



ENTER God's presence

Psalm 103:1-11

- ¹ Praise the Lord, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- ² Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—
- ³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
- ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
- ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- ⁶ The Lord works righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed.
- ⁷ He made known his ways to Moses,
his deeds to the people of Israel:
- ⁸ The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
- ⁹ He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
- ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
- ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him

Pray: Gracious God and loving God, we praise you for your steadfast love that is slow to anger and rich in grace. Open our hearts and minds as we reflect on your word. Where our understanding of love is small, reshape it. Where our love is hesitant or fearful, ground us again in the love which you have first given us in Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.



SHARE life together

1. **What are your highs and lows since you last met?**
2. **What is something that you 'love'? What is it that you 'love' about this thing?**
3. **Who is someone that you love? Why do you love this person?**

Week beginning:
Monday 22nd December 2025

Worship series:
Christmas is...
#4 Christmas is Love



VERSE for the week

"But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

Matthew 1:20



REMEMBER this week

**We embrace God's
gift of love by
accepting the risk of
loving as he has
loved us.**

"I love Christmas!" It's the cry of almost every child as they anticipate the arrival of Santa Claus and all his presents. You may even hear some adults say something similar as they excitedly go 'all out' to make sure their house outshines the neighbours with Christmas lights or as they bake their family's favourite Christmas goodies or prepare a delicious Christmas lunch. But that's not the kind of love Christmas is all about.

That kind of love is simply a positive emotional response to an external stimulus. The love that God demonstrates to us at Christmas is something much deeper. It begins as a choice in the face of opposition. It's a choice which moves God, and Joseph, beyond the demands of the law and into new territory. It's a choice to sacrifice a rightful claim to justice and revenge and instead move toward the people or things that stand against you with mercy and kindness despite the risk of pain and rejection.

So read **Matthew 1:18-25** [HERE](#) or in your own Bible and then reflect on what this passage shows us about love.

4. **Try to summarise the main idea of these passages.**
5. **What verse/concept/teaching in these readings caught your attention and what was challenging/confronting/comforting about them for you?**
6. **As you read Matthew 1:18–25, what words or actions stand out to you that show Joseph's care or love for Mary, even before the angel speaks to him?**
7. **After Joseph hears God's message through the angel, what changes do you notice in how he responds to Mary and to the situation he's in?**
8. **In choosing to obey God and take Mary as his wife, what does Joseph risk or give up—and how does that help us see love as something costly or self-sacrificing?**



The example of Joseph's initial response to the 'Mary' situation, is often considered as loving concern for Mary. While there may be some truth to this, this initial response, to 'deal with it quietly' also served Joseph's own interests. It would allow him to save face and also retain something of the reputation he might have had. But when God's plan is articulated and his promise is made known Joseph responds differently. Not out of love for Mary necessarily, but out of love for God and his promises.

9. **What does Joseph's initial plan reveal about the pull of self-protection or managing appearances, and how does that contrast with the kind of love God calls him into ?**
10. **Where do you see the difference between acting out of human love (or self-interest) and acting out of trust in God's promises and His love in your own life or relationships?**
11. **In what ways does Joseph's obedience foreshadow the kind of love Jesus ultimately shows—love that lays aside personal comfort or status in order to fulfil the Father's will?**



MAKE IT REAL: As we sit with Joseph's story, we're reminded that God's love doesn't just shape what we believe—it reshapes how we live. Joseph's response shows us that love grounded in God's promises moves beyond self-protection and convenience and becomes a way of life marked by trust, courage, and obedience. Christmas invites us to receive that same love in Christ and to consider how it might take shape in our own decisions, relationships, and daily choices. With that in mind, let's turn to what it means to live out this love purposefully in the places God has placed us.

12. Where might God be inviting you to move from self-protection or comfort toward a more courageous, obedient kind of love this week?
13. Is there a place in your life where loving someone will cost you something—time, reputation, comfort, or convenience—and what would it look like to trust God in that space?
14. What is one small, faithful step you can take this week to reflect God's self-giving love—at home, at work, or in your community?

Plan your weekly devotions or [download the Church Central app](#) for the daily **LifeWay Devotions**



PRAY intentionally

- **Praise the Father**, for his steadfast and enduring love.
- **Thank Jesus** for demonstrating the self sacrificing, other's focussed love of God towards us through his life, death, and resurrection.
- **Ask the Holy Spirit** to help you show the self-giving love of Jesus to others
- Pray for all of LifeWay as we continue to grow into God's plans and purpose for us as his people as we live his love, share his hope with all, and grow in grace together.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross on their forehead or on the palm of their hand as you say...

[Name], Jesus loves you, this I know; for the Bible tells me so. Amen.