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# ADVENT SMALL GROUP GUIDE

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John the Baptist by Gracie Morbitzer,  
"The Modern Saints Series",  
[themodernsaints.com](http://themodernsaints.com)

## TINY THINGS TO TRY THIS WEEK

from 12 Tiny Things - [12tinythings.com](http://12tinythings.com)

- Shut down your phone and computer at night. Take intentional breaths while they reboot come morning.
- Donate ten things.
- Watch the sun rise or set.
- Sit down when you eat.
- Light a candle at every meal.
- Hand write a letter to someone you love.

## LOUD VOICES - ADVENT 1

*"The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us." - Walter Brueggemann*

### LUKE 3:1-6

The reading begins by naming those who were powerful and centered by systems at the time: the Emperor, the governors, the tetrarchs, and high priests. The list aims to place this story within a real, historical context before shifting the focus to the margins and the wild places, the edges of the region and the character who moves us there. The gospels invite our gaze away from the Empire's stage to the edges, teaching us to expect God's liberation where we least expect it. John's cry is sacred and timeless: Prepare and make room. The landscape is changing. Something new is coming.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We begin the season of Advent in the wilderness. Can you think of other stories in scripture that take place in the wilderness? What about seasons in your own life?
2. Quotes from Isaiah are an important element in John and Jesus finding their voices in this gospel. What do this quote from Isaiah and Jesus' first sermon (Luke 4:18-19) have to say about ?
3. What voices do you listen for these days and who are you tuning out? How do you decide who gets your attention?

### PRAYER

*Saving God, you have been known to make a way where we can't. Guide our preparations for what is still coming and help us listen for voices that declare your liberation and love, through Jesus who is Word made flesh. Amen.*

### TRY THIS

Keep a log of all the sounds you hear or vibrations you feel in a day. Notice the soundtrack of your daily routine. What soothes or grates? What can you alter now that you've paid attention?

## FRIENDSHIP - ADVENT 2

*"Women's friendships are like a renewable source of power." - Jane Fonda*

### LUKE 1:39-45

Mary visits Elizabeth during their pregnancies and they spend three months together. Joseph does not come along and Elizabeth's husband Zechariah has been made mute by God until baby John is born. It is a rare scene in scripture - and in modern storylines - to hear two women speaking without men and about something other than men. Elizabeth feels the baby leap within her body and she announces a blessing over her cousin. This passage rejoices in their friendship, their bodies, and the blessing they are to one another and God's mission to save the world with love.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

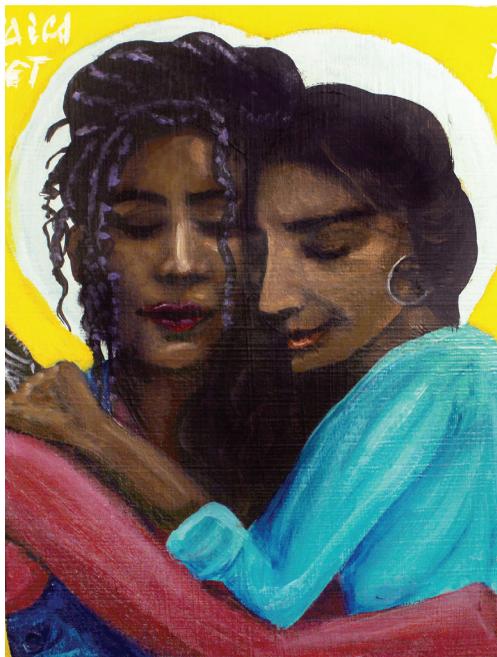
1. It means a lot when someone who knows you blesses you and calls you special. Who has been a blessing to you?
2. Why do you think God decided to be born as a baby instead of coming to earth as a grown up?
3. This story can be difficult for those who have struggled with infertility and pregnancy loss. What stories in scripture do you struggle with because of your lived experience?

### PRAYER

*Abiding God, we rejoice with Elizabeth and Mary, and are reminded how important it is to be blessed by the joy of those who know us and love us anyway. May we be that joy for another, today and every day. Amen.*

### TRY THIS

When you think of someone fondly this week, send them a simple note to let them know. If they have passed away, light a candle to honor their memory.

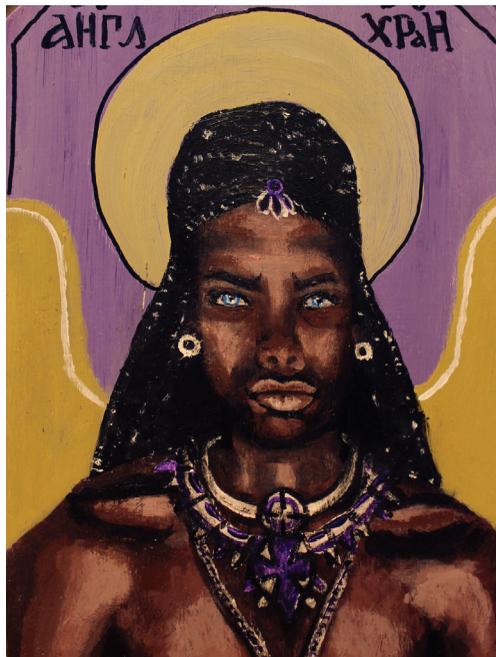


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### TINY THINGS TO TRY THIS WEEK

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- Carve out five minutes to sit.
- Do a craft you loved to do as a child.
- Go outside and touch something wild.
- Make eye contact and smile at three people.
- Listen. Not to respond, but to understand.
- Explore a new place in your neighborhood.



