

## First Week of Advent



*life*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God...What has come into being in him  
was life, and the life was the light of all people.* John 1:1,3b-4

No doubt you've seen pictures of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. In Michelangelo's painting, God has just created Adam and is reaching out to touch him. In the painting, Adam looks as if he's still getting his bearings, as if God is just waking him from a very long, deep sleep. God is the one who first makes contact. In fact, Adam wouldn't even be in the picture—or Michelangelo for that matter—if God had chosen not to create. We do not first touch God. God first touches us. God does so through his eternal and personal Word of creation, revelation, salvation and incarnation.

God speaks the universe into being through his eternal and personal Word. What God says he does. In fact, when God says it, it is done. So often we hear words like "Talk is cheap." We often witness the divorce between word and action. A husband tells his wife that he loves her and then sleeps all over town. A father tells his son that he loves him but never shows up for his baseball games or band concerts. A mother tells her daughter that she will never leave her and yet hands her over to grandparents so that she can pursue the nightlife when her husband bails on her. Grown children tell their elderly parents how much they miss them, but never bother to visit. There aren't too many people whose words are as good as actions being performed. But God's speech is active, and it produces results. God does what he claims he will do. In fact, his creative word is life-giving, bringing all things to life.

from *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town* by Paul Metzger, pp. 29-30

*life*

*light*

*belonging*

*grace*



## A Take Home Advent Devotional on *life, light, belonging, grace*

Each Sunday during the Season of Advent, you are invited to remove this cover and take it home, as a devotional guide to use during the week. The interior pages of the devotional guide are especially suitable for use with young children, and the back page offers a special reading for the grown-ups. Throughout the Four Sundays of Advent, we will explore four themes from the first chapter of the Gospel of John: life, light, belonging and grace.

### Symbols Key



Read It



Talk About It



Draw It



Sing It

On this first week of Advent, we listen to the words of John 1:1-5. These verses tell us that all life comes from God and that Jesus came into the world to show us how to live full and happy lives.



Draw a picture of something God made that makes you happy.

**Advent Prayer:** God, we thank you for the gift of life. Show us how to be truly happy by following Jesus. Show us how to share your gifts with others. Amen.

## An Advent Witness to Life - The Angel Gabriel

The Bible gives us many witnesses that share God's good news with us through words and actions. For the first week of Advent, we look to the Angel Gabriel, who is a witness to God's word of **life**.



What does the word "witness" mean? If it helps, look it up in a dictionary. What do witnesses do? Why are they helpful or important?



Read Luke 1:26-37. The Angel Gabriel visits Mary, a teenage girl in a town called Nazareth. He tells her not to be afraid because God loves her and has chosen her to be the mother of Jesus.



Gabriel says that in Mary's life nothing will be impossible with God. Can you name some things that God makes possible in your life?



Don't know the melody? Visit [soundcloud.com/sydneysteiner/people-look-east](https://soundcloud.com/sydneysteiner/people-look-east)

### People, Look East

1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the crown - ing  
2 An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth him who brings new  
of the year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble,  
life to earth. Set ev - 'ry peak and val - ley hum - ming  
trim the hearth and set the ta - ble. Peo - ple, look  
with the word, the Lord is com - ing. Peo - ple, look  
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Guest, is on the way.  
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Text: Eleanor Farjeon, 1881–1965  
Music: BESANÇON, French carol

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## Second Week of Advent



### *light*

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. John 1:6-9*

The light and darkness themes appear throughout John's Gospel. A master of metaphor, John often uses physical day and night to convey spiritual and moral light and darkness. For example, Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night (Jn 3:2) and is in the darkness (Jn 3:19-21). Later he comes into the light of life, even when everything else around him is shrouded in darkness (Jn 7:45-52; 19:38-42). Judas goes out at night into the darkness to betray Jesus (Jn 13:27, 30). Jesus is the light of the world (Jn 8:12). There is a strong polarity between light and darkness in John's Gospel. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness does not understand it and cannot overcome the light (Jn 1:5).

The moral aspect to the light and darkness polarity is borne out by the fact that the personal Word comes to the world and to his own people but is not recognized or accepted...Why do we often reject the Word when he makes contact with us? Connected to our fear of vulnerability and losing control is love of the darkness. As Jesus says, "Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil" (Jn 3:19). We live in the spiritual darkness of self-delusion. As a result, we cannot tolerate real love when it touches our hearts. We can settle for love as a commodity. We can even make a compartment for love. But God as love revealed in the person of Jesus will not allow us to commodify or compartmentalize him...

