CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH



LOVE CAME close



November 29–December 25, 2026

AN ADVENT DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Dear Church Family,

Advent is a season of waiting, remembering, and preparing. Each year, we look back to Bethlehem and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. But Advent also gives us an opportunity to remember something remarkable about the heart of God: He came to us.

From the opening pages of Scripture, we discover a God who moves toward people. When Adam and Eve hid, God called, "Where are you?" When Hagar felt forgotten in the wilderness, God found her. When Jacob was running from his past, God met him along the way. When Elijah was exhausted and discouraged, God came near.

Throughout Scripture, we see a God who does not simply stand at a distance waiting for hurting, wandering, and sinful people to find their way to Him. He seeks. He calls. He pursues. He comes near.

Then, in the fullness of time, God came closer than anyone could have imagined.

John tells us, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14). Jesus entered our world. He walked our roads, sat at our tables, touched the untouchable, welcomed the rejected, comforted the grieving, forgave sinners, and restored those who had fallen.

That is why, this year, we have chosen as our Advent theme:
Love Came Close.

During the days leading to Christmas, we will meet people throughout Scripture who discovered that God's love was not distant. In their moments of fear, loneliness, failure, grief, sin, and uncertainty, God moved toward them.

Their stories ultimately lead us to Bethlehem, where we discover the greatest demonstration of God's pursuing love: We did not have to find our way to God. God came to us.

May this Advent season remind us that the God who came close then is still near today. And may we not only remember the love that came close in Bethlehem but open our hearts anew to the One who still seeks, calls, and draws us near.

In Christ's love,
Your CFC Staff Team

What is Advent?

The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival." For generations, Christians have set apart the weeks leading to Christmas as a season of prayerful preparation—remembering Christ's first coming in Bethlehem and looking forward with hope to the day when He will come again.

This year, our Advent journey invites us to reflect especially on the love of God revealed in His willingness to come near.

Each week will reveal another part of that story:

Week 1 — Love Came Looking
God seeks those who are hiding, wandering, forgotten, or hurting.

Week 2 — Love Came Near
Jesus enters people's lives and meets them where they are.

Week 3 — Love Came for the Broken
Jesus moves toward people in their pain, grief, sin, and failure.

Week 4 — Love Came Close
Our journey leads us to Bethlehem and the wonder of the incarnation—God with us.

Using the Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath reminds us that we are moving toward Christmas.



The evergreen circle represents God's enduring faithfulness and eternal life.

Traditionally, four candles mark the four Sundays of Advent, with the white Christ Candle lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

As another candle is lit each week, remember that the Light of the World was drawing near.

How to Use This Devotional

* **SET ASIDE**
  a regular time each day—morning, evening, or during family meals.

* **BEGIN BY LIGHTING**
  the appropriate candle(s) for that week.

  - **Wk 1**: Purple Candle
  - **Wk 2**: Purple Candle
  - **Wk 3**: Pink Candle
  - **Wk 4**: Purple Candle
  - **Christmas Day Candle:** White Candle

* **READ THE SCRIPTURE**
  passage aloud.

* **READ THE DEVOTION**
  slowly, pausing for reflection.

* **CLOSE BY COMPLETING**
  the Family Focus together.

Love Came Looking

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Before there was a manger in Bethlehem, Scripture was already telling the story of a God who seeks people. This week, we meet people who were hiding, forgotten, running, uncertain, overlooked, or discouraged—and discover that

God made the first move.

{Sunday, 11/29}

DAY 1 // Love Came Looking — Adam and Eve

Genesis 3:8–9

"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?'"

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Family Focus:

Why did Adam and Eve hide?

Talk about why it is always better to run ***toward God*** rather than away from Him when we sin or make a mistake.

IT IS ONE OF THE SADDEST SCENES IN THE BIBLE.

Adam and Eve had enjoyed open fellowship with God. There had been no fear, shame, or reason to hide. Then sin entered the picture, and everything changed. When they heard God walking in the garden, they hid.

But notice what happened next.

God came looking for them.

His question, "Where are you?" was not because God had lost track of Adam. God knew exactly where he was. The question reveals something about God's heart. Even after Adam and Eve sinned, God moved toward them.

That pattern continues throughout Scripture.

We wander; God seeks. We hide; God calls. We run; God pursues.

Their sin had consequences, but God did not abandon them. Even in Genesis 3, He began revealing His plan to rescue humanity. One day, a descendant of the woman would crush the serpent's head.

The story that begins with people hiding among the trees eventually leads to a Savior hanging upon a tree.

That is where our Advent journey begins. God did not wait for sinful humanity to somehow find its way back to Him. He continued moving toward us until, in Jesus Christ, **Love Came Close.**

Perhaps there are places in our lives we would rather hide from God—failures, regrets, or sins. But God's invitation is not to hide. It is to come into the light and receive His grace.

God still asks, **"Where are you?"**

He already knows the answer. And wherever we are, His love still comes looking.

{Monday, 11/30}

DAY 2 // Love Found Her in the Wilderness — Hagar

HAGAR WAS ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS.

She was an Egyptian servant caught in the middle of Abraham and Sarah's attempt to accomplish God's promise in their own way. After being mistreated by Sarah, Hagar ran away.

She was pregnant, hurting, far from home, and uncertain about what would happen next.

Then Scripture gives us a beautiful sentence: **"The angel of the LORD found Hagar."**

Hagar may have felt forgotten, but God had not forgotten her. He knew where she was. He knew what had happened to her. He knew the child she carried, and He knew what her future held.

Hagar responded by giving God a remarkable name: *"You are the God who sees me."*

Imagine what those words meant to someone who probably felt invisible.

Throughout Scripture, we discover that God sees people others may overlook. He sees the lonely, the hurting, the forgotten, and those who wonder whether anyone really knows what they are going through.

