

Advent 2025 – Love came down

Please note Bible stories and themes may occasionally differ from this overview.

At Christmas we celebrate the moment Jesus entered the world – love made visible, hope born in human form. Not in comfort, but into the cold. Not among the powerful, but among the poor, the overlooked and the ordinary. When love came down at Christmas, it was noticed and celebrated.

During Advent we will be following the Nativity story, looking at what happened and how different people experienced the love of God coming down to earth in the form of his son, Jesus. We see the **patience** of Zechariah and Elizabeth and share the **joy** of Mary following God's plan. We experience God's **peace** when we trust in his plan and love for us. And we see that the **love** that came down was a **love** for all of us, and we can respond with **faithfulness**.

Session 1 29/30 November

Aim: To know that Zechariah's prayers were answered
Bible ref: Luke 1:5-20

Today's fruit

Just like Zechariah and Elizabeth, we need to show **patience** as we wait for answers to our prayers.

Love is a promise (1)

As we prepare for Christmas this year, we are going right back to the start. We often think about the angel Gabriel visiting Mary with some exciting news as the beginning of Advent, but today we are going one step back before this event even happened. We are going back to Mary's cousin Elizabeth, who was a lot older than Mary. Elizabeth had a husband called Zechariah, an old priest who prayed a lot in the Temple.

Elizabeth and Zechariah did not have any children, and this made them sad. Even so, Zechariah carried on praying. One day the angel Gabriel visited him and said that they would have a baby boy and that his name must be John. John would prepare the way for Jesus to come into people's lives. Zechariah was confused and frightened and couldn't believe what he heard, so Gabriel made him silent until these things happened.

Think about

Do you ever have times when you are very quiet, perhaps thinking to yourself or not wanting to talk? Are you ever confused or frightened by what you hear in the world? Does God ever speak to you in any way, not just a voice or an angel, but through another person or something you see? How might God be answering your prayers today?

Consider the long-awaited promise. Hope begins in quiet, faithful waiting. Sometimes we need to wait for things. When we are waiting calmly, we say we are being patient. Elizabeth and Zechariah had to wait a long time before they were blessed with a child, but God kept his promise to them.

How does it feel when you have to wait for something for a long time?

Session 2

6/7 December

Aim: To see how Zechariah, Elizabeth and Mary made choices of faith

Bible ref: Luke 1:26-38, 57-64

Today's fruit

Mary experienced **joy** in being part of God's plan, and we can too.

Love is a promise (2)

This week we see the angel Gabriel visiting a young girl called Mary, to tell her that she is going to become the mother of God's son. God wanted her to name him Jesus. Mary hurried off to visit her cousin to share her own joy, only to find out that Elizabeth was going to have a baby too! Elizabeth's son John would be a holy man and follow God. John would point people towards Jesus and tell them about the wonderful Kingdom that he would bring.

We see how Zechariah and Elizabeth stick to Gabriel's instructions and name their son John, even though their family are very surprised at this choice.

Think about

Like Elizabeth and Zechariah, is there something that you think seems impossible, that you would like God to change for the better? Does following God ever cause you to make a different choice from your friends? Like John, do your actions point the way to Jesus for other people?

Even when it was difficult, Zechariah and Elizabeth chose to follow God; they made choices of faith. Do you think they were easy choices?

How do you think Mary felt when the angel Gabriel spoke to her about God's plan and asked her to be part of it? Do you think it was an easy choice for her to make? What did Mary decide to do? How do you think she felt afterwards?

Are there ever times when we need to make decisions even when they seem too big or scary? How might we be able to choose to show joy even in those moments?

Session 3

13/14 December

Aim: To celebrate the birth of Jesus as the gift of God's love and the sign that God is with us

Bible ref: Luke 1:57-66, 2:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

Today's fruit

We can know and show God's **peace** when we trust God and receive his love.

Love is a gift

The birth of John reminded God's people that he always keeps his promises. But John's role was to prepare the way for someone even greater – Jesus, God's son. Joseph was unsure what to do when he learned that Mary was expecting a baby. But in a dream, an angel told him not to be afraid, because the child was from the Holy Spirit. Joseph was to give him the name Jesus, because he would save people from their sins. This fulfilled God's promise that the child would be called Immanuel, which means God with us.

