

ADVENT OUT LOUD

by Linda Allen



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Advent Out Loud

A series for candlelighting

by Linda S. Allen

INTRODUCTION

In this series of candlelighting scripts, Everyman contemplates the themes of Advent: hope, peace, joy, and love. Sometimes his conflicting thoughts (voiced out loud by other actors) compete for attention, presenting the challenge of living a life centered on these four qualities in a confused and conflicted modern society. In every week's circumstance, words from the Bible redirect his thinking. The theme comes from John 10:10, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

The question for Everyman (and woman!) is this: if Jesus came to give us full, abundant lives, why don't we live that way? Why are our lives often half-lived? Have we said we believe and accept Christ without believing, accepting, and acting on the abundance he offers?

Each week's drama takes place in different settings. In "Everyman Ponders Hope in the Pew," Everyman contemplates what the words from Jeremiah (hope and a future) mean for his life. Everyman and his wife are trapped in holiday traffic in "Everyman Ponders Peace on the Overpass." This piece is a little edgier than the others because it deals with violence in our homes and throughout the world. Everyman questions what part we each play in promoting violence ... or peace. When Everyman (a grandfather) finds himself reluctantly shopping during an unwanted holiday trip in "Everyman Ponders Joy in a Candy Store," he is confronted with the lack of joy in his own life. "Everyman Ponders Love in a Manger" presents how stress in our lives often overrides the love we're called to show to our God and to each other when Everyman directs an annoyed and distracted cast for the Christmas play.

These weekly dramas are short in length and require minimal costuming, only a stool or two for a set, and no props except for the Advent wreath with candles and a wand-type lighter.

Everyman may be played by the same person or a different person each week throughout the Advent season.

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Hope in the Pew

Week 1 of Advent

Scripture:

Jeremiah 29:10-14; 1 Peter: 1:13, Genesis 1:31

Cast:

EVERYMAN

LAY LEADER

VOICES 1-4 (Within EVERYMAN's head)

Costumes:

EVERYMAN wears typical clothing for worship. LAY LEADER wears a suit or whatever clothing is appropriate for your congregation. VOICES wear all black.

Set:

A stool at Center Stage. The Advent wreath is in place with a wand-type lighter nearby, but none of the candles are lit.

(EVERYMAN enters and sits on stool. VOICES 1 and 2 stand beside him at Stage Right and VOICES 3 and 4 stand beside him at Stage Left. LAY LEADER stands at a podium or pulpit.)
EVERYMAN: (Distracted) Here I sit on this first Sunday of Advent in my usual place for worship, but I can't focus with all the thoughts running through my head.

VOICE 1: That doctor's report.

VOICE 3: The credit card bill.

VOICE 2: The plumbing.

EVERYMAN: Yet another crisis in the Middle East.

VOICE 4: I can't believe the _____. *(Insert your closest professional sports team.)*

VOICE 2: What was the knock-knock sound in the car engine?

EVERYMAN: It's hard to ... concentrate. And the lay leader reads from ...?

LAY LEADER: Our Scripture reading today is from Jeremiah, chapter twenty-nine.