Advent tells us that God did more than see our need from heaven. **He came close.**

Jesus entered a world filled with loneliness, pain, injustice, and brokenness. He noticed people passed by. He touched those others avoided. He welcomed those others rejected.

Perhaps someone you know feels overlooked this Christmas. Perhaps you have felt that way yourself.

Hagar's story reminds us that there are no invisible people in God's sight. Before Hagar ever found her way back, God found her beside a spring in the wilderness.

The God who saw Hagar sees us too.

Genesis 16:7, 13

"The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert…"

"She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me.'"

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Family Focus:

Think of someone who may feel lonely or overlooked this Christmas.

What is one simple thing you can do this week to help that person know they are seen and loved?

{Tuesday, 12/1}

DAY 3 // Love Met Him on the Run — Jacob

Genesis 28:15–16

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go… I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

"When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.'"

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Family Focus:

Share about a time when God seemed especially near during a difficult or uncertain season.

JACOB WAS RUNNING.

He had deceived his father and taken the blessing intended for his brother Esau. Now Esau was angry, and Jacob left home with an uncertain future. That night, he stopped along the road, slept on the ground, and used a stone for a pillow.

It hardly seemed like the place to encounter God.

But God came close.

In a dream, Jacob saw a stairway reaching from earth to heaven. There God repeated the promises He had made to Abraham and Isaac and told Jacob what he desperately needed to hear:

"I am with you."

Jacob had not earned this encounter. He was not seeking God; he was running from the consequences of his own choices. God did not excuse Jacob's deception. In the years ahead, He would shape his character and teach him to trust. But God's work in Jacob's life began with grace.

When Jacob awoke, he said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it."

Perhaps we have felt that way too. Difficult circumstances, disappointment, or even our own mistakes can make God seem far away. Then, sometimes in the very place we least expect, we discover He was nearer than we realized.

Advent celebrates that truth.

Jacob saw a stairway joining heaven and earth. At Christmas, we celebrate the One who truly brings heaven and earth together. Jesus did not wait for us to find our way to Him. **He came to us.**

His promise remains:

"I am with you."

{Wednesday, 12/2}

DAY 4 // Love Met Him in the Wilderness — Moses

MOSES PROBABLY THOUGHT THE IMPORTANT PART OF HIS LIFE WAS BEHIND HIM.

Once he had lived in Pharaoh's palace. Now, after fleeing Egypt, he was tending sheep in the wilderness of Midian. Forty years had passed.

Then, in the middle of an ordinary day, God called his name, **"Moses! Moses!"**

But notice what God said about His people in Egypt: "I have seen… I have heard… I am concerned… I have come down."

Those words reveal the heart of God.

The Israelites had suffered for years under Egyptian slavery. They may have wondered if God had forgotten them. But He had seen every burden, heard every cry, and knew every sorrow.

Now God was acting.

He would use Moses to lead His people out of bondage, but the rescue began with God. **He took the initiative.** God came looking for Moses because He intended to rescue His people.

Those words also point us toward Christmas.

Centuries later, God again saw humanity's need. He saw our bondage to sin and our inability to rescue ourselves.

And once again, God acted. This time He did not send Moses. **He sent His Son.**

The angel told Joseph, "You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

That is the wonder of Advent. God did not remain distant from our need. He saw us, loved us, and came to rescue us.

The God who said, "I have come down," ultimately came close in Jesus.

Exodus 3:4, 7–8

"God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses! Moses!'"

"I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out… and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them."

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Family Focus:

Read Exodus 3:7–8 again.

What do the words "I have seen, I have heard, I am concerned, and I have come down" teach us about God?

{Thursday, 12/3}

DAY 5 // Love Called His Name — Samuel

1 Samuel 3:4, 10

"Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, 'Here I am."

"The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening."

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Family Focus:

Spend one quiet minute together. Then read 1 Samuel 3:10 aloud and say together:

"Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening."

SAMUEL WAS STILL YOUNG WHEN GOD CALLED HIS NAME.

Three times he heard a voice and assumed Eli was calling him. Each time Samuel got up and went to Eli. Finally, Eli understood what was happening and told Samuel how to respond.

Then God called again: **"Samuel! Samuel!"**

There is something wonderfully personal about that moment. God could simply have delivered His message. Instead, He called Samuel by name.

Throughout Scripture, God shows that He deals personally with people. He called Abraham. He called Moses from the burning bush. He called Samuel during the night.

When Jesus came, we see the same pattern.

He called fishermen beside the Sea of Galilee. He called Zacchaeus down from a tree. After the resurrection, Mary Magdalene recognized Jesus when He simply spoke her name: "Mary."

The God who created the universe knows people by name. That is part of the wonder of Advent.

Jesus did not come merely to save "humanity" as some distant group. He came for real people—with names, families, struggles, failures, hopes, and fears.

He came for us.

Samuel's response also gives us a wonderful Advent prayer: *"Speak, for your servant is listening."*

Christmas can become noisy. There are gifts to buy, meals to prepare, gatherings to attend, and schedules to keep. In all that activity, it is easy to miss the quiet voice of God speaking through His Word.

Perhaps Advent should include moments when we simply become still enough to say: **"Lord, I am listening."** The God who called Samuel still knows our names.

{Friday, 12/4}

DAY 6 // Love Saw the One Others Overlooked — David

WHEN SAMUEL CAME TO JESSE'S HOUSE TO ANOINT ISRAEL'S NEXT KING, DAVID WAS NOT EVEN INVITED TO THE GATHERING.

One by one, Jesse's sons stood before Samuel. They looked impressive, and Samuel naturally thought one of them must be God's choice.

But God said no. Finally, Samuel asked, "Are these all the sons you have?"

