




Wonders of
His Love



WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD
DEVOTIONAL GUIDE




Using this Guide

This guide contains five Christmas devotionals for you to use with your family - one for each week preceding Christmas Day and one for Christmas Day itself. It is meant to be complementary to our December sermon series titled: “Wonders of His Love”. Here is a schedule of each Sunday’s theme and text:

- Dec 3 - God’s Inherent Love (1 John 4:7-21)
- Dec 10 - God’s Predetermined Love (Eph 1:3-10)
- Dec 17 - God’s Unbreakable Love (Rom 8:35-39)
- Dec 24 - God’s Life-Giving Love (John 3:16)

Parents: Each devotional is written to work for large or small families with minimal preparation. We envision you sitting at the table or in your living room for about twenty intentional minutes with your children. We hope you find it both practical and helpful in remembering and rejoicing in the astonishing aspects of God’s love this Christmas.

-Pastor Jason



Week 1 Family Devotional

The Inherent Love of God, written by Isaac Smith

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light the first candle on your advent wreath.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passage out loud:

- 1 John 4:7-21

DEVOTIONAL READING

Have one parent read the following reflection aloud:

We hear it all the time from our friends and our coworkers, the explanation, “I don’t believe in God because there is no way that He can be a God of love. If He truly was a loving God, then why does He allow all of these bad things to happen to me and to the ones that I love?”. This question, however, stems from the wrong vantage point of what love is. When we make statements like this, we are the ones who are setting the definition of what love is, and not looking at how God defines love. 1 John 4:7-21 answers this question with the understanding that God IS love. The basic definition of what love is comes from the nature of who God is. In this passage, love is not a verb, neither is it an adjective to describe God’s character, but rather it is a noun showing that it is the identity and nature of God. This means that our understanding and definition of what love is comes from our understanding of who God is. Our understanding of love is therefore rooted in our recognition of the redemptive narrative of the Gospel. God created the world and loved the world, but mankind chose to love and worship themselves over the opportunity to dwell with God. What would have been right would have been the complete judgment and ruin of the creation that completely denied their Creator. However, in His loving nature, the Creator God became man, dwelling and walking among us in order to create a way that we may be reconciled to Him. Jesus modeled love by coming and serving. He washed the feet of the disciples (the lowest of tasks) and spent time with the poor, sick, and outcast. In this way, God showed His perfect love by becoming a servant to the creatures that He Created, but that didn’t recognize Him (John 1). Christ shows that love takes the form of humble servanthood (Phil. 2). Christ’s ultimate act of love was to lay down His life for the sake of the people that willingly rebelled and fought against Him. Through the loving actions of Christ, we are able to have our relationship with God restored. This is love, that even though we did not deserve grace or a relationship with God, Christ came in the form of a humble servant to pay for our egregious acts and to bring us back into a loving relationship with the Father. We are called, therefore, to love like this, looking for ways to humbly serve and to worship the God that saved and redeemed us.

¹ The phrase in the Greek for both verse 8 and in verse 15 is ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν. Agape here is in a nominative declension (noun) that is meant to pair with Theos (God) which is in the same declension, showing there is a natural relationship between the two.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have one parent ask the following questions and discuss them as a family:

1. How does the statement “God is love” inform the way that we think about who God is?
2. How does reading 1 John 4 inform our definition of love?
3. 1 John wrote that the people of God are identifiable by how they love others. How might we display such love, which ultimately displays Christ in us?
4. How are we to love others around us?

CHRISTMAS SONG

Play this song on your preferred device and ask your family to reflect on the words.

- “How Many Kings?” by Downhere
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iS0QOYsoGOU>

PRAYER

Have one member of your family pray to conclude your devotional time.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Parents, consider making a plan with your family to engage in one or more of the following activities throughout the week:

- Have each person plan a sneaky act of kindness for someone in your family (an act of kindness that does not benefit you and that they might not know about).
- Create a family list of all the ways that you have seen God’s love in your life this past year. Spend time in prayer as a family thanking God for the items on your list.
- List people in your lives that need to know the story of Christ’s love. Pray for them by name. Consider inviting them to join you for one of our Christmas Eve services.

Week 2 Family Devotional

The Predetermined Love of God, written by Greg and Lee Carter

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light the first and second candles on your advent wreath.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passage out loud:

- Ephesians 1:3-10

DEVOTIONAL READING

Have one parent read the following reflection aloud:

During this advent season, we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. What amazing love was displayed by our Father in Heaven when He sent the Redeemer as a tiny babe born in a manger. This plan to save sinners was determined before time began when God the Father set His love upon those He chose to be separated from the world and be a people for Himself. God the Son would accomplish the plan by shedding His blood and dying on the cross to redeem the chosen from the penalty of sin. God the Spirit would then seal the redeemed as assurance that they are God's property. Now they would no longer be enemies of God but would be called His sons and daughters. This means that before you were ever born, God knew you and He knew all the things you would do, good and bad, but He still loved you enough to send His one and only Son to die for you. Why would God do this for sinners? According to Ephesians 1:5, He did it "according to the kind intention of His Will and to the praise of the glory of His grace." Romans 5:8 says it this way, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." As Christmas approaches, let us remember that the tiny baby born in a stable was the ultimate act of love and grace by God towards His children. A love that was determined before the beginning of time. A love that never fails, endures all things, and nothing can separate us from it. Pray that in your time of reflection you "may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:18).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have one parent ask the following questions and discuss them as a family:

1. What does it mean when Ephesians 1:4 says “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”?
2. Why did God “predestine us to adoption as sons (and daughters) through Jesus Christ to Himself.”? (see Ephesians 1:5-6)
3. Ephesians 1:3 says that those of us who are “in Christ” have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Then verses 4-10 list many blessings that we have through Jesus. Read verses 4-10 again and identify the blessings we have through Jesus.
4. What is one word that describes how you feel when you remember God’s predetermined love for you this Christmas season?

CHRISTMAS SONG

Play this song on your preferred device and ask your family to reflect on the words.

- “Mary, Did You Know?” by Maverick City Music.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtWBHkbOwPQ_

PRAYER

Have one member of your family pray to conclude your devotional time.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Parents, consider making a plan with your family to engage in one or more of the following activities throughout the week:

- Play a game of Christmas charades. Google search for a Christmas charades list such as this one - <https://www.skiptomylou.org/christmas-charades/>
- Plan a home Christmas item scavenger hunt using your nativity set or other Christmas items.
- Make cookies and take them to your neighbor(s). Then invite them to one of our Christmas Eve church services.

Week 3 Family Devotion

God's Unbreakable Love, written by Jesse and Denaë Jackson

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light the first, second, and third candles on your advent wreath.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passage out loud:

- Romans 8:35-39

DEVOTIONAL READING

Have one parent read the following reflection aloud:

What can separate God's children from the Creator's love? Can the things we fear? Can the things that stress us out? Can those who hate our God? Can Satan and his demons who fell from the heavens? The answer is an emphatic NO! Not even death itself can separate us from God's love.

God's love is so unmeasurable and all encompassing that not even the galaxies can hold the love He bestows upon us. It was by His love that each of us were knitted together in our mother's womb (Ps. 139:13-16) and were part of His perfect eternal plan before He created the earth He spoke into existence (Eph. 1:4).

As if it needed to be, that love was magnified even more when the beginning and end, everlasting, mighty God sent Jesus, His only Son, to our world to be born through a miraculous virgin birth. Jesus experienced thirty plus years of the life we live—He had to work, obey His parents and government, evangelize, make disciples, and endure temptation—so that He could die on a cross for our sins, paving a way for us to have a relationship with God our Heavenly Father.

But the cross wasn't the end. God's love was on display when Jesus broke out of the tomb after three days. On that day, nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus conquered death, eliminating the wall our sin created between us and God.

Pause and take some time to think about that. God, the One who was before all things, chose to sacrifice His only Son so that we could rest in His love. So that those who call on His name, repent of their sins, and make Him Lord of their life wouldn't have to fear tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, or death.

The Author of Love made it possible for sinners like you and me to live for eternity experiencing a love we don't deserve. Emmanuel (God with us)! El Shaddai (God almighty)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have one parent ask the following questions and discuss them as a family:

1. Do you ever wonder if God will stop loving you? If so, share a little more about what makes you feel that way.
2. When you think about God's unbreakable love for you, and that nothing can take it away from you, it can help drive away our fears. Fill in the rest of this sentence: "When I believe that God's love for me will never end, then I don't have to fear _____."
3. Who are some people we know that may need a reminder that God loves them? Take a minute to write them a quick Christmas note reminding them that they are loved and cared for by God and by your family.

CHRISTMAS SONG

Play this song on your preferred device and ask your family to reflect on the words.

- "O Come O Come Emmanuel" by Phil Wickham
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-UEb2mQ_c4

PRAYER

Have one member of your family pray to conclude your devotional time.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Parents, consider making a plan with your family to engage in one or more of the following activities throughout the week:

- Together, as a family, bake cookies and write in icing some of the attributes of God's love and share them with a neighbor. As your family delivers the cookies, include a note that shares one way you've experienced God's love in your life, and that God also loves them.
- Every day of the week, have each family member write down one way God has shown His love to them that day. At the end of the week, read the list, praising God for all the ways He shows His love to us.
- Get a bowl and some ping pong balls. Write on the ping pong balls with a marker the things that the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8:35-39 that can't separate us from God's love (tribulation, distress, persecution, etc.). Put the ping pong balls in the empty bowl. The jar represents us. Then fill the entire bowl with water (make sure you have it in the sink or in something that will catch the ping pong balls). The water represents God's love. When the bowl with the ping pong balls is filled with water, the ping pong balls representing things that can't separate us from God's love will be pushed out of the bowl. Try to put the ping pong balls back in the bowl, showing that they can't come between us and God's love.