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- 1 VOICE 1: Jeremiah?
- 2 VOICE 2: There are no Christmas stories in Jeremiah.
- 3 HOPE: No angels. No shepherds.
- 4 VOICE 4: No Virgin Mary.
- 5 VOICE 1: No baby Jesus in a manger. No animals.
- 6 VOICE 3: Can't be much of a Christmas story.
- 7 EVERYMAN: Jeremiah in Advent? What a stretch.
- 8 LAY LEADER: The prophet writes: "I know the plans I have
- 9 for you ... Plans to prosper you ... to give you *hope* and
- 10 a future."
- 11 EVERYMAN: Plans to prosper me and give me hope? Talk
- 12 about a stretch — *hope* is a stretch.
- 13 VOICE 1: *You* hope. You said the other day when you wanted
- 14 to play golf, "I *hope* it doesn't rain."
- 15 VOICE 4: What happened?
- 16 VOICE 2: It rained.
- 17 EVERYMAN: Hope.
- 18 VOICE 1: In this economy?
- 19 VOICE 3: With everything going on in the world?
- 20 VOICE 1: But the prophet talks about God promising us hope
- 21 and a future.
- 22 VOICE 4: And that's about Jesus, right? Isn't that the story of
- 23 Christmas?
- 24 LAY LEADER: The first Sunday of Advent. (*Brightly*) Hope!
- 25 VOICE 4: Shiny hope!
- 26 VOICE 3: (*Thoughtfully, almost a question*) Elusive hope.
- 27 EVERYMAN: Just not sure about hope anymore.
- 28 VOICE 2: I think hope is sort of like a game.
- 29 VOICE 1: A game?
- 30 VOICE 2: Hide and seek. Sometimes it's there ...
- 31 VOICE 3: And sometimes it isn't.
- 32 VOICE 4: What keeps you from hoping now?
- 33 EVERYMAN: Too often I'm afraid to hope.
- 34 VOICE 3: Exactly! What good is hope anyway?
- 35 VOICE 2: It just lets you down.
- 36 VOICE 1: Ah! But remember Genesis? "God saw all that he
- 37 had made, and it was very good."
- 38 EVERYMAN: But it's not *all* good.

- 1 VOICE 3: And that's the problem.
- 2 EVERYMAN: Maybe it used to be good. Sometime in the past
- 3 ... I don't know ...
- 4 LAY LEADER: "Set your hope wholly and unchangeably on
- 5 the grace that is coming to you" (AMP).
- 6 VOICE 1: That's in our New Testament!
- 7 EVERYMAN: Unchangeable hope? How is that possible?
- 8 VOICE 3: Maybe we hope on God too much. Are the promises
- 9 in the Bible way too big?
- 10 VOICE 4: (*Childishly naïve*) Just say a little prayer. Move a
- 11 mountain!
- 12 VOICE 2: If you want to move a mountain, call the Army
- 13 Corps of Engineers.
- 14 VOICE 1: So God is not big enough?
- 15 VOICE 3: Who *is* big enough to hold our hope?
- 16 VOICE 4: Science!
- 17 VOICE 2: The Army Corps of Engineers!
- 18 VOICE 1: The government?
- 19 EVERYMAN: Which branch do I hope in?
- 20 VOICE 2: Congress?
- 21 VOICE 1: The Supreme Court?
- 22 VOICE 4: The President?
- 23 EVERYMAN: Maybe my hope is to stand on my own two feet.
- 24 VOICE 3: Your feet? Isn't the chemical composition of your
- 25 feet basically clay?
- 26 LAY LEADER: God through Jeremiah said, "I have plans for
- 27 you."
- 28 EVERYMAN: But life is not all good. Bad things have
- 29 happened to me and to those I love.
- 30 VOICE 2: And will happen again.
- 31 VOICE 3: That's life.
- 32 VOICE 4: What happened before when bad things came?
- 33 EVERYMAN: Looking back ...
- 34 VOICE 1: Blessings came. Not what you expected.
- 35 VOICE 3: Not what you asked for.
- 36 VOICE 1: But blessings came.
- 37 VOICE 4: And that's God!
- 38 LAY LEADER: God through Christ offers you hope and a

future.

VOICE 3: Oh, dear one ... Do you want to live without hope?

EVERYMAN: *(A couple beats as he thinks about it)* Can I live without hope? *(EVERYMAN lights the first candle on the Advent wreath.)*

Peace on the Overpass

Week 2 of Advent

Scripture:

Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:18

Cast:

EVERYMAN (Husband)

WIFE

VOICE (In EVERYMAN's head)

RADIO VOICE

Costumes:

EVERYMAN and WIFE wear normal clothing for shopping; VOICE wears black.

Set:

Two stools side by side at Center Stage. Off-stage microphone for RADIO VOICE. One candle is prelit on the Advent wreath, and the lighter is nearby.

(EVERYMAN and WIFE enter and sit on stools. EVERYMAN's stool is Stage Left — the driver's side. VOICE stands near EVERYMAN to his left. RADIO VOICE is Off-stage on a microphone.)

VOICE: Stuck in traffic ... again.

EVERYMAN: Now what? We're trapped on the overpass!

WIFE: You should've taken the other route like I told you to.

