

Title: Advent - Love: "Here I Will Dwell" // **Scripture:** Psalm 132

ARRIVAL / SOCIAL TIME *15-20 minutes*

Spend the first 15 minutes or so of your time together catching up and socializing with one another. Also find time to catch up together on how the assignments from last week turned out.

SERMON REVIEW *5-10 minutes*

This week we continued our Advent journey together by talking about Love. Love is often a word that gets lost in the all too prevalent world of cliché. We talk a lot about love but it really doesn't mean anything to us. Even God's love can become a cliché in our lives. Verses like John 3:16 become so well known to us that we forget the GREAT truth of this verse—that here in this one verse we see the greatest subject (God) give His greatest affection (love) to the greatest object (the world) through the greatest gift (His Son) for the greatest opportunity (whoever) to those who make the greatest commitment (believe in Him) for the greatest promise (life with God forever). But how do we embrace the love of God in the "in between" places of our lives? How do we experience the love of God in between the prayer and the promise? This week we saw that the way we live in between the prayer and the promise of God is that we wait, and as we wait, we recognize His presence is there even before He performs His greatest works.

THE MAIN THOUGHT *keep this in mind as you facilitate discussion*

Love is giving of yourself without regard for return.

SEE IT – Questions *10-15 minutes*

Picture (What is the story saying?): What is love? (love is giving oneself without regard for return) How has the idea of love become a cliché in our world today? How has even the love of God in John 3:16 become a cliché in our world today? How does Psalm 132 challenge the cliché of love and call us to something more real?

Mirror (Where am I in the story?): Where in your life are you standing between the prayer and the promise? Is it possible that God might be meeting you in this place? How might your eyes be opened to God's presence, instead of just waiting for God's performance?

Window (How does the story change how I see those around me?): Who could you be present with this week in order to help them see and hear the presence of God? How could you stand in the "in between" with him or her? What might it look like to love this person in their "in between" time this week? What's keeping you from giving that love?

BE IT – Practice

Change UP // Hear the Story *10 minutes*

Take a moment to read together the Christmas story from Luke 2:1–40 from an Advent perspective. Before you read the story aloud, challenge the group to listen for places of Hope, Joy, Peace and Love (the four emphases of Advent). Invite the group to share different places where Hope, Joy, Peace and Love stood out to them.

Change IN // Group Activity *10 minutes*

Take a moment to make the Christmas story your story. Choose a way to hand out something with one of the four words from Advent on it (Hope, Joy, Peace or Love) to each person in your group. You may want to write one of those words on a cup that each person uses for their drink this night or you may just want to have them draw out these words from a bucket. However the person receives one of these four words, invite each person to share one story from their life where he or she has best seen this word played out in his or her life. Celebrate Hope, Joy, Peace and Love through these stories together.

Change OUT // Spread the Celebration

Holidays are a great time to share God's Hope, Joy, Peace or Love with your neighbors. As we challenged you last week to take some time to think about how you could be a Christmas presence in your neighborhood or network, use this week to deliver those gifts or throw that party—and do it without any regard for return in your life. Be present with those you give to. Enjoy the celebration of Christmas.

CLOSING PRAYER *5 minutes*

Take a few minutes to gather any prayer requests and pray for each other to SEE IT and BE IT this week.