There was one more. David. He was outside taking care of the sheep.

Imagine being the son nobody thought needed to be called into the room. Yet the one others overlooked was the one God had chosen.

God told Samuel, *"People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*

That truth prepares us beautifully for Christmas.

When God's promised King finally came, He did not arrive with the outward appearance people expected. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. His mother laid Him in a manger. Shepherds were among His first visitors.

The King of Kings entered our world in humility. God often sees what people overlook. He saw David in the field. He saw Hagar in the wilderness. Jesus would later see Zacchaeus in a tree, a widow giving two small coins, and a blind man calling from beside the road.

And He sees us.

You may sometimes feel unnoticed. Others may never know the quiet ways you serve, the burdens you carry, or the faithfulness with which you follow Christ.

But God sees differently. David's story reminds us that God's attention is not captured by position, appearance, or importance. **He sees the heart.**

1 Samuel 16:7, 11

"The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Samuel asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" Jesse answered, "There is still the youngest. He is tending the sheep."

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Family Focus:

Read Exodus 3:7–8 again.

What do the words "I have seen, I have heard, I am concerned, and I have come down" teach us about God?

{Saturday, 12/5}

DAY 7 // Love Came Close to the Discouraged — Elijah

1 Kings 19:4–5, 12

"He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die… Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep."

Later, after the wind, earthquake, and fire:

"And after the fire came a gentle whisper."

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Family Focus:

Think of someone who may be tired, grieving, lonely, or discouraged this Christmas.

What simple thing could you do this week to come alongside that person?

ELIJAH HAD JUST EXPERIENCED ONE OF THE GREATEST VICTORIES OF HIS MINISTRY ON MOUNT CARMEL.

Then everything changed.

Threatened by Queen Jezebel, Elijah ran for his life. Exhausted, frightened, and discouraged, he sat beneath a broom tree and told God he had had enough.

We might expect God to rebuke him. Instead, **God cared for him.**

Elijah slept. An angel provided food and water. He rested again. Then God led him to Mount Horeb, where Elijah experienced a powerful wind, an earthquake, and fire. But the Lord was not in them. Then came a gentle whisper.

God knew what His exhausted servant needed. Before giving Elijah another assignment, God came close to him in his weakness. That tells us something important about God's love.

God does not only pursue people who are lost or wandering. He also comes near to His children when they are tired, frightened, grieving, or discouraged.

Advent can be a joyful season, but it can also be difficult. Christmas sometimes magnifies grief, loneliness, family tensions, or memories of someone who is no longer sitting around the table.

Elijah's story reminds us that God is not frightened by our weakness. **He meets us there.**

Centuries later, Jesus would say, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." The heart of God revealed to Elijah is the same heart we see in Jesus.

Sometimes God's pursuing love calls loudly. Sometimes it comes quietly. **But either way, Love Came Close.**

Love Came Near

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In Week 1, we saw God looking for people in the garden, wilderness, and moments of uncertainty.

This week, the story moves closer. We see God entering ordinary lives and, through Jesus, personally approaching people others might have overlooked or avoided.

Love did not remain at a distance. Love came near.

{Sunday, 12/6}

DAY 8 // Love Came to an Ordinary Young Woman

Luke 1:28, 30–31

"The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.'"

"Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus."

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Family Focus:

What can Mary's response, "I am the Lord's servant," teach us about trusting God when we do not know exactly what lies ahead?

MARY WAS PROBABLY GOING ABOUT AN ORDINARY DAY WHEN EVERYTHING CHANGED.

She was a young woman from Nazareth, a small town far from the centers of power and influence. Nothing about her circumstances suggested that she would become part of one of the greatest moments in history.

But God came to her. The angel Gabriel announced that Mary would give birth to Jesus, the promised Messiah. God was doing something only He could do, and He invited this ordinary young woman to become part of His extraordinary plan.

Mary was understandably troubled. She had questions. She could not see how everything would work out. Yet God's message was: **"The Lord is with you."** That is one of the great truths of Advent.

God often enters ordinary places and ordinary lives. Bethlehem was not impressive. A manger was not a palace and Shepherds were not powerful people. Yet God chose these humble surroundings to reveal His Son.

We sometimes imagine that God works most powerfully through important people in important places. Mary's story reminds us otherwise.

God sees ordinary faithfulness. Mary's response was simple: *"I am the Lord's servant."* She did not understand everything that lay ahead. She simply trusted the God who had come near.

Perhaps that is part of our Advent invitation as well. We may not understand everything God is doing in our lives, but we can trust the One who is with us.

The Christmas story began unfolding in the life of an ordinary young woman who discovered an extraordinary truth: **God had come near.**

{Monday, 12/7}

DAY 9 // Love Came Near in His Confusion — Joseph

JOSEPH FOUND HIMSELF IN A SITUATION HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND.

Mary, the woman he planned to marry, was expecting a child, and Joseph knew the child was not his. Matthew tells us that Joseph was a righteous man. Rather than publicly disgrace Mary, he decided to end their engagement quietly.

Joseph had made his decision. Then God came near.

An angel appeared to him in a dream and told him not to be afraid. What Joseph could not understand, God explained: Mary's child had been conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Then came the words that changed everything: "You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Joseph still did not know everything the future would hold. He would soon travel to Bethlehem, flee with his family to Egypt, and eventually return to Nazareth.

But he knew enough to obey.

Sometimes God comes near to us in seasons when life does not make sense.

We want explanations. God often gives us something better—His presence and enough light to take the next step.

Joseph woke and did what the Lord commanded. That quiet obedience became part of the Christmas story.

Advent reminds us that we do not need to understand everything before we can trust God. The God who sees the whole story may simply ask us to faithfully take the next step.