VOICE: Why is it when she makes us run late, she blames you?

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- 1 EVERYMAN: You realize we could've already been to the
2 mall and back if we'd started sooner.
- 3 VOICE: Like *you* wanted to.
- 4 EVERYMAN: Like *I* wanted to!
- 5 WIFE: There could be a wreck ahead. Someone might be
6 hurt. Dear Lord, please ...
- 7 EVERYMAN: (*Disgusted*) It's road construction. Why road
8 construction during Christmas?
- 9 WIFE: (*Big sigh*) So much for prayer. I guess they set out
10 orange barrels just to annoy you. When they don't do
11 road construction, you complain about how bad the
12 roads are.
- 13 EVERYMAN: I should've expected an answer like that from
14 you.
- 15 WIFE: What's that supposed to mean?
- 16 EVERYMAN: You never take my side. Everything's a
17 Supreme Court debate with you.
- 18 VOICE: She's just like her mother!
- 19 EVERYMAN: You're just like your mother.
- 20 WIFE: Do you realize you say that every time we have an
21 argument? Like my mother? Well, thank you! I assume
22 that's a compliment.
- 23 VOICE: What's that blasting from the jacked-up junk car
24 next to us?
- 25 EVERYMAN: Rap! (*Looks out the "car window" and yells.*) Turn
26 that racket down!
- 27 VOICE: It's not real music anyway.
- 28 EVERYMAN: (*Still loud*) It's just a bunch of dirty words to a
29 beat.
- 30 WIFE: Good grief — what are you doing? Roll the window up!
31 I can't believe you. (*A beat before next line*) Remember
32 what you used to listen to? You played AC/DC's "Rock
33 and Roll Ain't Noise Pollution" louder than those kids
34 are playing their rap.
- 35 EVERYMAN: Don't say rap and AC/DC in the same sentence.
- 36 WIFE: I can't talk to you anymore. I'm turning on the radio.
- 37 RADIO VOICE: Peace talks have broken down again in the
38 Middle East. Dozens died as missiles hit an apartment

- 1 building in the residential area of ...
- 2 WIFE: Peace talks have broken down again. Do those people
3 *want* to live like that? Don't they want peace over
4 there?
- 5 VOICE: Maybe they get satisfaction out of lobbing missiles at
6 each other. Zap!
- 7 EVERYMAN: Maybe each side thinks they're on the right
8 side.
- 9 WIFE: Aren't God's people on *both* sides? Is being right —
10 whatever that means — more important than innocent
11 lives?
- 12 EVERYMAN: (*High-handed, very defensive*) Some things are
13 worth fighting for.
- 14 VOICE: Watch out for incoming missiles!
- 15 WIFE: But is *everything* worth fighting over?
- 16 VOICE: Zap!
- 17 RADIO VOICE: In local news, a shooting at the Cloverleaf
18 Apartments has left one dead and three more
19 hospitalized. Police say a fight broke out at a family
20 gathering when ...
- 21 WIFE: We don't have to go far to hear of people dying in their
22 homes.
- 23 VOICE: Poor guy was probably dealing with a mother-in-law
24 like yours.
- 25 EVERYMAN: Not to mention any family names ... but it's
26 probably a good thing I don't pack a Smith and Wesson.
27 (*If this is worded too strongly for your congregation, substitute*
28 *"There's no excuse for gun violence, but some families can really*
29 *get on each other's nerves" with a pointed look in WIFE's*
30 *direction.*)
- 31 WIFE: And what about *your* family? At least my folks will be
32 sober this Christmas.
- 33 VOICE: Run for cover! Another incoming!
- 34 RADIO VOICE: Today Congressional leaders walked out on
35 a meeting with the President as they grappled with the
36 latest situation in ...
- 37 VOICE: Lob a missile. The red states. The blue states. Their
38 news channel. Our news channel. A direct hit! Zap!

