighbors come together to celebrate with a naming ceremony. There is special food served, like beans mixed with greens. Then starting with the children, each guest stands and announces what they suggest the baby be named. After all the suggestions have been made, the parents talk together and the father announces the name that they have chosen.

Who chose your name?

At the Manger

Baby Jesus was laid in a manger- a feeding trough for animals.

In Rwanda, many families have small outdoor rooms where they keep their farm animals. You may find a cow, goats, chickens, and rabbits among the farm animals.

The next time you are near farm animals, stop to notice the sights, sounds and smells. Then imagine Jesus in the middle of everything, sharing the animals' shelter.

Visiting Family

In Rwanda, there is a tradition about babies and visiting family. First, the parents of the new mother make a visit to the new family. It is said that they are "bringing porridge"- offering nutritious food to the new mother. Then the new family must make a special visit to the grandparents, to show the new baby to them and others in the family and community.

Before that special visit, the new mother is not allowed to go and visit her parents, or she would be breaking tradition.

Who were the first people to visit you after you were born? Who are your favorite people to go and visit?

Swaddling Clothes

If Jesus had been Rwandan, he would have been swaddled and carried on Mary's back.

A Rwandan baby is laid on his mama's back with his head looking to the side and his arms and legs spread out around her. Then she wraps a soft blanket around, supporting his head and tucking up under his bottom. She ties the blanket around her front so that the baby is secure. Babies love sleeping ku mugongo.

How did your mother carry you when you were a baby? Can you imagine Mary carrying Jesus like that?

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What's in a Name?

Do you remember the meaning of Jesus' name? Look again at Matthew 1:21-23.

In Rwanda, it is not traditional for families to share a last name or family name. Instead, each person receives two names which are unique to them. Usually, one of the names is from the Kinyarwanda language, and one is from French or English. For example, in the Azizi Life family, we have some very special names. Can you try to pronounce them?

Umutoniwase means Daddy's Princess, *Uwimana* means Person of God, and *Uwimanimpaye* means She who God has given.

What does your name mean?

Shepherds in their Fields

Jesus' angels appeared to the shepherds of Bethlehem while they were watching over their flocks in the fields that night.

In Rwanda, many people just have a few small farm animals. If they have a sheep, they may tether it to a post along a path nearby the house so that it can munch on the grass in that area. Cows are always kept in a simple wooden stable in the yard, and families grow long grasses to cut and bring to the cow each day.

How are farm animals cared for in your community?

Glory to God in the Highest

In Rwanda, there is a fun way of expressing praise to God. Sometimes when one person shares something great that God has done, their friends will join in the celebration by raising their arms above their heads and waving their hands at the sky-usually with an expression like, "Wooooooo!" Give it a try- it's fun!

Take turns sharing things from or about God that you are celebrating.

Sleep in Heavenly

Peace

We know that Jesus was laid in a manger to sleep.

In Rwanda, many families sleep on shared mattresses or woven mats on the floor of their home.

What did you sleep in when you were a baby?

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Christmas Dinner

Families in the US and Europe love to share a big Christmas dinner with dishes like turkey or ham, roasted potatoes and Brussel sprouts.

For Rwandan families, Christmas is one of the only times of year that they spend the extra money or use one of their farm animals to enjoy meat with their meal. The mamas will cook together in their outdoor kitchen, over a wood or charcoal fire. On the menu may be potatoes, rice, french fries, cassava or corn polenta, beans, and vegetables like ground cassava leaves.

What is your favorite Christmas meal?

Star of Wonder

God provided a star to point the way to the newborn Savior.

In Rwanda, many communities are now connecting to power lines for electricity. But even so, nights are dark enough that the stars shine brilliantly. Sometimes we can see the constellation Orion, the Big Dipper or the Milky Way.

The next time you see one of these constellations, imagine someone in Rwanda looking up and seeing the same stars. Maybe the three Wise Men saw these constellations, too!

What if the Three Wise Men were Rwandan?

Rwanda is not home to precious metals like gold or special spices like frankincense. If the three Wise Men had come from Rwanda, maybe they would give milk, fruit, a special animal like a cow, fabric for Mary to make a new dress, or a hand woven basket like this one.

What is something special from your own home area which you might give to a King?

Good Gifts

In Rwanda, Christmas is a holiday of faith and family, and there is not the tradition of buying gifts for everyone.

What are some gifts you can give someone today that don't cost any money?

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Happy Birthday, Jesus!

At Christmas, we celebrate Jesus' birth. But actually, no one is really sure which day is Jesus' birthday!

It's similar in Rwanda. Rwandan families do not have the tradition of birthday celebrations. In fact, many adults don't actually know their true birth date. So on the official identity cards of many Rwandans is written the birth date January 1st.

If you could choose any day to be your birthday, what would you choose?

Out of Egypt

When Jesus was a toddler, his life was threatened by King Herod. After the three Wise Men returned to their country, God helped Mary and Joseph to escape to Egypt, where they stayed until it was safe to return to Israel. Read about it in Matthew 2:13-15.

Rwandans have shared many of Jesus' life experiences. Included in those shared experiences for many people is being forced to flee their home communities and seek safety in a neighboring country. Jesus also was a refugee, and he and his family found safety among the people of Egypt.

Take some time around the dinner table to pray for people who are sharing Jesus' refugee experience today. Pray for those countries that have opened their doors to welcome and care for refugees.

If Santa were Rwandan...

If Santa were Rwandan, we wonder if he would balance his sack on his head?

Check out this YouTube video - search for "Rwandan women dancing with baskets on their heads."

Try walking with your Rwandan basket balanced on your head. Who can walk the furthest in a balancing contest?

Christmas Hymn

Want to hear a Christmas song from Rwanda? Check out this video on YouTube:

NOEL NZIZA by Fortran

(Noel Nziza means Merry Christmas)

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Joy to the World

Joy to the world, the Lord
has come, let earth
receive her king. Let
every heart prepare him
room, and heaven and
nature sing!

The coming of Jesus
brings joy to us, and to all
people around the world.

In Rwanda, Christians
celebrate his coming and
his salvation. They too
are praying that every
heart would prepare him
room, and join in the
joyful song of heaven.

Sing the song Joy to the
World together.

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