When the time came for a census, Mary and Joseph travelled to Bethlehem. The town was so crowded that there was no proper place for them to stay. In those humble surroundings, Mary gave birth to her son. She wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger.

The birth of Jesus was God's greatest gift of love to the world. Though he came in weakness and simplicity, he was the sign that God is with us. This gift brings peace to everyone who welcomes him.

Think about

What makes something a gift? Who do you think the gift of Jesus was for?

Why do you think God chose for Jesus to be born in such a simple and humble place?

What does that show us about God's love?

How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when they welcomed their baby son?

The Bible calls Jesus the Prince of Peace. What do you think peace means? Can you think of a time when God's peace has helped you or your family?

Just as John's birth was a sign of God's promises kept, how is Jesus' birth the greatest sign of God's love for us?

Session 4

20/21 December

Aim: To consider why angels appear to shepherds, and why the 'outsiders' receive the good news first

Bible ref: Luke 2:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

Today's fruit

We know that God loves everyone – we too can show **love** to those people who may be on the outside, like the shepherds.

Love is powerful

On the night Jesus was born, shepherds were out in the fields near Bethlehem, watching their sheep. They were ordinary people, poor, often looked down on, and not considered very important. Yet they mattered to God.

Suddenly the dark sky was filled with light as an angel appeared. The shepherds were afraid, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news for everyone. Today a Saviour has been born for you in Bethlehem. You will find him lying in a manger.'

Then a whole choir of angels filled the sky, praising God and singing, 'Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to all people.'

The shepherds hurried into Bethlehem and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus lying in a manger, just as the angel had said. They told everyone what had happened, and people were amazed at their story. Afterwards, the shepherds returned to their fields, praising God for all they had seen and heard.

This story shows us God's powerful love. He chose the shepherds to hear the good news first. The message was not given to kings or priests but to outsiders. God's love

overturns expectations, it lifts up the ordinary and brings peace to the world through Jesus.

Think about

The shepherds were ordinary people and not seen as very important. Why do you think God chose them to hear the good news first? What does this tell us about God's love? How is it powerful?

Are there people in society today who are often left out or forgotten? How do you think God feels about those people?

Why was it important that the shepherds were the first ones to hear the news of Jesus' birth? What was God showing us by choosing them?

The angels sang about peace on earth. What do you think peace looks like in your school, family, or community?

When the shepherds told others what they had seen, they became the first messengers of Jesus' birth. How can we follow their example and share God's love with others?

Can you think of a song or piece of music that helps you feel close to God, just as the angels' song helped the shepherds know God was with them?

Session 5
27/28 December

Aim: To see how the wise men faithfully responded to God's gift of Jesus, and to learn that we can also respond by giving ourselves fully to God

Bible ref: Matthew 2:1-12

Today's fruit

We can respond with **faithfulness** to the love God gave through the gift of Jesus.

Love is an action

The Magi, sometimes called wise men, were men who studied the stars. One night they noticed a new star in the sky. They believed it was a sign of a new king, so they set out on a long journey to follow it.

Not everyone welcomed this news. King Herod was jealous and wanted to find a way to harm the new king. The Magi stayed faithful to the sign they had seen. They continued their journey until the star led them to the place where Jesus was. When they found him, they were filled with joy. They bowed down before Jesus and gave him expensive gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were gifts fit for a king.

The Magi's journey shows us that love is an action. They were faithful to God's sign, they kept going even when it was hard, and they gave their very best to Jesus. We can respond to God's gift of love in Jesus in the same way by giving him our love, our lives, and our faithfulness. Christians sometimes call this a covenant, a special promise to give 'all of me for all of you forever.'

Think about

Have you ever looked up at the stars at night? What did you notice and how did it make you feel?

The wise men followed a star together. Why do you think it is easier to follow Jesus with others instead of on your own?

The wise men travelled a very long way. Have you ever been on a journey that felt long or difficult? What helped you to keep going?

The wise men gave their very best gifts to Jesus. What gifts can we give to God today?

In January The Salvation Army has a special day called Covenant Sunday. A covenant is a special promise to give 'all of me for all of you forever.' Just as the wise men were faithful and gave their gifts to Jesus, we can respond to God's gift of Jesus by giving him our lives and showing love to others.

