

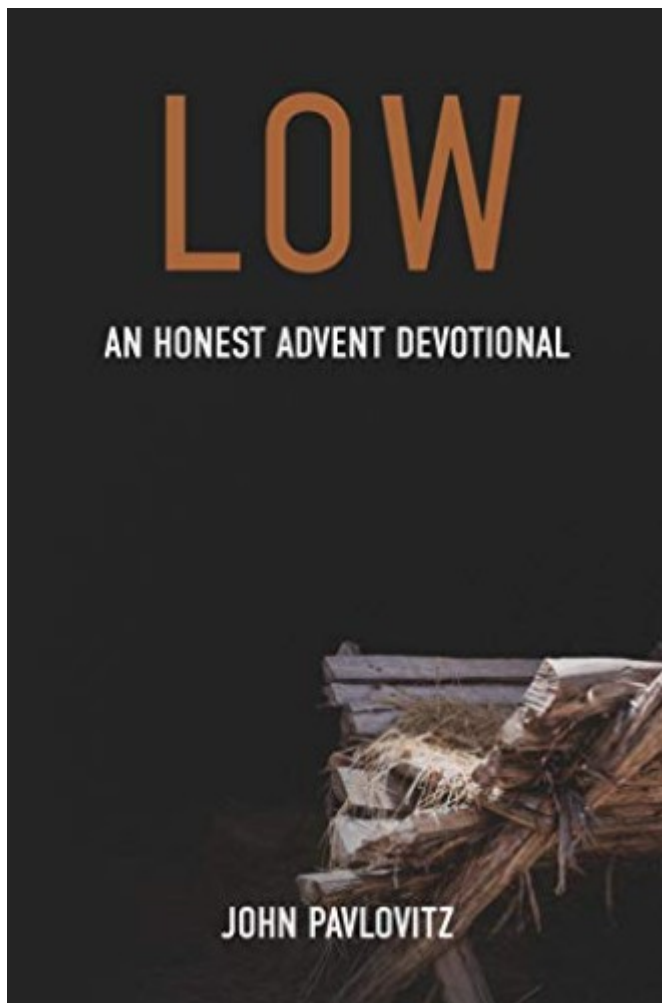
Advent is coming. Are you ready?

These six new Advent devotionals may help.

by [Elizabeth Palmer](#)