Joseph discovered that God had not abandoned him in his confusion. God came near, spoke into his uncertainty, and showed him the way forward.

Matthew 1:20–21

"An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife… She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.'"

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Family Focus:

Spend one quiet minute together. Then read 1 Samuel 3:10 aloud and say together:

"Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening."

{Tuesday, 12/8}

DAY 10 // Love Came to the Shepherds

Luke 2:9–11

"An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them… But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.'"

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Family Focus:

Why do you think God chose shepherds to hear the news of Jesus' birth? Talk about what this tells us about the people God notices and loves.

THE SHEPHERDS WERE SIMPLY DOING THEIR JOBS.

While Bethlehem slept, they were outside watching their sheep. There was nothing unusual about that night—until heaven came close.

Suddenly an angel appeared, the glory of the Lord surrounded them, and frightened shepherds heard words that would change the world: **"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news."**

Then came the announcement: "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." Notice those two small words: **"To you."**

The Savior had been born not only for kings, priests, or important people. He had been born **for them.**

God chose ordinary shepherds to hear the announcement and become some of the first visitors to the newborn Christ. That tells us something about the heart of God.

Jesus came for ordinary people. He came for people working the night shift, raising families, paying bills, carrying burdens, and simply trying to be faithful in everyday life.

The shepherds did not discover Jesus because they had been searching through Bethlehem. **Heaven came looking for them.**

After hearing the announcement, they hurried to Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Then they returned to their fields glorifying and praising God. Their circumstances had not necessarily changed. The sheep still needed watching. Life continued. But they returned different because they had encountered Jesus.

Advent reminds us that Christ continues to meet us in the ordinary moments of life. We do not have to be important to be noticed by God. The message announced over Bethlehem is still good news for us:

A Savior has been born—for you.

{Wednesday, 12/9}

DAY 11 // Love Drew Them from Far Away — The Magi

THE MAGI CAME FROM A DISTANT PLACE.

Matthew does not tell us exactly where they lived or how long their journey took. We simply know that these men from the East saw a sign in the heavens and understood that a king had been born. So, they followed the star.

Their journey eventually brought them to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem, where they found Jesus with Mary. But before the Magi ever traveled toward Jesus, **God was already drawing them.**

He met them in a way they could recognize and placed before them enough light to begin their journey.

That is another picture of pursuing love.

The Magi were outsiders. They were not Israelites waiting in Jerusalem for the Messiah. They came from another land and culture.

Yet God invited them to come near.

When they finally saw Jesus, they bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Their journey reminds us that Jesus did not come for one nation or one kind of person.

He came to be Savior for the world.

Advent reminds us that God's love reaches across every boundary we create—distance, nationality, culture, background, and past.

There are no people so far away that God cannot reach them. Perhaps someone in your life seems far from God. Do not give up praying for them. The God who placed a star in the sky to draw travelers from the East still knows how to reach a searching heart.

The Magi traveled a great distance to find Jesus. But the story began because **God first drew near to them.**

Matthew 2:1–2, 10–11

"Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?'" "When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him."

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Family Focus:

Think of someone who seems far from God. Pray together that God will draw that person toward Jesus and help you show Christ's love to them.

{Thursday, 12/10}

DAY 12 // Love Sat Beside the Well — The Samaritan Woman

John
4:7, 9–10

"When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?'"

"The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?'"

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Family Focus:

Jesus noticed someone others might have avoided.

Is there someone around you who may feel excluded or overlooked? How could you intentionally show that person kindness this week?

SHE CAME TO THE WELL EXPECTING TO DRAW WATER. SHE DID NOT EXPECT TO MEET JESUS.

John tells us that Jesus traveled through Samaria and stopped beside Jacob's well. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus did something surprising. **He spoke to her.**

Jews and Samaritans carried generations of hostility toward one another. Cultural expectations also made this conversation unusual. Even the woman was surprised that Jesus would speak with her.

But Jesus saw more than a Samaritan woman standing beside a well. He saw her.

As their conversation continued, Jesus revealed that He knew her story—the broken relationships, disappointments, and choices that were part of her past.

Yet He did not walk away. Instead, He offered her "living water." This is what makes the encounter so beautiful. Jesus knew the truth about her life and still came close. That is the heart of the gospel.

Sometimes we imagine that if God really knew every-thing about us, He would keep His distance. But He already knows. Christmas proves that God did not move away from sinful humanity. **He moved toward us.**

Jesus crossed a cultural boundary, began a conversation, and offered grace to someone others might have avoided.

The woman eventually left her water jar behind and hurried into town saying, *"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"* The woman who came alone to get water returned carrying good news.

Advent reminds us that Jesus still meets people in unexpected places. Sometimes Love Came Close in Bethlehem. And sometimes **Love sat beside a well and started a conversation.**

{Friday, 12/11}

DAY 13 // Love Called Him by Name — Zacchaeus

ZACCHAEUS WANTED TO SEE JESUS.

There was just one problem. He was short, and the crowd blocked his view. So, this wealthy tax collector climbed a sycamore-fig tree.

Perhaps he expected only to watch Jesus pass by.

Instead, Jesus stopped. He looked up and said: **"Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."** Imagine his surprise.

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, and tax collectors were despised. Many became wealthy by taking more money than Rome required. The crowd certainly knew Zacchaeus' reputation.

Jesus knew it too. Yet Jesus called him by name and invited Himself to his home.

The crowd complained that Jesus had gone to be the guest of a sinner.

But that was exactly the point. Jesus explained His mission in one unforgettable sentence: **"The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."**

Zacchaeus thought he was trying to see Jesus. In reality, **Jesus had come looking for him.** That encounter changed Zacchaeus. He promised to give half his possessions to the poor and repay those he had cheated.

