ADVENT WEEK 4 - Love (Light the two purple candles from previous weeks at this point.)

Read 1 John 4:7-9

As we begin this week that is all about love, let's start with a definition. One source says that to love someone or something is to "like or enjoy [it] very much." If that's true, then it's easy to see why we so often use this word the way we do. If you "like or enjoy'' playing with friends, watching sports, baking, or going on long runs, according to this definition, you actually love those things.

The Bible provides a very different and more robust picture of "love." In the New International Version of the Bible, the word is used 425 times in the Old Testament and 261 times in the New. The New Testament, originally written in Greek, uses multiple words for love, depending on the author's context. C.S. Lewis often focused on the "four loves":

STORGE=familial love

PHILOS=love that describes deep friendship

EROS=physical or romantic love

AGAPE=selfless, unconditional love

The Bible doesn't just talk about feelings of love, but the commandment to love. In Matthew 22, Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment of any is to "love the Lord your God." The second? To love our neighbors.

So what does this have to do with Advent? Jesus' birth brought a new kind of love. In fact, He didn't just bring love, He is love. As we continue learning about the love of God made visible through the birth and life of His only Son, remember this: "love" was never meant to be a watered-down, worn out word used to describe any and everything. True love—biblical love—is powerful and significant, and we understand it best by turning and looking to Jesus.

Family Time (Light the pink candle at this point while stating this is the "Love Candle". It reminds us of the Love Jesus has for us.)

Talk about these questions with your family or group.

KIDS

1. What are some ways that we can love God with our words and actions?

2. What or who are we supposed to love most? Is it okay to love things besides God?

TEENS AND ADULTS

3. What are other examples or stories about love you've learned about from the Bible? Share those with each other.

4. How is our love for God supposed to be different from our love for people or things?

5. What or who do you love more than God right now? Why is it easier to love those things more than God?

Pray

Thank God that He loves you. Pray that you would see clearly the things in your life that you love more than Him, and that as you learn more about biblical love this week, you would begin to understand and desire it more than worldly love.