

“When the angels had returned to heaven the shepherds said to each other, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’ They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing Him the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished” (Luke 2:15-18).

Manger Things is God’s *super* love coming into our natural world. That is what makes His love supernatural! Think about the God’s supernatural work all around you—even at this moment. Be still. Reflect, just for a while. And praise Him for who He is. Thank Him for all He has done, is doing, and will do. He loves you. He loves your family. God wants all people to know Him, for His glory to be revealed to all people everywhere!

4. In a quiet place, read the following Scriptures. In the space below, write what stands out to you from God’s Word, and perhaps a prayer of gratitude. Resolve now to love more like Christ.

Isaiah 40:3-5 John 1:14-18 1 Timothy 2:1-7 2 Peter 3:8-13 Revelation 1:4-8

One Year Bible Reading

December 10: Amos 1:1-3:15, Revelation 2:1-17, Psalm 129:1-8, Prov. 29:19-20

December 11: Amos 4:1-6:14, Revelation 2:18-3:6, Ps. 130:1-8, Prov. 29:21-22

December 12: Amos 7:1-9:15, Revelation 3:7-22, Psalm 131:1-3, Proverbs 29:23

December 13: Obadiah 1:1-21, Revelation 4:1-11, Ps. 132:1-18, Prov. 29:24-25

December 14: Jonah 1:1-4:11, Revelation 5:1-14, Ps. 133:1-3, Proverbs 29:26-27

December 15: Micah 1:1-4:13, Revelation 6:1-17, Ps. 134:1-3, Proverbs 30:1-4

December 16: Micah 5:1-7:20, Revelation 7:1-17, Psalm 135:1-21, Prov. 30:5-6

MANGER THINGS

Text: 1 John 4:7-21

Plain Truth:

Christmas is how love _____, and turns
_____ into a redemptive journey.

1. There are spirits _____ to _____ your life.

Schemes saying you don’t need Christmas

a. Salvation by _____

b. _____

2. Supernatural love _____ supernatural love through
the _____.

Practical Steps to Supernatural Love:

1. Love is _____. It’s _____ about _____.

2. Love _____ the first _____.

3. Supernatural love _____ God - we do our part then leave
the _____ to God.

Life Group Lesson

Week of December 10

“Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, He has spoken to us through His Son... The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God, and He sustains everything by the mighty power of His command. When He had cleansed us from our sins, He sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven” (Hebrews 1:1-2a,3). The writer of Hebrews goes on to say: “And when He brought His supreme Son into the world, God said, ‘Let all of God’s angels worship Him’” (Hebrews 1:6).

The angels of heaven did worship Him! On the night of Christ’s birth when the angel appeared to the shepherds with the news, “Suddenly the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in highest heaven. And peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased’” (Luke 2:13-14). As we prepare for the coming of the Christ Child, let us not forget we are living in the second advent. Christ will come again. But the next time Christ appears, He will not be found humbly in a manger like the shepherds found Him that night, surrounded by animals and damp earth. He will appear in glory “surrounded by unnumbered thousands of chariots”—the mighty hosts of heaven and God’s holy ones (see Psalm 68:17, Luke 9:26, Ephesians 4:9-10). God’s love is powerful and has come down to us!

Read 1 John 4:7-21

No one else across the landscape of history fits Christ’s description: “So the Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son” (John 1:14). Jesus Christ came to this earth to not only point the way to God, but *become* the way to God through His death and resurrection. The punishment our sin deserves was placed on Christ when He died on the cross. His beautiful bodily resurrection proved He had the power and authority to deal with the judgment our sin deserves. Our part is to believe upon His name and simply accept this gift of salvation. This is what *Manger Things* is all about: God’s Christ redeeming the world.

1. In light of all this, re-read 1 John 4:11-12. As we turn from sin and head in the direction of God’s love, how is God’s love ‘expressed’ in us?

When the culture embraces a mindset that season is about anything but Christ, how can you ‘express’ the deeper, more powerful (indeed, more radical) meaning of Christmas to those around you? (Think in terms of word and deed, faith and action.)

Of all the times of the year, Christ-followers should worship Christ at Christmas—every chance we get. We join the angels who are already worshipping (Luke 2:14, Hebrews 1:6, Revelation 11:15-17). When we trust in Christ, God gives us His Spirit ‘as proof that we live in Him and He in us’ (v13) and His Spirit draws us daily, moment-by-moment, into this personal relationship with our heavenly *Abba*. We can now call God *Abba* because of the love of God’s firstborn Son. Jesus actually wants to share His inheritance with us!

2. God’s firstborn Son loved us so much, He was willing to die so that our sin would not keep us from living with Him forever. Think about the power of love. Love causes interruptions and upheaval. It’s not always easy. Choosing to love—and following through—can bring suffering and deep sacrifice at times. When have you seen love fleshed out through fiery trials?

Perhaps God is convicting you to love someone like that now. Will you be like Jonah who took the first boat out of the country? Or will you stay put and do the hard work of loving like Christ? He loved hard, all the way to Calvary. What will you decide to do?

“If someone says, ‘I love God’ but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar, for if we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?” (1 John 4:20). There is a reason the Bible says multiple times to ‘work hard’ at living in peace. Jesus said if you are on your way to worship, even kneeling at the altar, and “suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God” (Matthew 5:23-24).

3. Part of doing the hard work of loving is choosing to forgive *often*. Releasing bitterness is hard and sometimes a process, but it is freeing. Has Christ helped you to forgive some deep hurt? Sharing your experience with your Life Group or someone else in that place will help them and bless you—no experience is wasted. How is the Lord prompting you to encourage someone through your experience of forgiveness?

And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face Him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world” (1 John 4:17). We will all stand before Christ one day (Hebrews 9:27). Will you be ready, or will you still be living in sin and harboring anger and bitterness? There is much at stake. Even now, Christ ‘sustains everything by the mighty power of His command’ because He is the very Word of God (*logos*—heaven’s fullest expression of love and power), born at the time set on heaven’s calendar who made His home among us. “God showed how much He loved us by sending His one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him” (1 John 4:9). It is time for the church (that’s us!) to rise up love hard and be proclaimers of the Good News!