- 1 WIFE: Sometimes I understand why they say “no news is
2 good news.”
- 3 RADIO VOICE: Once again we report on the latest
4 controversy over the live Nativity scene at the ...
- 5 WIFE: Seems everything's a battleground anymore. *(The*
6 *following greetings are not joyful — they're “in your face,”*
7 *heavily sarcastic or acrimonious, like a child's nah-nah-nah-*
8 *nah-nah-nah. Use a rapid-fire delivery.)*
- 9 VOICE: Happy Holidays! Zap! Merry Christmas! Zap! Happy
10 Hanukkah! Season's greetings! Happy Kwanzaa! Zap!
- 11 WIFE: Where is God in all this? I'm turning the radio off.
12 *(Beat to think it over)* You know, Jesus said, “Blessed are
13 the peacemakers.” *(Another beat or two)* Sunday we read
14 in Romans: “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you,
15 live at peace with everyone.”
- 16 VOICE: *(Tone changes here.)* Live at peace?
- 17 EVERYMAN: *(Thoughtfully, as he lights the second candle on the*
18 *Advent wreath.)* What a concept. Live peaceably . . .
- 19 WIFE: With *all* people.
- 20 EVERYMAN: Dear God. What are we doing to each other?
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12
Joy in a Candy Store

Week 3 of Advent

Scripture:

Isaiah 58:7-8, references to Psalms and the Sermon on the Mount

Cast:

EVERYMAN (Grandpa who is burned out on Christmas)

GRANDMA (Has a sense of humor and sweetly puts up with her husband's grouchiness)

KATIE (Teenage granddaughter)

GOOD GUY VOICE (In EVERYMAN's head)

BAD GUY VOICE (In EVERYMAN's head)

Costumes:

EVERYMAN, GRANDMA, and KATIE wear clothing appropriate for Christmas shopping. GOOD GUY VOICE is dressed in white. BAD GUY VOICE is dressed in red or black.

Set:

Two candles are prelit on the Advent wreath, and the lighter is nearby.

(EVERYMAN, GRANDMA, and KATIE enter and take their places at Center Stage. GOOD GUY VOICE stands Stage Right. BAD GUY VOICE stands Stage Left.)

EVERYMAN: *(Grumpy)* OK, here's the Mrs. Claus Candy Shoppe you two wanted to visit. One more tourist trap.

KATIE: Thank you for bringing Grandma and me to Holiday Village, Grandpa. Aren't you excited about Christmas?

EVERYMAN: No!

GRANDMA: *(GRANDMA's zingers are always intended to be friendly joshing and not mean-spirited.)* Dickens had your grandpa in mind when he created Ebenezer Scrooge.

KATIE: Grandpa? I don't believe that for a minute. And Scrooge turned out to be a good guy at the end of the story.

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1 EVERYMAN: I'm already a good guy. I salute the flag. I pay
2 my taxes. I served my country in the military. I go to
3 every worship service and potluck at church. And I'm
4 here now with you two instead of home watching the
5 game on TV.

6 GOOD GUY VOICE: When you're on your deathbed, you
7 won't be thinking, "I wish I'd spent more time in front
8 of the TV instead of with my granddaughter."

9 EVERYMAN: What?

10 GRANDMA: We didn't say anything.

11 EVERYMAN: I thought I heard something.

12 BAD GUY VOICE: (*Sarcastic, syrupy, sinister*) It's your good-guy
13 conscience. You and I don't listen to him very often.

14 EVERYMAN: What?

15 BAD GUY VOICE: I'm the one in your head that keeps you
16 grounded in reality.

17 GRANDMA: Why do you keep saying "What?"

18 EVERYMAN: Just get your bag of candy and let's get out of
19 here.

20 KATIE: Look, Grandpa. They've got fudge! And pralines. And
21 Jelly Bellies. And Gummi Bears. I've been saving my
22 baby-sitting money for Christmas. I want to get some
23 candy for my friends.

