



*Our faith is not just something we check in with on Sundays, our faith is how we live lives of meaning and purpose everyday, if we will learn to notice and respond to how God is moving. But this awareness, like anything worthwhile, takes practice. Which is why a weekly discipleship practice of Reading, Reflecting, and Responding to scripture in the context of community is so important. The following devotions have been written with this practice in mind. Use them with friends or family to help you deepen your experience of faith.*

## ***Week: Christmas 1***

### **Adult and Littles**

**Read:** John 1:14

**Reflect:** In this verse we learn about a man named John who loved to tell people about Jesus' love. John was Jesus' cousin, and sometimes they worked together to share God's love with people.

**Respond:** Who tells you about Jesus' love? Is it someone in your family? How can you be like John this week? Who do you know that you would like to tell about God's love for them? If you aren't sure, ask someone in your family to help you practice. John helped Jesus, - who can help you?  
- Jerusalem Greer

### **Adult and Middles (Elementary)**

**Read:** John 1:1-18

**Reflect:** Did you know that the Christmas Season actually begins on Christmas Day and last for 12 days, until January 6, which is the Feast of the Epiphany? These twelve days are a great opportunity to think about what it means to be Christian, about our history and tradition and about who God is calling each of us to be as we start a new calendar year. In today's bible verse, we read that *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.* Like John, we are called to be witnesses to the Light (which is God's love through Jesus). This week as you get ready to go back to school, or to celebrate Epiphany, think on how God is calling you to be Witness to the Light. Instead of writing down your New Year's resolutions, write those down!

#### **Respond:**

*There is a legend that says that the song The 12 Days of Christmas had hidden meanings to help teach children and new Christians about our faith. This week see if you can memorize each of the coded messages!*

A partridge in a pear tree - Jesus

Two turtledoves - The Old and New Testaments

Three French hens - Faith, hope, love or the Trinity or the Wise Men

Four calling birds - The Four Gospels

Five gold rings - The Torah/Pentateuch, first five books of the Old Testament

Six geese a-laying - The six days of Creation

Seven swans a-swimming - Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit

Eight maids a-milking - Eight Beatitudes

Nine ladies dancing - Nine fruits of the Holy Spirit

Ten lords a-leaping - The Ten Commandments

Eleven pipers piping - The eleven faithful Apostles

Twelve drummers drumming - Twelve points of the Apostles' Creed.

- Jerusalem Greer

### **Adult and Bigs (Youth)**

**Read:** John 1:1-18

**Reflect:** There are many times in the Christian Year when we are given times for renewal. Advent and Christmas are great examples of this. Jesus has come into our midst to bring about great change. Jesus has come to shift the very foundations of the way we live.

So, what are the things that you and your family are going to do to celebrate your new life in Jesus? This is starting to sound a lot like “New Year Resolutions” and I’m not exactly going to deny this point. It’s true...But, rather than think about the new diet you’re going to begin or the amount of time you are going to go to the gym; think about the ways in which you are going to bring “Good News” into the world. Think about how, like John, you will testify to the Light that is God in Christ.

**Respond:** This is the time to think about your spiritual life and see where you can make small changes for the coming year. Can you strive to go to church one more Sunday each month as a family? Can you think hard about all the gifts you received and then think about the people who might have received less than you and do something positive about that? Maybe you can commit to practicing the Way of Love each week of 2019... (<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love>)  
- Bill Campbell

### **Adult and Adult**

**Read:** John 1:1-18

**Reflect** Quick! Look busy, Jesus is coming! This is how I always feel as we approach Christmas. Advent, a season that is meant to be slow and reflective, for a lot of us is filled with busyness and stress. As though we aren’t all busy enough!

But guess what? Christmas has arrived, Jesus is here! In today’s gospel we read “*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. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*”

So here we are, on Christmas 1, after all the hubbub, after all the busyness, and Jesus is here and he has brought grace upon grace to each of us. Exhale.

**Respond:** What would grace upon grace look like for you this year?

It can be hard to keep the fires of Christmas going into Christmastide, so I want to encourage you to do something. Make a plan for Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>, make a plan to receive grace upon grace in the form of restful play. On Epiphany, on the last day of Christmas, I want you to have some fun! Just for yourself. You can invite others to join you, but not if it will cause you work and stress.

I’m asking you to plan something nice for yourself and the people you care about that is *easy*. I’m asking you to schedule some self-care for next week, practicing rest and joy. I am asking you to do as our Presiding Bishop says, and take a moment to Love yourself! Why? Because we are called to love who God loves, and that includes yourself!

- *Bill Campbell and Jerusalem Greer*

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