Week 4 Family Devotion

God's Life-Giving Love, written by Rachel Kimble

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light the first, second, third, and fourth candles on your advent wreath.

SCRIPTURE READING

Have one person read the following passage out loud:

- John 3:16

DEVOTIONAL READING

Have one parent read the following reflection aloud:

In today's passage we jump into the middle of a conversation between Jesus and a Jewish ruler named Nicodemus. Nicodemus had come to Jesus at night and was trying to understand who Jesus was and what he was teaching. Although it was taught in the Old Testament, the religious leaders didn't understand that Jesus had come to change their hearts (Ezekiel 36:26). They needed to be completely born again spiritually. More than that, whoever would believe in Jesus would receive eternal life. It did not matter if they were Jewish or not! This was news to Nicodemus. The first word in the verse (for) shows us that Jesus is explaining more about the previous verses. In verse 15 he says that whoever believes in him would have eternal life. Verse 16 shows how God's love made this life possible.

Think about the phrase "For God so loved the world." Some have thought the word SO loved means that God loved us so, so, so very much. While Jesus does really love us a lot, that word actually means that God loved the world in this way. This helps us to understand what his love was like and what his love did; his love made the way for us to have eternal life.

So what did God do to make this way? The next phrase tells us the answer. He "gave his only Son." God the Father sent Jesus to be the sacrifice for our sins! We know that Jesus is God the Son and he came to earth as a man to live a perfect life and die so that we can live. We could never pay for our own sins, but Jesus did!

That's why the next phrase says that "whoever believes in him." The purpose of Jesus' death was to make a way and people can now respond by believing! Anyone can believe in Jesus. When you believe in Jesus it means that you believe that he is God the Son and that his sacrifice on the cross is the only way our sins can be paid for. It means that you believe that what he said was true and that the work he did on the cross was enough! Believing is not like climbing a mountain. Believing is more like jumping into someone's arms. Trusting in Jesus is how you become a Christian.

And when you do become a Christian, that means we “should not perish but have eternal life.” This is really great news! Because of our sin, every person is condemned. We will be punished for our sin forever after we die. BUT because Jesus died in our place, when we believe in him we are given ETERNAL LIFE! This life starts now. We can have a relationship with God and grow to be more like Jesus. We can have fellowship with other Christians and love people and tell them about Jesus. But even moreso, after we die physically, we are guaranteed to live with God forever in the New Creation. Imagine that! We will get to be with God and live in a perfect Place.

Jesus did everything necessary to bring us into this new life! We must simply believe. God’s love truly gives us life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have one parent ask the following questions and discuss them as a family:

1. What does John 3:16 tell us that God did to show his love to the world?
2. Who can have eternal life?
3. Parents - share about how you came to trust in Jesus alone for eternal life. Then ask the question: Have you trusted in Jesus yet? (For older kids or adults: What are some things that might keep you from believing in Jesus?)

CHRISTMAS SONG

Play this song on your preferred device and ask your family to reflect on the words.

- “Behold the Lamb of God” by Andrew Peterson
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFEK68ncZ7o>

PRAYER

Have one member of your family pray to conclude your devotional time.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Parents, consider making a plan with your family to engage in one or more of the following activities throughout the week:

- Pile up all of your pillows and blankets next to the couch to make a big squishy pile. Take turns jumping into the pile and remember that is what it is like to believe in Jesus - you jump into his arms, trusting that he is strong enough to save you.
- Deliver some cookies to an elderly neighbor or widow/widower and remind them that God loves them and so do you. Maybe you could even sing a Christmas carol to them when they answer the door.
- Turn on your Christmas tree lights and sit around it wrapped in blankets. Maybe grab a cup of hot chocolate and imagine what eternal life with God will be like! God has promised to make a new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21). Plan your perfect day on the new earth with no sin or sickness or frustration, but living a true life in God’s presence. What will you do? What might it be like? Maybe draw a picture or make up a story of your perfect day with God.

Christmas Day Family Devotion

God's Love for Me

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

Have one member of the family light all of the candles on your advent wreath.

SCRIPTURE READING

Parents, choose a verse or passage that was instrumental in your own life when you came to trust Christ as Savior. Have one member of your family read the verse or passage.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Have one or both parents share their testimonies of when they came to faith in Christ. Speak from your heart about what God's love means to you.
- After each parent shares, ask your children if they have any questions about their parents' testimony.
- Encourage your children in their faith. If your children are believers, share a memory of God's saving work in their lives. If your children are not believers, encourage them to trust in the God who loves them and sent Jesus for them on the first Christmas morning.
- Read the Christmas story from Luke 2:1-20.
- Listen to "Joy to the World" by Awaken Hymns
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TX6ThHbts5Y>
- Close by having each person in your family pray (if they are comfortable doing so) and give thanks to the Lord for showing His love and sending Jesus on the first Christmas morning.

