



**The Three Together**

# **Advent Course**

**Someone to  
Believe In**

An Advent Course based on  
*Miracle on 34th Street*

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**SHEILA JACOB**

# **Week One**

## ***Seeds of Faith***

- Icebreaker:** Seeds of faith
- Personal meditation:** Think about the person or people who encouraged you to have faith in God. Why might you say to them now?
- To Start:** A Reading for the book
- Pause for thought:** Think about your own coming to faith. If you have never come to a personal faith in Jesus, think of someone who has. Can you talk to them this week about their relationship with God through Christ?
- Watch Clip** *Original Movie Clip: 7:35 – 11:22 (4.47mins)*
- Pause for thought:** Do you think it is right that Susan isn't allowed to believe in fantasies? Do you think a child being encouraged to believe in fairy tales as a reality is harmful, or not?
- Watch Clip:** *Modern Movie Clip: 38:47 - 40:14 (2:27mins)*
- Think about:** Faith is a confident assurance or belief in a person or a thing. We all have faith in *something*. Even if it isn't in Jesus, we may have faith in other people, our communities, our abilities, ourselves.

**Pause for thought:** Who do you really trust? If your answer is, 'No one', why is that?

**Watch Clip:** *Original Movie Clip: 18:46 – 24:23 (7.09mins)*

**Pause for thought:** What do you think of the worldview that says, 'That may be true for you, but it isn't true for me'?

**Think about:** Recall your first steps in a life with faith. We may have received affirmation, but more likely we may have been met with a little opposition along our faith journey.

**Pause for thought:** How have your views of Jesus been coloured by other people's thoughts, teaching or example? How different might you feel if you met him, one to one?

**Watch Clip:** *Original Movie Clip: 14:14 – 15:18 (2.02mins)*

**Pause for thought:** Alfred has strong views on the time of year. What do you think Christmas 'stands' for?

**Think about:** Christmas has increasingly become a time when the values of materialism fae outweigh the 'season of goodwill'. But the run-up to the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, the season we call Advent, should not be about 'making a pound'. It is a time for reflecting and preparing.

**Pause for thought:** *How can we avoid some of the cynical attitudes that grow in us over the years in relation to Christmas?*

**Watch Clip:** *Modern Clip: 51 – 52:19*  
*(1.19mins)*

**Watch Clip:** *Original Clip: 28:18 – 28:59*  
*(41seconds)*

**Pause for thought:** Is the statement, 'It's a frame of mind,' in what ways is Christmas 'a frame of mind.'

**Think about:** As we continue in our thoughts about the secularization of Christmas. Although Kris Kringle is speaking here, these words might be a Christian plea. In truth, Jesus and the values of the Kingdom of God are not just being pushed out of Christmas, but out of society itself.

**Pause for thought:** Think on areas of your own life where God may be speaking to you about the kingdom values.

**Into Advent:** *Read the 'I' am' Statements of Jesus:*

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

*John 6:35*

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

John 8:12

“Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture.

John 10:7-9

<sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

John 14-15

“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

John 11:25-26

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:6

<sup>15</sup> “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. <sup>2</sup> He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.

John 15:1-2

**Pause for Thought:**

*Why is it important to acknowledge the deity of Christ?*

*What are some of the ways in which Jesus revealed his deity to the people he met?*

**Activity:**

*Light an Advent candle, thanking God for Jesus, the light coming into the world.*

**Read:**

*For us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

**Pause for Thought:** *How do the names of Jesus here denote his deity?*

**Discussion:** Doris Walker's statement: 'I think we should be realistic and completely truthful with our children and not have them growing up believing in a lot of legends and myths like Santa Claus, for example.'

How would you answer someone who denied that without belief in the deity of Christ, you cannot be a Christian?

**Bible verse:**

*<sup>2</sup> He called a child, whom he put among them, <sup>3</sup> and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

*Matthew 18:2-3*

**Reflection:** Do you think it is really possible for an adult to come to Jesus like a little child? Why would Jesus ask us to?

What is a child like when they come to someone they trust? What might coming to Jesus in a child-like way mean for you, personally?

## **Closing Prayer:**

Loving heavenly Father,  
as we begin this journey through Advent, let us keep in mind  
The real reason for the season. Thank you for those who  
have helped us this far in our getting to know you. Let us  
grow in faith as we walk through these studies, seeing you  
more clearly with every step, believing that the seed of faith  
planted in us can grow in good soil of your love. Help us  
come to you as little children and live to  
please you.  
Amen.