Grace came first. Change followed. That is important. Jesus did not say, "Zacchaeus, straighten out your life, and then I will come to your house."

He came close first.

That is the gospel we celebrate at Christmas. Jesus did not wait for us to make ourselves worthy of Him. He entered our world to seek and save us.

Perhaps we sometimes feel like Zacchaeus—watching from a distance, wondering whether Jesus would really want anything to do with us. Then Jesus stops. He looks up. And He calls us closer.

Luke
19:5, 9–10

"When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.'"

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

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Family Focus:

Why do you think Jesus chose to visit Zacchaeus before Zacchaeus changed his behavior?

What does that teach us about God's grace?

{Saturday, 12/12}

DAY 14 // Love Reached Out and Touched Him — The Leper

Mark 1:40–42

"A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.'" "Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed."

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Family Focus:

Think of someone people may avoid or overlook.

How can your family show that person the dignity, kindness, and compassion Jesus demonstrated?

THE MAN APPROACHED JESUS CARRYING MORE THAN A DISEASE.

Leprosy could separate a person from family, community, worship, and normal human contact. Under the law, those with certain serious skin diseases were declared unclean and required to live apart.

Imagine how long it may have been since someone had touched this man with compassion. He came to Jesus and fell to his knees.

"If you are willing, you can make me clean." The man did not question Jesus' ability. He wondered about His willingness.

Then Jesus did something remarkable. **He touched him.** Jesus could have healed the man with a word. Instead, before saying, *"Be clean,"* He reached out His hand.

The touch itself spoke. You are not forgotten. You are not beyond My reach. I am willing to come close. Then the man was healed.

This encounter gives us a beautiful picture of Christmas. Humanity was separated from God by sin. We could not make ourselves clean or repair what had been broken.

So God reached toward us. Jesus entered our world, took on flesh, walked among broken people, and ultimately went to the cross to make cleansing and forgiveness possible.

The man with leprosy came wondering whether Jesus was willing. The manger and the cross give us the answer. **He was willing to come close.**

Perhaps there are people we instinctively keep at a distance because their lives are uncomfortable or different from ours. Following Jesus means learning to see them differently. Love does more than notice people from across the room. Sometimes love reaches out.

Love Came for the Broken

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Jesus did not come only for people whose lives were going well. He moved toward the hurting, those who felt ashamed, the desperate, the grieving, and those who had failed. This week we meet people at some of the lowest moments of their lives and discover a Savior who was willing to enter their pain.

Love did not turn away from brokenness. Love came close.

{Sunday, 12/13}

DAY 15 // Love Saw His Deeper Need — The Paralytic

Mark 2:3–5

"Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus…"

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"

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Family Focus:

The man's friends helped bring him to Jesus.

Who has helped you grow closer to Jesus? How could you help someone else move closer to Him?

THE MAN CAME TO JESUS BECAUSE HE COULD NOT WALK.

Or more accurately, his friends brought him.

The house was so crowded they could not reach Jesus, so they climbed onto the roof, made an opening, and lowered their friend directly in front of Him.

Everyone could see the man's obvious need.

He needed healing. But Jesus saw something deeper. His first words were not, "Get up and walk."

Jesus said: **"Son, your sins are forgiven."**

Jesus knew that this man's greatest need was not physical. Like all of us, his deepest need was forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

Only then did Jesus tell him to rise, take his mat, and go home. The man walked out carrying the very mat that had carried him in. Jesus cared about both his body and his soul.

That is why Jesus came.

At Christmas, God did not send His Son merely to make our lives easier or remove every difficulty. Jesus came to deal with our deepest problem—the sin that separates us from God.

The angel told Joseph, *"You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

Sometimes we come to God focused on the problem we can see.

Jesus sees deeper. He knows every hurt, every burden, and every need. But He also knows what we need most.

The child born in Bethlehem came offering something greater than temporary relief.

He came offering forgiveness and new life.

{Monday, 12/14}

DAY 16 // Love Stood Between Her and Condemnation: The Woman Caught in Adultery

SHE WAS BROUGHT TO JESUS PUBLICLY AND SHAMEFULLY.

The religious leaders were not primarily concerned about her restoration. They were using her to trap Jesus.

She stood before Him guilty, exposed, and surrounded by accusing voices.

Then Jesus changed the conversation. *"Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."*

One by one, her accusers walked away.

Eventually only Jesus remained. He was the one person present who truly was without sin—and He did not throw a stone.

Instead, Jesus said: **"Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin."**

Notice both grace and truth. Jesus did not pretend her sin did not matter. He called her to leave it behind.

But He did not crush her beneath it either. He offered grace and a new beginning. That is the heart of the gospel.

Christmas happened because our sin was real and we could not rescue ourselves. Jesus came close not to approve of our sin, but to save us from it.

John later wrote, *"God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

Perhaps we carry memories of things we deeply regret.

Jesus does not invite us to remain trapped in shame.

He calls us to receive His forgiveness, rise, and walk differently.

Love Came Close not to leave us as we were, but to make us new.

John 8:3–5, 10–11

"The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery… 'In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?'"

"Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' … 'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin.'"

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Family Focus:

What is the difference between forgiving someone and pretending their wrongdoing does not matter? Talk about how Jesus showed both grace and truth.

{Tuesday, 12/15}

DAY 17 // Love Entered a Father's Desperation — Jairus

Mark 5:22–24, 35–36

"One of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, 'My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.' So Jesus went with him."

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Family Focus:

What are some situations that make us afraid?

Talk about what Jesus' words, "Don't be afraid; just believe," can mean when we are frightened.

LATER JESUS SAID: "DON'T BE AFRAID; JUST BELIEVE."

Jairus came to Jesus as a desperate father. His position as a synagogue leader no longer mattered. His daughter was dying, and there was nothing he could do to save her.