November 4, 2019

In Review

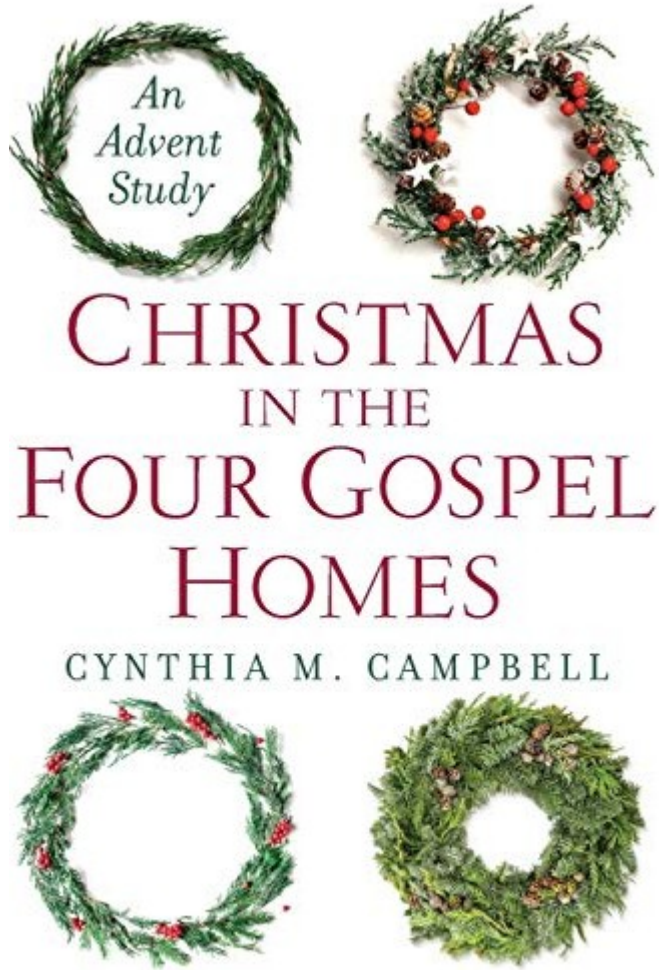


Low

An Honest Advent Devotional

by John Pavlovitz

Chalice Press

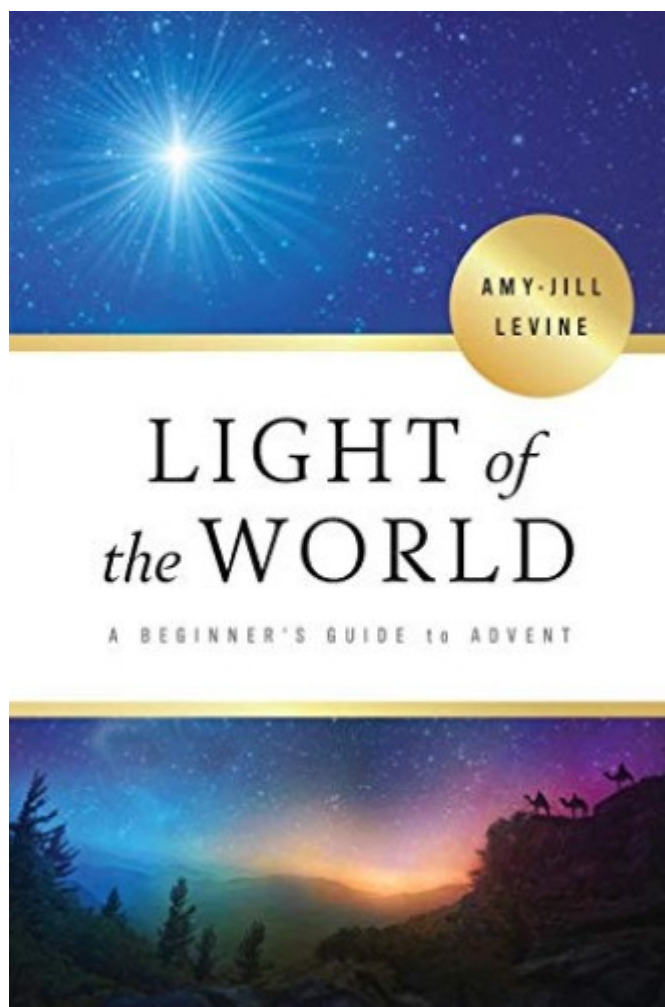


Christmas in the Four Gospel Homes

An Advent Study

by Cynthia M. Campbell

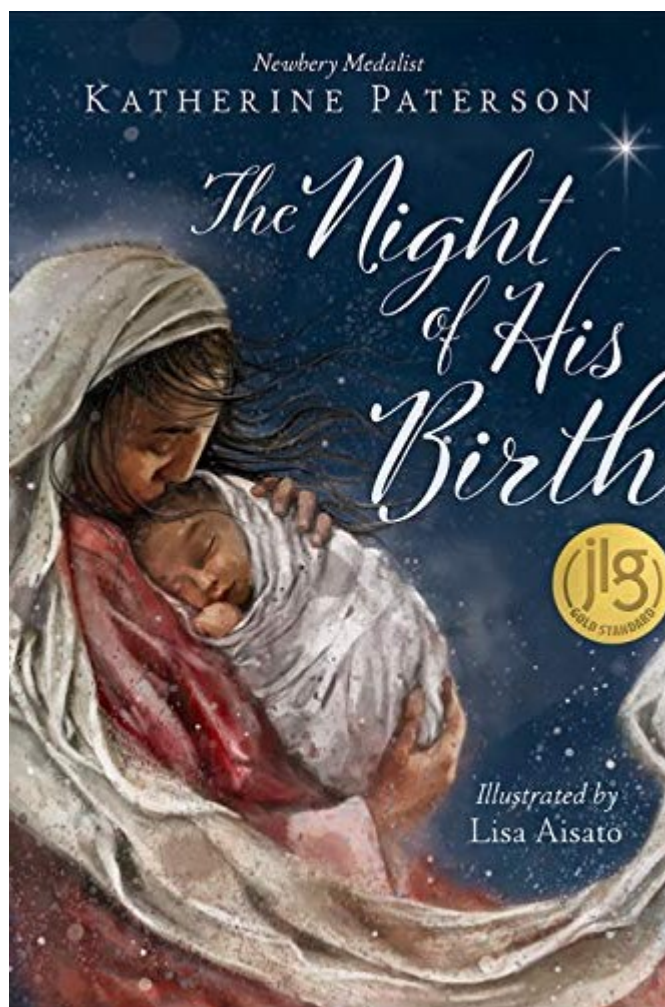
Westminster John Knox Press



Light of the World

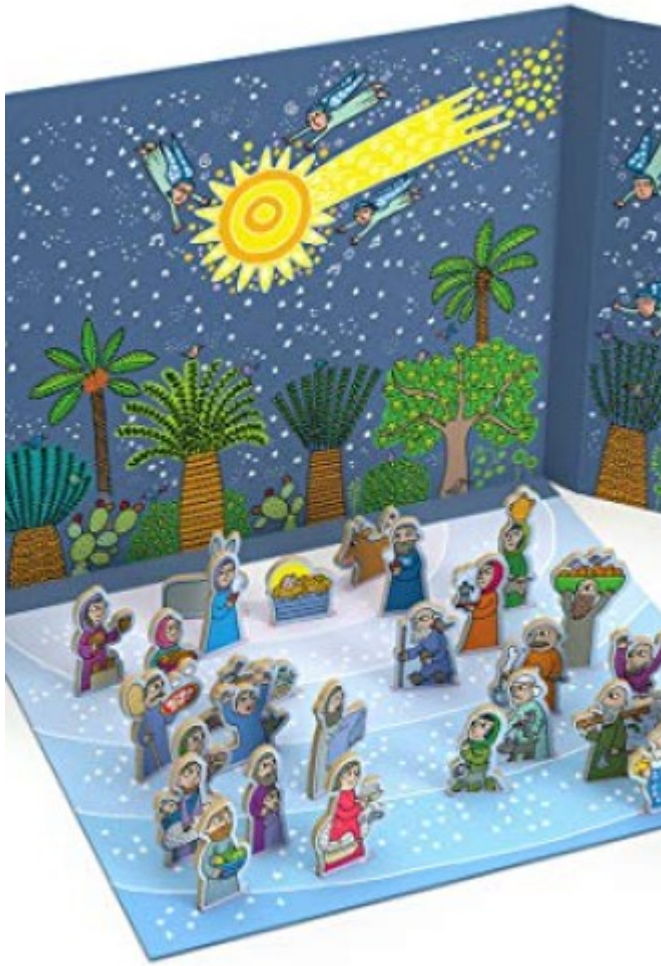
A Beginner's Guide to Advent

by Amy-Jill Levine
Abingdon Press



The Night of His Birth

by Katherine Paterson, illustrated by Lisa Aisato
Flyaway Books



The Birth of Jesus Advent Calendar and Nativity Scene

by Agostino Traini
Beaming Books



Pilgrim Year: Advent

by Steve Bell
Novalis

Advent doesn't invite us to ascend to some divine heavenly realm, John Pavlovitz writes in *Low*. It invites us to bring heaven down to earth, to see in the birth of Jesus "divinity coming low to inhabit humanity." The brief daily devotionals in this book—each based on a passage from scripture—address the world's "gritty, messy reality" alongside the promises that were born in Bethlehem and remain with us today.

Cynthia Campbell strikes a beautiful balance between astute scholarship and elegant prose in *Christmas in the Four Gospel Homes*, which examines each of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' birth. The home metaphor makes the differences between the stories vividly clear: If dwelling in Mark is like visiting a small cottage, Matthew's

house is more like a “rambling Victorian.” The book also contains annotated illustrations of each Gospel home and questions for group discussion.