*from The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town by Paul Metzger, pp. 31-32*

*life*

*light*

*belonging*

*grace*



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### Symbols Key



Read It



Draw It



Talk About It



Sing It

On this second week of Advent, we listen to the words of John 1:6-9. These verses tell us that Jesus' cousin, John, came to tell others about the light that God brings into the world through Jesus.



Draw someone bringing a light to a person or animal that needs it.

**Advent Prayer:** God, we thank you for the gift of light. Show us how to shine your light in this world. Help us bring your love to others. Amen.

## An Advent Witness to Light - John the Baptist

For the second week of Advent, we look to Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, who is a witness to God's word of **light**.



Read Luke 3:2-6. John the Baptist is Jesus' cousin. He went out and "prepared the way" for Jesus. He told people that they need to forgive others and be forgiven. He talked about making the roads in our lives smooth and straight so God can come to us.



When we hurt others or they hurt us, what happens to our relationship with them? Give an example of a time when you were hurt someone else? Did you do anything to make it better?

Do you like light in the darkness or sunshine in winter? Why?

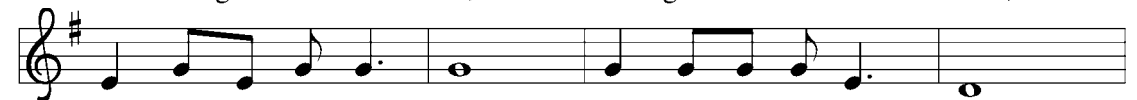


Learn it in sign language at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfeBXIy\\_VAI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfeBXIy_VAI)

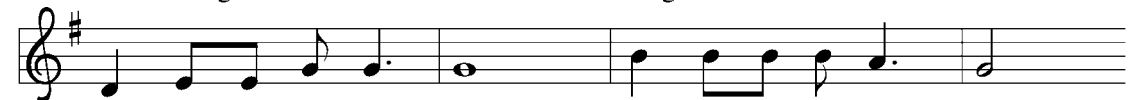
### This Little Light of Mine



1 This lit - tle light of mine, I'm goin' - a let it shine;  
2 Ev - 'ry - where I go, I'm goin' - a let it shine;  
3 Je - sus gave it to me, I'm goin' - a let it shine;



this lit - tle light of mine, I'm goin' - a let it shine;  
ev - 'ry - where I go, I'm goin' - a let it shine;  
Je - sus gave it to me, I'm goin' - a let it shine;



this lit - tle light of mine, I'm goin' - a let it shine,  
ev - 'ry - where I go, I'm goin' - a let it shine,  
Je - sus gave it to me, I'm goin' - a let it shine,



let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.  
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.  
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Text: African American spiritual  
Music: THIS JOY, African American spiritual

### Third Week of Advent



## *belonging*

*He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. John 1:10-13*

The movie *Good Will Hunting* chronicles the story of a brilliant young man (played by Matt Damon) who protects himself from being hurt by others until love finally breaks through to him. It takes the forceful, loving embrace of Will's counselor (Robin Williams) to tear down Will's walls of self-defense, which have kept people from hurting him ever since his stepfather beat him when he was a child. Will's counselor becomes his real father, not some biological-or-legal-by-marriage-father-figure impostor. Will's counselor does not simply tolerate Will. He does not begrudge his existence and beat him, or allow Will's tough-guy exterior or brilliance to repel him. He touches Will. He embraces him. Although Will fights it at first, he finally breaks down and weeps in his counselor's arms, and then travels across the country in pursuit of the young woman he loves but has kept at arm's length for so long.

When we are used to being beaten or—perhaps worse—ignored, it is very difficult for us to accept God's acceptance of us and his embrace. God does not tolerate us, as many of our parents do, treating us like “accidents.” God loves us. Sometimes God has to embrace us forcefully (though not violently) so that we cannot break away to hide and so that our hearts' walls will break so his love can flow through.

from *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town* by Paul Metzger, p. 33.

*life*

*light*

*belonging*

*grace*



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### Symbols Key



Read It



Draw It



Talk About It



Sing It

On this third week of Advent, we listen to the words of John 1:10-13. These verses tell us that Jesus' coming into the world shows us that we are the children of God. Jesus shows us that we belong to God's family.



Draw a picture of a place where you feel safe and where you are loved.

**Advent Prayer:** God, we thank you for the gift of belonging. Make us feel safe and help us welcome others into Jesus' loving family. Amen.

## An Advent Witness to Belonging - Joseph

For the third week of Advent, we look to Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, who is a witness to God's word of **belonging**.



