

A landscape of rolling green hills under a hazy sky, with the word "Love" written in white cursive script across the center. The hills are covered in dense green vegetation, and the sky is a soft, hazy greenish-brown. The word "Love" is written in a white, elegant cursive font, centered horizontally and slightly above the middle vertically. Two thin white horizontal lines extend from the left and right sides of the word, framing it.

Love

Week Four: Love

After Jesus is born, Mary and Joseph take him to the Temple to present him to the Lord and to offer sacrifices according to the law.

It is there they encounter Simeon. The story of Simeon beautifully ties many Advent themes together. Just like Israel, God's covenant people, had been waiting and hoping for the Messiah, and all of humanity had been waiting for the Savior, Simeon is looking, waiting, and hoping for the consolation of Israel, the One who would come and save Israel. He waited many years, hoping he would see it with his own eyes. The Holy Spirit even promised him that he would.

Then, one day, somehow, he sensed the Spirit leading him to the Temple to see what he had waiting so long to see. He sees this young couple carrying a tiny baby and knows that He is the One. He picks up the little One in his arms and brings all the prophetic promise into one moment, "*a light for the nations.*" He had waited and hoped; he had prepared for the moment God's promise would be fulfilled for him, and this was the moment. Hope, joy, and peace culminated in the Child. He had received the gift of God's perfect love.

For many of us, Christmas Day is one of the most important days of the entire year. We adjust schedules, plans, and budgets months in advance. Family members travel in from far away. Decorations are perfectly placed, menus are planned, and gifts wrapped. There is intentionality, joy, and anticipation, all because this day is significant. And also, because we believe it is a reality. Christmas isn't a pretend day; it's real. We trust it to come on the same date every year. Out of love and expectation, we make every necessary preparation, so that when it comes, we are ready.

We spend months preparing to celebrate and remember Christ's first coming. How much more should we seek to be ready for His second coming? That day, too, is a reality; an absolute certainty.

Unlike Christmas Day, which happens every December 25, only the Father knows the day and hour His Son will return. But He is coming. How, then, are we to prepare, and how shall we wait?

We wait in love. As we receive the gift of the love of Christ, we allow him to transform us into his same likeness, extending his love to all we encounter. This is the daily Advent of Christ in us each day. That his love would be made manifest in every one of his children and given lavishly away is the heart's desire of the Father who made us for himself.

*Come, Desire of nations, come!
Fix in us Thy humble home:
Rise, the woman's conqu'ring seed,
Bruise in us the serpent's head;
Adam's likeness now efface,
Stamp Thine image in its place:
Final Adam from above,
Reinstate us in Thy love.
-Hark the Herald Angels*

J E S U S I S L O V E

Love is a multifaceted word, yet there is only One who holds all facets perfectly. When we are in the season of observing Advent before Christmas, we are remembering the anticipation of the Messiah's coming, and we celebrate His birth. Without His birth, there would be no death or resurrection. We are in an advent awaiting His return right now. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son..."* It was Love that brought Jesus to us. It was Love that kept Him on the cross. It was Love that brought Him back to life. It is Love that will power His return.

How do we give of ourselves as Jesus gave Himself?

What does love look like? These are not to be taken as the only steps you can take, but simple suggestions if you are having a hard time getting started.

Week 4 | Love | Integration

Basic:

Love through your prayer.

Pray for the leaders of organizations that are helping those in need. That certainly includes the churches in your community.

Read 1 John 4:7-12 this week.

Baseline:

Love through serving.

Give some of your time and skills to a local organization

Read and meditate on 1 John 4:7-12 each day this week.

Build:

Be consistent in your love.

Sign up to give and serve regularly.

Memorize and meditate on 1 John 4:7-12 this week.





*Scripture Reading
Week Four*

PSALM 89:5

LUKE 1:30-35

PSALM 148:1-2

ISAIAH 60:1-3

MATTHEW 1:20-25

LUKE 2

GALATIANS 4:4-5, 1 PETER 1:13

Reflections

LOVE

Where did you start this week? Circle one: Basic | Baseline | Build

What did you take away from your integration this week?

Do you feel more equipped to sacrifice your time/energy to show
love to others?

What is the next step for you to grow your love for Jesus and others?