

Small Group Guide: Love That Came Down

Advent Series – Week 4: Love

Based on John 3:16 | December 21, 2025

Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by thanking God for His incredible love demonstrated through Jesus Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to open hearts and minds to receive deeper understanding of God's agape love.

Icebreaker Question

What is your favorite love story (book, movie, or real-life) and why does it resonate with you?

This helps transition into discussing the "greatest love story ever told."

Sermon Overview

This week's message explored how Christmas reveals God's agape love—not sentimental affection, but sacrificial decision. We examined love from multiple dimensions: the Father's love in sending His Son, Mary's obedient love, the Incarnation as love made flesh, and how divine love transforms the unworthy.

Key Scripture Passages

- **John 3:16** – "For God so loved the world..."

- **John 1:14** – "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us"

- **Romans 5:8** – "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"

- **John 13:35** – "By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Understanding God's Love

1. **The sermon stated that Christmas "wasn't the beginning of God loving man, it was the culmination of God loving man." What does this mean? How does this change your perspective on Christmas?**

2. **Read John 10:30 and Galatians 4:4. What does it reveal about God's character that He sent His Son "not reluctantly, but lovingly"? How is this different from human love?**

3. **The pastor described agape love as "not based on attraction or emotion but on choice and covenant." Why is this distinction important? How does it differ from the world's definition of love?**

Section 2: Love Became Flesh

4. **Reflect on John 1:14 – "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The Greek word for "dwelt" means "pitched His tent." What does it mean to you that God chose to dwell among humanity in such humble circumstances?**

5. **The sermon emphasized that Jesus was born "not in gold or marble laden buildings...but in cobblestoned walls, floors of straw, surrounded by the smell of animals." Why was this setting significant? What does this teach us about how God works?**

6. **Mary's obedience came with the prophecy that "a sword will pierce your own soul also" (Luke 2:35). Discuss this statement: "Divine love often walks through pain and the path of love always passes through the shadow of sacrifice." Have you experienced this in your own life?**

Section 3: Love That Transforms

7. **The message stated: "True love does not overlook sin—it overcomes it. Divine love doesn't just accept us AS we are; it changes WHO we are." How have you experienced God's transforming love in your life?**

8. **Jesus loved society's rejects: the Samaritan woman, Peter the failure, the adulterous woman, Zacchaeus. He was outraged by their sin but chose to do something about it. How does this challenge our approach to loving difficult people?**

9. **Read the lyrics from "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" included in the sermon. Which line resonates most with you and why?**

Section 4: Personal Application






10. **John called himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." The pastor said he wasn't being arrogant—he embraced God's love as his identity. How would your life change if you truly defined yourself as "the one whom Jesus loves" rather than by your achievements or circumstances?**

11. **The sermon contrasted Pax Romana (peace through force) with Pax Christi (peace through love). Where in your life are you trying to create peace through control rather than through Christ's love?**

12. **The three closing points were: Receive His Love, Return His Love, and Reveal His Love. Which of these three is most challenging for you right now? Why?**

Key Takeaways

Write these down or have group members share which resonates most:

-  Christmas reveals God's **agape love**—selfless, unconditional, covenant love based on choice, not emotion
-  The Incarnation shows that **God stooped low** so no one can say "He doesn't understand my weakness"
-  Divine love **transforms the unworthy**—it doesn't just accept us as we are; it changes who we are
-  God's love was not just for humanity in general—it was meant for you personally
-  We are called to **receive, return, and reveal** God's love

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge: Choose One or More

1. RECEIVE HIS LOVE

- Spend 15 minutes each day this week meditating on Romans 5:8 and John 3:16
- Journal about areas where you're still trying to "earn" God's love rather than receive it freely
- If you've never accepted Christ's love and salvation, talk with your group leader about taking that step

****2. RETURN HIS LOVE****

- Write a prayer of worship expressing gratitude for God's sacrificial love
- Reflect on Ephesians 2:8-9 and identify one area where you're relying on works instead of grace
- Attend a Christmas Eve service with a heart focused on worship rather than tradition

****3. REVEAL HIS LOVE****

- Identify one "difficult person" in your life and commit to showing them Christ's love this week through a specific action
- Practice forgiveness: reach out to someone you've been withholding forgiveness from
- Perform an anonymous act of generosity that reflects God's unconditional love

****4. DEFINE YOURSELF BY GOD'S LOVE****

- Complete this sentence and post it where you'll see it daily: "I am the one whom Jesus loves, therefore I..."
- When negative thoughts arise, counter them with "I am loved by God" and speak Romans 5:8 aloud
- Share your testimony of God's transforming love with at least one person this week

Deeper Study (Optional Homework)

For those wanting to dig deeper before next week:

1. ****Read John 13-17**** – Jesus's final teachings about love before the crucifixion
2. ****Study the Nicene Creed**** quoted in the sermon – What does each phrase teach about Jesus?
3. ****Word Study****: Research the Greek words mentioned:
 - *Hen* (ἓν) – unity (John 10:30)
 - *Eskēnōsen* (ἐσκήνωσεν) – dwelt/pitched tent (John 1:14)
 - *Agapē* (ἀγάπη) – sacrificial love

Prayer Prompts

Close your group time praying through these areas:

- **Thanksgiving** for God's indescribable love demonstrated at Christmas
- **Confession** of areas where we've rejected or failed to receive God's love
- **Intercession** for those who don't yet know Christ's transforming love
- **Commitment** to reveal God's love to specific people in your lives this week
- **Worship** for Jesus, the Word made flesh, Love incarnate

Closing Reflection

Read together as a group:

"Lord Jesus, You are the Word made flesh, Love incarnate, dwelling among us. Teach us to rest in Your love that casts out fear. Transform our hearts to reflect Your grace and truth. Fill us anew with the love that sent You and the love that sustains us. In Your holy name, Amen."

For Next Week

If continuing the series or starting a new year:

- Reflect on how this Advent series has impacted your understanding of Christ
- Consider how you'll carry the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love into the new year
- Invite someone new to join your small group in January

Leader Notes

- **Timing**: This guide contains more questions than most groups can cover in 60-90 minutes. Select questions that best fit your group's needs and dynamics.
- **Sensitive Topics**: Question 7 about transformation may bring up painful past experiences. Be prepared to offer grace and prayer.
- **Salvation Opportunity**: If anyone in your group has questions about receiving Christ, be prepared