## **Week Two**

### ***Friends and Enemies***

- Icebreaker:** Reacting to personal challenges
- To Start:** Reading
- Pause for thought:** Thank God for Jesus, who brought us peace with God!
- Movie Clip:** *Original Clip: 30:35 – 34:19*  
(4.44mins)
- Pause for thought:** During the Advent season, we don't often prepare so much for the coming King as the coming relatives. Mr Sawyer plainly has a stressful home life. Do you anticipate stressful situation this year? Are you able to share your comments with God, and leave them with him?
- Think about:** Going back to the icebreaker question, remember how you answered. Do you think our responses might depend on who it is challenging us?
- Pause for thought:** God knows everything about us, and yet loves us just the same. He knew each of us before we were born (Jeremiah 1:5) and has witnessed everything we have ever said and done, yet he still sent his Son to save us. How might we respond to a God who loves us so unconditionally?
- Movie Clip:** *Original Clip: 48:50 – 53:42*  
(6.52mins)



- Pause for thought:** Sometimes it is easier to walk away from a difficult issue where we think we might hurt someone's feelings than it is to face the person in love, and deal with it. Mrs Walker's fondness for Kris is admirable. But do you think she handled this situation in the best way, given what happens next?
- Think about:** Love always protects (1 Corinthians 13:7). We can see this is Mrs Walker's refusal to hurt Kris.
- Pause for thought:** How did Jesus react when challenged? How did he react on the cross?
- Movie Clip:** *Original Clip: 53:44 – 55:33 (3.17mins)*
- Pause for thought:** It is easy to mix truth with falsehood, especially when we are tempted to manipulate difficult circumstances in our favour. How important is it to maintain our integrity, even if it costs us to do so.
- Think about:** While Mr Sawyer is plainly an enemy. Mr Shellhammer has hardly acted as a friend. He may have thought he was acting in the best interests of the store, but he has still lied. Sometimes we think 'little white lies' won't hurt. But the trouble is, they can lead to all kinds of other problems where we find ourselves led into larger and more elaborate fabrications to protect ourselves. Then our 'little white lie' becomes quite a big deal.

**Pause for thought:** Have you been lied to by someone you had faith in? How has this affected your relationship with them?

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(1.12mins)*

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**Pause for thought:**

There is a difference between sympathy, where you may feel pity for someone else, and compassion, which motivates you to do something about the problem. Carry out a Bible search online or in a study Bible for the word 'compassion' and see how many times it is used about the character and nature of God.

**Think about:**

This is a very interesting piece of the film because it presents us with so many ideas for question and debate.

1. Have you ever felt despondent and hopeless about a relationship, or about life itself?
2. Is feeling 'sorry' enough?
3. Is it okay to doubt – even our faith, when we have believed for years?
4. What kinds of things shake our faith in God?
5. How do we reach people with the gospel when they haven't 'believed' in anything for years?

**Pause for thought:**

Have you seen the 'lavish' love of God for you yet? Is Christmas 'personal' for you? Do you really see God's grace as a gift, or do you still strive to 'work' for God?

**Movie Clip:**

*Original Clip: 57:22 – 59:03  
(2.05mins)*

**Pause for thought:**

Is there anyone you trust as completely as Kris Kringle trusts Fred Gailey?

**Think about:**

We read earlier that at one point, Jesus' own close family thought he was crazy. And as we look in the Bible, we can see that Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Elijah and John the Baptist were hardly displaying 'normal' behaviour at times. Anyway – what's 'normal'?

**Pause for thought:**

In what (or in whom) do you put your trust.... Really? Be honest!

**Into Advent:**

God's free favour was about to be shown to the earth. He was bringing about peace between humanity and himself. God, in Christ, was coming in the flesh to live with us (John 1:14). It isn't something we deserved or worked for. It's a gift we need and a gift we don't have to accept.

**Pause for thought:**

How did Herod act when threatened?

What might have happened if the Wise Men had trusted Herod (Matthew 2:12)?

Why does humankind need a Saviour who is both man and God? Who is our real enemy?

**Activity:**

Think of friends you know you can really trust. This Christmas, could you say thank you to them in a special way?

**Discussion:**

'You'll get me out of this. You'll think of something.... I believe in you.' These are Kris Kringle's words to Fred Gailey. Are they ever our words to God? And if they are, what happens – or has happened?