Read Mathew 1:18-25. Joseph married Jesus' mother, Mary, before Jesus was born but after she became pregnant. His story is kind of like reverse adoption where the parent is the one who comes to join the family. He chose to listen to the angel of the Lord and helped provide a loving home for Jesus, Mary, and Jesus' others siblings.

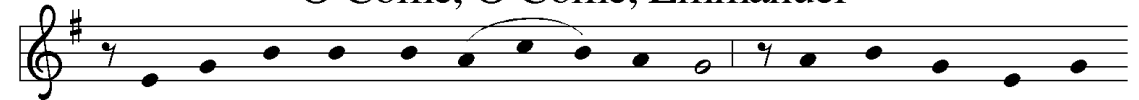


Jesus' birth family is what we sometimes call a blended family. We can use words like stepfather or adoption to describe it. Families come in all shapes and sizes. Have you ever thought of Jesus, as being adopted? What did Joseph's choice to become Jesus' dad do for their family?

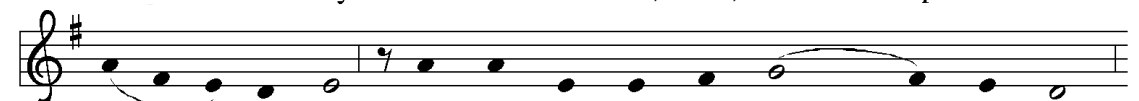


Need help with the tune? Visit [soundcloud.com/arielle-verinis/o-come-o-come-emmanuel](https://soundcloud.com/arielle-verinis/o-come-o-come-emmanuel). Or, for a funky remix, try [soundcloud.com/warwick-runnels/o-come-o-come-emmanuel-gentle](https://soundcloud.com/warwick-runnels/o-come-o-come-emmanuel-gentle).

### O Come, O Come, Emmanuel



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive  
2 O come, O Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen wide our



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here  
heav' - nly home; make safe the way that lea - ds on high,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear. Re-joyce! Re-joyce!  
and close the path to mi - ser - y. Re-joyce! Re-joyce!



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

## Fourth Week of Advent



*grace*

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known. John 1:14-18*

When God's Word comes to us, the Word doesn't speak to us at the level of rocket science technology or even at the level of auto mechanics. The Word simplifies his message for us as spiritual babes. He gets down on his hands and knees and speaks baby talk to us. "Baby talk" is a simple description of what we theologians call "accommodation." Here's what the great John Calvin says about the matter:

For who even of slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to "lisp" in speaking to us? Thus such forms of speaking do not so much express clearly what god is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity. To do this he must descend far beneath his loftiness.

The Word gets down on all fours, descending "far beneath his loftiness," lisping and speaking baby talk so that we little children can understand. And the Word doesn't just speak with lisping words but with deeds. The Word doesn't do drive-by evangelism. He stops, stoops and stays with us, showing us that his love for us is not just talk. As Eugene Peterson puts it, "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood."

from *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town* by Paul Metzger, pp. 34-35.

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Read It



Talk About It



Draw It



Sing It

On this fourth week of Advent, we listen to the words of John 1:14-18. These verses tell us that Jesus brings God's fullness to us. In Jesus, we are able to understand and experience God's love.



Draw a picture of Jesus sharing God's love with a person, place, or animal.

**Advent Prayer:** God, we thank you for the gift of grace. In Jesus, you have shown us your love. Help us share your Word of loving grace with others. Amen.

## An Advent Witness to Grace - Mary

For the second week of Advent, we look to Jesus' mother, Mary, who is a witness to God's word of **grace**.



Read Luke 1:39-56. When an angel came to Mary and told that she would soon be pregnant with Jesus, she was just a teenager. During her pregnancy, she went to visit her older cousin, Elizabeth, who was also pregnant. When their pregnant bellies got close to each other, the child inside Elizabeth (John the Baptist) jumped for joy.



Grace is the thing that allows us to receive life and all that is in it, as a gift. It changed Mary from being a scared and lonely teenager to the blessed mother of God. At first this news didn't sound like a gift, but she discovered that it actually was. Can you name a gift in your life that at first didn't seem like a gift? What changed your feeling or thinking?



### Away in a Manger



1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for his bed, the lit - tle Lord  
2 The cat - tle are low - ing; the ba - by a - wakes, but lit - tle Lord  
3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask you to stay close by me for -



Je - sus laid down his sweet head; the stars in the bright sky looked  
Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes. I love you, Lord Je - sus; look  
ev - er and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear chil - dren in



down where he lay, the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.  
down from the sky and stay by my cra - dle till morn - ing is nigh.  
your ten - der care and fit us for heav - en, to live with you there.