So Jairus fell at Jesus' feet and pleaded: "Please come."

Then Mark gives us four simple words: "So Jesus went with him." Jesus entered Jairus' crisis.

But along the way, Jesus stopped to help someone else. While He was delayed, messengers arrived with devastating news: "Your daughter is dead."

Imagine Jairus hearing those words. He had reached Jesus. Jesus had agreed to come. And now it seemed they were too late.

But Jesus turned to him and said: "Don't be afraid; just believe." Then Jesus continued to Jairus' home, took the child by the hand, and told her to get up. And she did.

Jairus discovered that even death was not beyond the authority of Jesus.

Advent reminds us that Jesus entered a world where parents grieve, families hurt, and death seems to have the final word.

He did not remain distant from that pain. He came into it. The baby born in Bethlehem would grow to become the Savior who declared, "I am the resurrection and the life."

We will still face moments when circumstances seem hopeless. We may even wonder why God has delayed.

Jairus' story reminds us that Jesus is never powerless and never too late. When Jairus cried, "Please come," Jesus went with him. And because of Christmas, we know He has come to us too.

{Wednesday, 12/16}

DAY 18 // Love Stopped for Her — The Bleeding Woman

FOR TWELVE YEARS SHE HAD SUFFERED.

Mark tells us she had gone from doctor to doctor and spent everything she had, but instead of getting better, she became worse.

Then she heard about Jesus.

She worked her way through the crowd thinking, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." She reached out, touched His cloak, and immediately knew something had changed.

She was healed.

She might have quietly disappeared into the crowd. But Jesus stopped. **"Who touched my clothes?"**

The disciples were confused. People were pressing against Jesus from every direction. But Jesus knew this touch was different. The woman came forward trembling and told Him the whole truth.

Then Jesus called her something beautiful: **"Daughter."**

After twelve years of suffering, isolation, disappointment, and failed attempts to find healing, Jesus did more than heal her body.

He saw her. He stopped for her. He restored her dignity and sent her away in peace.

Sometimes we wonder whether God notices us among the billions of people in the world.

This story gives us the answer. Jesus was surrounded by a crowd and on His way to help Jairus, yet one suffering woman was not an interruption to Him. She mattered.

Advent reminds us that Jesus entered our crowded, hurting world because we mattered to God.

The One who came for the world also comes close to individuals. He sees the person hidden in the crowd. He knows the pain no one else understands. And He still calls hurting people closer.

Mark 5:27–30, 34

"When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, 'If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.'"

Jesus later said to her:

"Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from

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Family Focus:

Jesus was busy but still stopped for one hurting person. Is there someone you have been too busy to notice lately?

How could you slow down and show that person care?

{Thursday, 12/17}

DAY 19 // Love Heard Him Cry — Blind Bartimaeus

Mark 10:47–49

"When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'"

"Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more…"

"Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.'"

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Family Focus:

Why do you think the crowd tried to silence Bartimaeus?

Discuss how we can become better at noticing people others may ignore.

BARTIMAEUS COULD NOT SEE JESUS PASSING BY.

But he could hear the crowd.

When he learned that Jesus of Nazareth was near, he began shouting: **"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"**

The people around him told him to be quiet.

Perhaps they considered him an interruption. Jesus was traveling toward Jerusalem. Surely He had more important things to do than stop for a blind beggar beside the road.

Bartimaeus refused to be silenced. He cried out even louder.

Then Mark records two wonderful words: **"Jesus stopped."**

The crowd was moving. Jesus stopped.

Others wanted Bartimaeus quiet. Jesus wanted him brought near.

When Bartimaeus came to Him, Jesus asked, *"What do you want me to do for you?"* He answered, *"Rabbi, I want to see."* Jesus restored his sight, and Bartimaeus followed Him along the road.

This is another glimpse of the heart of Christ. Jesus notices people others pass by. He hears cries others would rather silence. And He has time for those who call upon Him.

Advent reminds us that God heard humanity's deepest cry and did not pass us by.

Jesus came into our darkness as *"the light of the world."* Perhaps you sometimes wonder whether your prayers are heard. Bartimaeus reminds us to keep calling upon the Lord.

The crowd may be noisy. Life may be busy. Our circumstances may make God seem distant. But Jesus still hears. The Savior who stopped beside the road for Bartimaeus is the Savior who came close to us at Christmas.

{Friday, 12/18}

DAY 20 // Love Wept with Them — Mary and Martha

John 11:32–36

"When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'"

"Jesus wept."

"Then the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!'"

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Family Focus:

If someone you know is grieving this Christmas, what could you do to simply be present with them rather than trying to take their sadness away?

MARY AND MARTHA WERE GRIEVING.

Their brother Lazarus had died, and both sisters struggled with the same painful thought: *"Lord, if you had been here…"*

They knew Jesus loved Lazarus. They knew He had healed others. Yet Jesus had not arrived when they expected Him.

When Mary fell at His feet crying, Jesus did something remarkable.

Jesus wept.

He knew what He was about to do. In a few moments, He would stand before Lazarus' tomb and call him back to life.

Still, Jesus entered their grief. He did not tell Mary to stop crying because everything would soon be better. He wept with her.

Those two words—*"Jesus wept"*—tell us something beautiful about the heart of God. Our tears matter to Him.

Advent reminds us that Jesus did not enter our world untouched by human sorrow. The child in the manger would grow into *"a man of suffering, and familiar with pain."*

He experienced rejection, disappointment, betrayal, suffering, and death.

God came close enough to weep with us.

Christmas can be especially difficult when someone we love is missing from the table. Joy and grief sometimes sit side by side during the holidays.

Mary and Martha remind us that we do not grieve alone. Jesus ultimately raised Lazarus, giving us a glimpse of the greater victory He would accomplish over death.