The Gospel accounts of Jesus’ birth were meant to enlighten and entice readers, Amy-Jill Levine writes in *Light of the World*. This four-week study also enlightens and entices by focusing on the richness of what the Bible reveals about people and their relationship to God. Levine helps her readers view the stories leading up to Jesus’ birth through Jewish eyes, uncovering hidden layers of humor, tragedy, hope, and promise. A leader’s guide and DVD are also available.

Katherine Paterson, whose chapter books *Jacob Have I Loved* and *Bridge to Terabithia* have been read by generations of schoolchildren, speaks with the voice of Mary in *The Night of His Birth*, a picture book that's beautifully illustrated by Lisa Aisato. “His hair is black and thick and stands up like weeds upon his head. I try to smooth it with my lips, but it springs back, refusing my correction. I laugh aloud.” Mary’s puzzled sense of wonder over the newborn Jesus will resonate with both adults and children.

Agostino Traini's delightful Advent calendar looks like a book but unfolds into a Nativity scene made of pressed wood that’s sturdy enough to last for years. The brightly-colored figures that make up the scene—one for each day of the season and a bonus one for the day after Christmas—will delight children. Many of the characters are engaged in everyday activities, as if to emphasize that Christ came into a world of ordinary people.

Steve Bell is a Canadian singer-songwriter whose theological inclinations shine through in his *Pilgrim Year* series: a collection of thoughts, poetry, and song lyrics for each of the liturgical seasons. In the Advent volume, he connects the poems of Malcolm Guite, the poetic prose of John of the Cross, and the stories of traditional figures like St. Nicholas with the persistent injustices of our world. The books are available as a box set, and a companion CD featuring Bell's own songs is also available.