How important is it that we put out fait in the right people, or things? What can happen when we don't?

**Reflection:**

It is when we forgive that we are forgiven. Is there anyone you need to say sorry to? A person ... the Lord? Do you need to forgive an enemy? Can you think about praying for someone you would not consider a good friend ... or even very likeable?

**Closing Prayer:**

Dear loving heavenly Father,  
How good you are that you love so much that you sent your one and only Son to come to save us, and give us peace with you. Thank you for this Advent season, where we are remembering how Jesus came, and why. Help us to remember you and find your peaceful presence in the middle of all the busyness. Father, we have friends for whom we thank you, but we also have an enemy, so please help us be constantly aware, and stand firm in our faith in Jesus, keeping faithful to you.  
Amen.

## **Week Three**

### ***When Common Sense Tells You Not To***

- Icebreaker:** Common sense or foolishness
- Personal meditation:** Have you every done anything (or brought anything) on the spur of the moment, and regretted it? Alternatively, have you ever decided not to take a risk, but later wished that you had?
- To Start:** In the court scene, Kris Kringle never deviates from his claim. He asserts that he is Santa Claus. Is he crazy? Deluded? Or could he *really* be Father Christmas?
- Pause for thought:** Have you ever taken a real risk for Jesus? What was it, and what happened?
- Extra Movie Clip:** *Modern movie: 1h17mins – 1h17.50 mins (50mins)*
- Movie Clip:** *Original Clip: 1h:03:50 – 1h:07:032 (5.22mins)*
- Pause for thought:** Think of the 'I am' claims of Jesus We read in Week One. Do you think he was deluded, up to no good – or telling the truth?
- Think about:** When we think about identity, what come to mind? People can lose their sense of identity when they get heavily immersed in a life-style

**Pause for thought:** Have you ever really seen your true identity in Christ? How does thinking about yourself as a *son or daughter* of the living God affect you with regard to your actions and identity?

**Movie Clip:** *Original Clip: 1h:07:37 – 1h:10 (3.37mins)*

**Pause for thought:** Where is your 'security'? In your job? Your marriage? In God?

**Think about:** This is a very interesting part of the film, because it shows how very different Fred Gailey's mind-set is from that of his love interest.

**Pause for thought:** Think about Mr Gailey's 'lovely intangibles'. Do you think they are the only things that are worthwhile, or are your observations more in line with Mrs Walker's view about 'getting ahead'?

**Into Advent:** Read Luke 2:1-20

As anyone who has attended a traditional Nativity play knows, Jesus was born in Bethlehem; his parents had to go there to register because of a census of the Roman World.

**Pause for thought:** Have you ever thought about the coming of Jesus as 'good news' for you personally? Do you experience joy in your relationship with Jesus – or has serving him become lifeless and boring?

Why not ask God to give you a fresh revelation of his good news for you today?

**Activity:** Can you write a card, or find time to squeeze in a visit to someone who needs to know the kindness, joy, and love of Jesus this Advent season?

**Discussion:** How does knowing our identity in Christ strengthen our faith?

Do you strive for worldly status? Is it really wrong to want to 'get ahead'?

**Reflection:**

How do Mr Gailey's 'lovely intangibles' connect to the Christmas story, and our ongoing faith in Jesus? Think about the 'lovely intangibles' in your own life. Are they being squeezed out because of other, less important things? Is God asking you to take a risk for him? Perhaps he is asking you to take a risk of totally committing your life to him; getting to know him better; seeing more of your true identity and security in him as you believe more wholeheartedly; or stepping out for him in some other way?

**Prayer:**

Dear loving Father God,

Thank you for the common sense you gave us all in our daily lives. But Lord, please increase our faith so that when you ask us to do something, or believe something, that doesn't seem to fit in with our comfortable worldview, we are willing to take the risk of believing you and acting on it.

Amen.