But before the miracle came the tears. Sometimes Love Came Close with a healing touch. Sometimes **Love Came Close and wept.**

{Saturday, 12/19}

DAY 21 // Love Came Back for Peter

John 21:15, 17

"Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?'"

The third time Jesus asked:

"'Do you love me?' ... He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'" are you?""

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Family Focus:

Why is it sometimes difficult to believe God can still use us after we fail?

Talk about what Peter's restoration teaches us about forgiveness and second chances.

PETER HAD PROMISED JESUS, "EVEN IF I HAVE TO DIE WITH YOU, I WILL NEVER DISOWN YOU."

Hours later, he denied three times that he even knew Him.

Then the rooster crowed. Peter went outside and wept bitterly.

Imagine carrying that failure after Jesus' crucifixion. Peter could not take back his words. He could not return to that courtyard and do it differently.

But after the resurrection, **Jesus came looking for Peter.** John tells us that Jesus met His disciples beside the Sea of Galilee. He prepared breakfast for them over a charcoal fire.

Then Jesus turned to Peter. Three times Jesus asked: **"Do you love me?"**

Three denials. Three opportunities to affirm his love. Jesus was not humiliating Peter. He was restoring him. Then Jesus entrusted Peter with responsibility: *"Feed my sheep."*

Peter's failure was real, but it would not be the final chapter of his story. Grace would be. That is wonderful news for anyone who has ever failed God.

We sometimes believe Jesus will come close when we are faithful but keep His distance when we disappoint Him.

Peter discovered otherwise.

Jesus knew exactly what Peter had done, yet He pursued him, restored him, and gave him a future. That is why Jesus came into our world.

Christmas announces that God has moved toward sinful people with redeeming love. Our failures do not need to have the final word. Jesus does.

Peter denied Jesus beside one fire. Beside another fire, **Love Came Close and gave him another beginning.**

Love Came Close

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Throughout Advent we have watched God move toward people—in gardens and wilderness places, beside wells and roads, in grief, failure, and need. Now our journey leads us to Bethlehem. The God who seeks the lost did something greater than anyone could have imagined.

He came Himself.
The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.

Love Came Close.

{Sunday, 12/20}

DAY 22 // Love Went Looking for the One—The Lost Sheep

Luke 15:4–6

"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them.

Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine… and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?"

"And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home."

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Family Focus:

Think of someone who may have wandered away from God.

Pray for that person by name and ask God to help you show them the patient love of the Good Shepherd.

JESUS ASKED HIS LISTENERS TO IMAGINE A SHEPHERD WITH ONE HUNDRED SHEEP.

One wandered away. The shepherd still had ninety-nine. But one was missing, and that one mattered.

So the shepherd went looking.

Notice Jesus did not describe a shepherd standing beside the flock hoping the lost sheep might eventually find its way home.

He went after it.

And he continued searching "until he finds it." Then something beautiful happened. The shepherd did not angrily drive the sheep home. He placed it on his shoulders and carried it back rejoicing.

Jesus told this story because religious leaders were complaining that He welcomed sinners.

They saw people who should have known better. Jesus saw lost sheep who needed a shepherd.

That is the heart of our Advent theme. Humanity had wandered from God. We could not find our way home by ourselves.

So the Shepherd came looking for us.

Jesus later said, *"The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* Christmas is part of that rescue mission. The baby lying in Bethlehem's manger is the Good Shepherd who came into our wilderness to bring us home.

Perhaps you have wandered at some point in your life. Perhaps someone you love seems far from God today. Do not forget the Shepherd. He knows when one is missing. He searches. He finds. And He rejoices when the lost come home.

Advent reminds us that we worship a God who does not easily give up on wandering people.

Love goes looking for the one.

{Monday, 12/21}

DAY 23 // Love Ran to Meet Him — The Prodigal Son

Luke 15:20, 22–24

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

"For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

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Family Focus:

What surprises you most about the father's response to his returning son?

Talk about what this story teaches us about God's willingness to forgive.

THE SON HAD MADE A MESS OF HIS LIFE.

He demanded his inheritance, left home, traveled to a distant country, and wasted everything.

Eventually, hungry and desperate, he decided to return home.

He rehearsed what he would say: *"Father, I have sinned… I am no longer worthy to be called your son."*

Perhaps he expected anger. Maybe he hoped simply to become a servant. But Jesus tells us that while the son was still a long way off, **his father saw him**. Then the father did something unexpected.

He ran. He threw his arms around his son and kissed him. Before the son could finish his prepared speech, the father was already calling for the best robe, a ring, sandals, and a celebration.

The father did not deny what his son had done. The son had truly wandered and sinned. But his father's heart was set on restoration.

Jesus told this story to show us something about the heart of God. God welcomes repentant sinners home.

That is also the message of Christmas. Humanity had wandered far from God. Yet instead of leaving us in the distant country of our sin, God moved toward us. Jesus came close.

The manger reminds us that God's love is not cold or reluctant. He is not waiting with crossed arms, wondering whether we deserve another chance.

He is the Father who sees the returning child and runs to meet him.

Perhaps you wonder whether you have wandered too far. Jesus' story gives us the answer. **The road home is still open.** And when we turn toward the Father, we discover that His love has already been moving toward us.

{Tuesday, 12/22}

DAY 24 // Love Met Him in the Darkness— Nicodemus

John 3:1–3, 16

"Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus… He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God.'"

Jesus later told him:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son…"

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Family Focus:

What questions would you have asked Jesus if you had been sitting with Nicodemus that night?

Talk about why God is not afraid of our honest questions.

NICODEMUS CAME TO JESUS AT NIGHT.

Perhaps darkness gave him privacy. He was a Pharisee and a respected religious leader. Being seen with Jesus could raise uncomfortable questions. Yet something about Jesus drew him.

