

GOD WITH US

Week 4: Advent of Love

1 John 4:7-12

OPEN

This is the fourth week of our series called "God with Us" based on Matthew 1:23 which says, "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "**God with us**"). The story of Christmas is really the story of God coming down in the person of Jesus to bring us back into relationship with the Father. Christmas reminds us that Immanuel, God with Us, gives us **hope, peace, joy and love**. Advent (meaning arrival) is a time of expectant waiting, preparation, with great anticipation, for the arrival of Jesus. We live between two advents. We look back at his birth which gives us hope for his return at the second coming. Advent invites us to slow down and experience Immanuel—"God with Us" anew, who came to bring us hope, peace, joy, and love in the midst of the messiness and busyness of the our lives.

READ

- To overflow with love to others, we must first be connected to the source of love who is God Himself.
 - **Read John 15:9-17.** How does this passage bring further clarity to what this looks like?
 - What does it mean practically to remain or abide in God's love?
- The work of Jesus on the Cross is the clearest demonstration of God's love for us.
 - **Read Ephesians 2:13-18, Colossians 1:13-14, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 5:6-8**
 - How do each of these passages describe the significance of what Jesus accomplished on our behalf through His death, burial, and resurrection?

REFLECT

A true encounter of God's love compels us to love others in a similar way.

- **Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 1 John 3:16-18.**
 - How do these passages describe what love looks like?
- **Read John 13:34-35.**
 - According to Jesus, why does our "love for one another" matter?
- How is the world's definition of love different from what we discover in the God of love demonstrated through Jesus?
- What does it mean to be captivated by the Cross?
 - What are some reasons why we begin to lose the wonder of all that Jesus has done for us?
 - How can you cultivate a greater sense of awe?
- Why is it so difficult at times to put love into action? How can you overcome this?
- How have you seen genuine expressions of love for one another, create opportunities to speak about Jesus to others?

APPLY/PRAY

- What are some practical ways you will put love into action this week with those around you?
- Pray and personalize the words of **Ephesians 3:17-19**: "I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."
- Pray that Wellspring would be known for the love of Christ especially to many guests visiting over Christmas. Also pray for wisdom and unity for the board, staff, and ministry leaders as we follow God's lead in this transition period.