## **Week Four**

### ***Nothing Impossible***

- Icebreaker:** The Greatest Gift
- To Start:** Reading: so far and where we are at.
- Pause for thought:** Ask God to increase your faith this Christmas!
- Movie Clip:** *Original Clip: 1h:19:00 – 1h:22:22 (2.22mins)*
- Pause for thought:** Think about Susan's child-like faith. Remember when you first believed. Is your faith as 'fresh' as it was then? Has anything happened to dampen your expectations of what God might do in your life?
- Think about:** Is Jesus everything we might expect God to be?
- Pause for thought:** Is the real God, as we see Jesus, the God you believe in?
- Movie Clip:** *Original Clip: 1h:26:47 – 1h:27:24 (2.21mins)*
- Pause for thought:** If Mrs Walker believes Kris truly is Santa, why do you think she doesn't believe in the 'supernatural' part of who he is?
- Think about:** Just as Doris Walker's words reveal that she only partly believes – and so therefore has not had the life-changing experience of actually finding out that Kris really is the real Santa Claus at this point – so our words (and actions) reveal what we truly believe. Often the Jesus we say we believe in stays safely in a manger, or on the cross, but isn't allowed to intrude in our day-to-day lives. Why is that?

**Pause for thought:** In what areas of your life are you paying Jesus lip service? Do you believe his is able to work miracles, large and small, in your life and in the lives of those you love?

**Movie Clip:** *Modern Clip: 1h:26:19 – 1h:31:53 (6.13mins)*

**Pause for thought:** Do you agree that we cannot prove the existence of God? Why/why not?

**Think about:** Following on from the pause for thought – is it really impossible to prove the existence of the living God? When we look at the natural world, can we honestly say we don't see him?

**Pause for thought:** Do you believe that God exists in the person of Jesus Christ?

**Movie Clip:** *Original Clip: 1h:27:25 – 1h:29:30 (3.55mins)*

**Pause for thought:** Being so let down by her previous partner, Doris Walker has allowed bitterness to corrupt her life and, tragically, the life of her daughter. Here, we see the ice beginning to thaw. Do you have any 'rooms' in your life that you are reluctant to open up to God? What do you think may happen if you let him in?

**Think about:** When people let us down, we can often choose to shut the door, never trust them again, and never trust God, either. The root of bitterness can grow into a big tangled plant if we are not careful.

- Pause for thought:** Have you felt let down by God? By other people? How did this affect your relationship with Jesus?
- Movie Clip:** *Original Clip: 1h:29:31 – 1h:32:13 (3.34mins)*
- Pause for thought:** Mr Gailey has just legally proved Kris Kringle is Santa Claus. So why do you think he and Mrs Walker were shocked when they saw the cane?
- Think about:** I don't know about you, but when I get a prayer answered I am often quite surprised. I wonder how the disciples really felt when Jesus, risen from the dead, appeared to them. The Bible tells us they thought he was a ghost (Luke 24:37-39) and Thomas didn't believe at all, till he was given some substantial proof (John 20:24-28).
- Pause for thought:** Are you surprised when your prayers are answered? Why/why not?
- Into Advent:** Read Luke 1:26-38
- Pause for thought:** How many miracles can you count in the Christmas story?  
Think about your favourite carol. How true is it to the story of the Nativity that we find in the Bible?  
Has God fulfilled his promises to you? Or are you still waiting?#
- Activity:** Review the icebreaker activity at the beginning of this week. Is there any changes or you would like to add?

**Discussion:** 'When you forgive someone for hurting you, you don't let them off the hook, you let yourself off the hook.' Do you believe this?

The story *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* is a lovely Christmas tale, and actually rather innocent. It addresses far deeper issues than we might at first suppose. Have a general discussion about the thoughts that have come to you during this Advent study.

What has helped you? What has challenged you? Has your faith in God, who he is, and what he has done and is going to do, been strengthened?

**Reflection:** It is often when we 'let go and let God' that we see God begin to work in our lives. Is there an area in your life where you have struggled to let go? Perhaps it is something you very much want, and you can't take your hands off the situation, leaving to frustration and disillusionment. Why not ask Jesus to give you the strength to let go, and rest in him, trusting him for the outcome? It may be more effective to see this process as letting Jesus in to a 'room' in your life that you have previously closed off to him. Perhaps this Christmas, you can open that door, and let him in.

**Closing Prayer:** Dear loving heavenly Father,  
Thank you for the wonderful Christmas story. But help us remember that it is not just for December, but for the whole year round. Let us never forget the wonder that God, because of this great love for us, became flesh and came to live with us, and died for us, and was raised to life for us, in the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith and help us grow closer to you in the coming days, and weeks, and months. And help us to always remember that nothing is impossible to you. Amen.

# Who do you believe in?



This Advent course has been compiled by the Revd Dan Cant for use within the Three Together Churches of St. Stephens, St. Margarets and Wimpole Road Methodist. The sole source of the advent course comes from 'Someone to Believe in' by Shelia Jacobs. 2023 Advent Course.