Nicodemus had knowledge. He knew the Scriptures. He had position and respect. But he still needed something more. Jesus told him: **"You must be born again."**

Nicodemus was confused. How could someone be born a second time?

Jesus was speaking about spiritual life—a new beginning that only God can give.

Then, during this nighttime conversation, Jesus spoke words that have become some of the best-known in Scripture: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son…"

There is our Advent story in one sentence. God loved, so God gave. Christmas was not humanity reaching upward to God. It was God reaching down to us. Nicodemus came to Jesus in darkness, and Jesus pointed him toward the light.

Later, after Jesus died, Nicodemus would step out of the shadows. He joined Joseph of Arimathea in caring for Jesus' body.

Something had changed. The man who first came quietly at night eventually identified himself with Jesus publicly.

Perhaps some people approach Jesus cautiously. They have questions. They are not sure what they believe or what following Him might require.

Jesus did not turn Nicodemus away. He welcomed the conversation and pointed him toward truth.

Advent reminds us that Jesus still welcomes searching hearts. And into our darkness, God has given His Son. Love Came Close and brought light.

{Wednesday, 12/23}

DAY 25 // Love Reached Him at the Very End — The Thief on the Cross

HE HAD NOTHING LEFT TO OFFER JESUS.

The criminal hanging beside Christ was dying. He could not undo his crimes. He could not rebuild his reputation, repay what he owed, or spend years proving that his life had changed.

His time was almost gone. But Jesus was close.

One criminal mocked Christ. The other recognized something different. He turned toward Jesus and made a simple request: **"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."**

Jesus answered with grace: *"Today you will be with me in paradise."*

Think about that promise. The man could not earn salvation. He could only receive it. And Jesus gave it.

This encounter happened at the cross, but it helps us understand why there was a manger. Jesus was born to save sinners.

The child Mary wrapped in cloths would one day stretch out His hands upon a cross. The One who came close at Bethlehem would come even closer to our sin and shame at Calvary.

Christmas cannot be separated from the cross.

Jesus came because we needed more than an example or a teacher. **We needed a Savior.**

Perhaps we sometimes believe we must clean up our lives before Jesus will receive us.

The thief could do none of that. He simply turned to Christ in faith. And Christ received him.

No one is saved because they have lived a good enough life.

We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. That is why the angel announced at Bethlehem: *"A Savior has been born to you."*

From the manger to the cross, the message is the same: **Love came close to save.**

Luke 23:40–43

"Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'"

"Jesus answered him, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'"

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Family Focus:

Why could the thief do nothing to earn Jesus' promise? Talk about what his story teaches us about grace and why we need a Savior.

{Thursday, 12/24}

DAY 26 // Love Came Down — Christmas Eve

Luke 2:10–12

"The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.'"

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

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Family Focus:

Before Christmas morning arrives, read Luke 2:1–20 together.

Ask each person to finish this sentence: **"Christmas shows me that God..."**

FOR WEEKS WE HAVE WATCHED GOD COME CLOSE TO PEOPLE.

He called Adam while he was hiding. He found Hagar in the wilderness. He met Jacob on the run. He called Moses and Samuel by name. Jesus sat beside a Samaritan woman, stopped for Bartimaeus, wept with Mary and Martha, and restored Peter after his failure.

But tonight we come to the moment toward which all those stories were pointing.

Love came down. Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, and there, in humble surroundings, Jesus was born.

Luke tells the story simply: "She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger." Yet nothing about this child was ordinary. The eternal Son of God had entered our world. The Creator stepped into His creation. The One through whom all things were made became a baby who needed to be held in His mother's arms.

Why? Because God loved us. Humanity could not climb its way back to God, so God came down to us.

The angel did not announce that a philosopher, politician, or military leader had been born. He announced: **"A Savior has been born to you."**

That is what we needed. Christmas is not simply the story of a baby in a manger. It is the beginning of God's rescue mission unfolding before our eyes.

The child of Bethlehem would grow, teach, heal, serve, die for our sins, and rise again.

Tonight, as we stand again beside the manger, remember what it tells us about God. He did not love us from a distance. **He came.** The God who had been pursuing people throughout Scripture stepped into human history.

Love came down because Love wanted to come close.

{Friday, 12/25}

DAY 27 // Love Came Close — Christmas Day

TODAY WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS.

But John tells the Christmas story differently than Luke. There are no shepherds, angels, manger, or Bethlehem.

John takes us back before creation itself: **"In the beginning was the Word."** The baby born in Bethlehem already existed before Bethlehem. He was with God. And He was God.

Then John gives us one of the most remarkable statements in all of Scripture: **"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."**

That is Christmas. God came close. Throughout this Advent journey, we have watched this truth unfold again and again.

Adam hid, and God called. Hagar felt forgotten, and God found her. Jacob ran, and God met him. Elijah was discouraged, and God cared for him.

Jesus noticed the overlooked, touched the untouchable, welcomed sinners, stopped for the hurting, wept with the grieving, and restored those who failed.

Why? Because this is who God is. **He is the God who comes near.**

Christmas is the greatest demonstration of that truth. Jesus did not come merely to tell us that God loves us. He came to **show us.**

The manger says God came near. The cross says how far His love was willing to go. The empty tomb declares that sin and death do not have the final word.

So as gifts are opened, meals are shared, and families gather today, remember the greatest gift Christmas has ever given us. God gave Himself. The One we could never reach came all the way to us.

The message of Advent can therefore be summed up in three simple words: **Love Came Close**. And because Jesus came, we can draw near to God.

John 1:1, 14

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory..."

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Family Focus:

Before the day ends, have each person share one thing this Advent journey has taught them about God's love.

Then thank Jesus together for coming close.


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