

**December 21, 2025**

The Gift of Love

Isaiah 9:1-2,6 & Luke 10:25-28

### **General group guidelines**

- Create safety. Remind the group that sharing is voluntary and everything personal stays in the group.
  - Start broad, go deeper. Begin with observation and head-level questions before moving toward heart-level and life-application questions.
  - Listen more than talk. Let silence work; give people time to think before jumping in.
  - Draw out quieter voices. Gently invite, never force: “Would anyone who hasn’t shared yet like to add anything?”
  - Affirm, don’t fix. Thank people for honesty; resist the urge to correct every word. Point to Scripture and God’s character rather than to quick advice.
  - Keep Jesus central. Continually connect the discussion back to God’s love shown in Christ and the call to love God, self, and neighbor.
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### **Overview**

This Advent teaching explores how God’s love breaks into darkness, grounds personal identity, and overflows to others through Jesus’ coming at Christmas, using familiar traditions and vivid stories to contrast fear with the light of Christ. Drawing from Isaiah 9’s promise of a great light and Luke 10’s call to love God, self, and neighbor, it emphasizes rejecting the lies of earning love or being “too bad,” receiving God’s unconditional love in Christ, and then sharing that love intentionally with others—especially by inviting people to encounter God’s love this Christmas.

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**Question 1:** When you consider the contrast between darkness and light in Isaiah 9, what stands out to you about how God chooses to bring hope into the world?

Follow-up questions:

- Where do you see this “darkness to light” theme echoed in the New Testament (for example, in the coming of Jesus)?

- How does it impact you that God's response to human rebellion is not abandonment, but the sending of a child who is called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"?
- What words or images from Isaiah 9:1–7 feel especially relevant to the world's condition right now?

Helpful scriptures:

- Isaiah 9:1–7 – People walking in darkness see a great light; a child is born, a son is given.
  - Matthew 4:16 – Matthew applies Isaiah 9:2 to Jesus' public ministry as the great light in Galilee.
  - 1 Peter 2:9 – God calls believers out of darkness into his marvelous light.
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**Question 2:** What do you notice about the order "love God, love your neighbor, as yourself" in Luke 10, and why might that sequence matter for healthy relationships?

Follow-up questions:

- How do love for God, love for neighbor, and love for self relate to each other in this passage? Which one do you tend to emphasize or neglect?
- In what ways does this "great commandment" give a simple but comprehensive picture of what a faithful life looks like?
- How might our relationships change if we treated "love your neighbor as yourself" as a daily lens for decisions rather than just an ideal?

Helpful scriptures:

- Luke 10:25–28 – The law summarized: love God with all your being and your neighbor as yourself.
  - Matthew 22:36–40 – Jesus calls these the first and second greatest commandments.
  - Romans 13:8–10 – Love fulfills the law and does no wrong to a neighbor.
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**Question 3:** Of the three common lies about love (needing to achieve it, needing everyone to like you, or being "too bad" for love), which one do you most often see in our culture, and where do you notice its impact?

Follow-up questions:

- How does the “achieve rather than receive” lie show up in performance-driven environments like school and work? What can make it hard to believe love is a gift of grace?
- Where do you see the pressure to be liked—on social media or in everyday relationships—shaping people’s sense of worth?
- How might believing “I am too bad for God’s love” keep someone from drawing near to Jesus, and what truth from Scripture could speak directly to that fear?

Helpful scriptures:

- Ephesians 2:8–9 – Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works, so that no one may boast.
  - Romans 5:6–8 – Christ died for us while we were still sinners, showing God’s love for the undeserving.
  - Romans 8:38–39 – Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
  - 1 John 4:9–10 – God’s love is seen in sending his Son so that we might live through him.
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**Question 4:** How does believing that “God is love” and that you are deeply wanted by God challenge or reshape the way you view yourself and your worth?

Follow-up questions:

- What difference does it make that love is not just something God does, but part of who God is?
- How could seeing yourself as beloved by God help you move away from either self-hatred or self-centeredness toward a more healthy, Christ-shaped self-acceptance?
- If God’s love is “perfecting” us, as 1 John 4 says, what areas of your self-image might God be wanting to heal or transform?

Helpful scriptures:

- 1 John 4:7–12 – God is love; his love is made manifest by sending his Son, and we are called to love one another.
- Psalm 139:13–16 – You are fearfully and wonderfully made; God knows and forms each person intimately.

- Ephesians 1:4–6 – God chose us in love before the foundation of the world and adopted us through Jesus Christ.
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**Question 5:** Who is one specific person God may be inviting you to pursue with intentional love this Christmas (through an invitation, conversation, or act of kindness), and what concrete step will you take this week?

Follow-up questions:

- What might it look like, in your context, to be a “Good Samaritan” to that person—costly, practical, and compassionate love?
- Are there fears, excuses, or lies that might hold you back from reaching out, and how can the group pray for courage and wisdom for you?
- What simple next step—text, call, meal, invitation to church, or offer to pray—can you commit to before you leave tonight? How can the group follow up next time?

Helpful scriptures:

- Luke 10:29–37 – The Good Samaritan shows what neighbor-love looks like in action.
  - Galatians 5:13–14 – Through love, serve one another; the whole law is fulfilled in “love your neighbor as yourself.”
  - John 13:34–35 – Jesus gives a new command to love one another as he has loved us, so the world will know we are his disciples.
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For leaders, a simple closing move each week is:

- Invite each person to name one takeaway about God’s love.
- Invite those who are willing to name one concrete action step.
- Pray specifically over these people, situations, and steps, asking that God’s perfect love would cast out fear and overflow to neighbors.