24 EVERYMAN: I'm sure their dentists will appreciate your
25 efforts.

26 KATIE: Aren't you going to buy some? It just makes me feel
27 good to give to people.

28 EVERYMAN: I don't have to go around spending my money
29 on other people to feel good. I already feel good.

30 GRANDMA: Really? And how are we supposed to know that?

31 KATIE: Look! Here are some pretty gift boxes to put the
32 candy in. They have "joy" written in glitter on the top.

33 EVERYMAN: So joy comes in glitter on a cardboard box.

34 BAD GUY VOICE: There you are! Commercialism.
35 Materialism. Bogus — all bogus!

36 GRANDMA: It's not about the glitter. It's about the giving.
37 Thinking about someone else.

38 EVERYMAN: I think about other people. I've thought a lot

1 about the guy that took my parking place. And the
2 woman with the screaming kid at the lunch counter.
3 GRANDMA: You used to love Christmas.
4 EVERYMAN: Never.
5 GRANDMA: I still remember the wonderful family
6 gatherings at your Aunt Edith's, God rest her soul. She
7 was the best cook. Remember her divinity with the
8 pecans on top?
9 BAD GUY VOICE: Yeah, and remember her son — your
10 rotten cousin Harry?
11 EVERYMAN: Harry.
12 GRANDMA: Oh my, yes. Your cousin Harry. We haven't seen
13 him and his family for years.
14 EVERYMAN: And never will, if I have anything to say about
15 it.
16 BAD GUY VOICE: We have a long memory.
17 KATIE: What's wrong with your cousin Harry?
18 GRANDMA: Oh, Harry hurt your Grandpa's feelings one
19 time.
20 KATIE: What was it about?
21 GOOD GUY VOICE: Go ahead — spill it. I'd like to hear what
22 you have to say.
23 EVERYMAN: Ummmm ...
24 GRANDMA: It was so long ago he doesn't remember.
25 EVERYMAN: I don't remember *exactly* what happened. But
26 something did! And I'll never forget it.
27 GRANDMA: And I think he's always been a little jealous of
28 Harry.
29 EVERYMAN: Never.
30 GRANDMA: Harry's successful job. Their big house. Their
31 expensive cars. The vacations.
32 EVERYMAN: Not important.
33 KATIE: Awwwww. Did your cousin Harry steal your joy,
34 Grandpa?
35 GOOD GUY VOICE: Interesting question. Did Harry steal
36 your joy?
37 BAD GUY VOICE: What a crazy idea! So we have a little envy
38 ... a dab of jealousy ... a tiny glob of bitterness. Hey,

- 1 that's just human nature!
- 2 **GOOD GUY VOICE:** In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said,
3 "Blessed are those who ..." How blessed are *you* feeling
4 right now? Where is the joy of your salvation that David
5 sang about in the Psalms?
- 6 **BAD GUY VOICE:** You can't forget all those old hurts. You
7 can't change the past!
- 8 **GOOD GUY VOICE:** Bernard Meltzer wrote, "When you
9 forgive, you in no way change the past ... "
- 10 **BAD GUY VOICE:** See?
- 11 **GOOD GUY VOICE:** "But you sure do change the future."
12 Where is the joy of your salvation?
- 13 **KATIE:** Look, Grandpa. I'm going to take the joy boxes and
14 fill them with candy for my friends. I know it sounds
15 funny, but somehow it makes me feel closer to God.
- 16 **EVERYMAN:** God in a candy store.
- 17 **GRANDMA:** Noooo. She's feeling good about giving to others.
- 18 **KATIE:** Like God does! He made us in his own image.
- 19 **EVERYMAN:** Huh! So God and I look alike? I always thought
20 he'd be taller.
- 21 **KATIE:** I mean we're like God because we can create things
22 and love people and give stuff. And just be full of joy if
23 we want to.
- 24 **GOOD GUY VOICE:** Did you catch that? Claim God's joy for
25 yourself — if you want to.
- 26 **BAD GUY VOICE:** Watch out! I don't like where this is going.
- 27 **GOOD GUY VOICE:** Listen to God's words through Isaiah: "I
28 want you to share your food with the hungry and to
29 welcome poor wanderers into your homes. Give clothes
30 to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives
31 who need your help. If you do these things, your
32 salvation will come like the dawn. Yes, your healing will
33 come quickly" (*NLT*).
- 34 **BAD GUY VOICE:** Don't listen to him. He's playing with your
35 head. We're fine just the way we are!
- 36 **EVERYMAN:** (*Beat while he ponders this, then we hear a different*
37 *tone in his voice.*) No, we're not fine just the way we are.
- 38 **GRANDMA:** Who do you keep talking to?



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