Gabriel the Archangel by Gracie Morbitzer, "The Modern Saints Series", [themodernsaints.com](http://themodernsaints.com)

## WONDER - ADVENT 3

*"Tell me, what is it you will do with your one wild and precious life?" - Mary Oliver*

### LUKE 1:46-55

Mary's song is the brave response to the words of blessing Elizabeth spoke when she arrived in Judah, and to the angel who announced her favor before God. She sings a sermon, a prophecy, a bold claim on what God has already accomplished and what might happen next. Mary names God's pattern for showing up for the sake of the least and the last, for seeing her in such a humble state and inviting her participation in something so important.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Go back to the Annunciation in Luke 1:26-38. Mary only had one clarifying question for the angel. What would you have asked and why?
2. Read (or sing) the Magnificat in Luke 1:46-55. Notice how Mary uses past and future tense to describe God's saving work. What does it mean that salvation already accomplished and also it's not fully realized yet?
3. Consider what you know about Mary, the mother of Jesus. Is she his first disciple? Why or why not?

### PRAYER

*God, we give thanks for Mary and her song, her declaration of your story that includes us in the reality of your love and liberation on earth. Give us a new song to sing this season, one that magnifies you and practices wonder for what can still be possible through Jesus. Amen.*

### TRY THIS

Write one of your persistent fears or worries down on a sticky note and add below it, "It's real and Jesus knows. But in the end, it doesn't win." Post it as a reminder of the already and not yet.

### TINY THINGS TO TRY THIS WEEK

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- Pick your toes up, fan them out and put them back down. Be here now.
- Put on a song you love and actively listen to the whole piece.
- Pick a machine in your life (car, computer, etc.) that you appreciate and give it a nod of gratitude before using it.
- Say yes to an invitation.
- Think about where your food came from.
- Commit to being open to surprise today. At the end of the day, reflect on what surprised you.

## ANCESTORS - ADVENT 4

*"Walking. I am listening to a deeper way. Suddenly all my ancestors are behind me. Be still, they say. Watch and listen. You are the result of the love of thousands."*

- Linda Hogan

### MATTHEW 1:1-17

We don't often hear this passage read in Christian worship. Some might say it's a doozy of a gospel opener! But then again, we aren't Matthew's primary audience. He was writing his account for a traditional Jewish community, folks who would have been curious about Jesus' genealogy, who would recognize names within his family tree. This list ties Jesus to all kinds of people - messy, complicated, beautiful, brutal people. It's one more way he's a lot like the rest of us.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

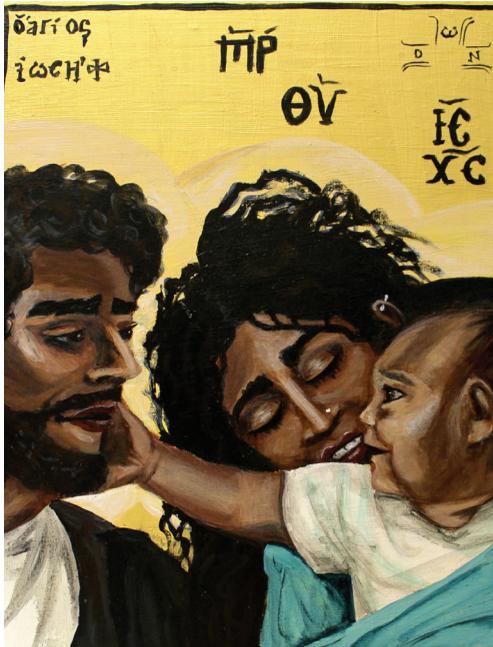
1. What names do you recognize in this lineage? Can you find the 5 women named in this patriarchal list?
2. Why do you think it was important for the author to name Jesus as a direct descendant of Abraham and David?
3. This account honors Joseph in the parenthood and genealogy of Jesus. Matthew takes good care to share Joseph's experience. Read Matthew 1-2 and consider the ways dreams fold Joseph into the promise with a purpose of his own.

### PRAYER

*God of generations, we are the result of the love of thousands, carried into being by your blessings that endure forever. Grant us wisdom, compassion, and courage to be good ancestors for those who come after us, through Jesus who lives in every generation. Amen.*

### TRY THIS

Learn about an ancestor (spiritual, biblical, or genealogical). How does their life impact or inspire yours? Name one way you hope to impact and inspire future generations.



Holy Family by Gracie Morbitzer,  
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### TINY THINGS TO TRY THIS WEEK

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- Clean something prayerfully.
- Eat a snack with your eyes closed.
- Write down three things you are grateful for.
- Make a list of things you would do if you didn't need money. Try to incorporate one today.
- Take a detour on purpose and see what happens.
- Change the pictures in your frames to see new memories of people and places you adore.