

Family Advent Celebration

Week Two

Before you read this Advent devotion, relight the first candle asking family members to recall what the first candle represented. (Hope)

LOVE

“This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.”

1 John 4:10

Let me tell you about my very favorite Christmas. We had some good ones and some bad ones. I remember a good one when the entire extended family was together, and our rich Aunt got me this really cool telescope and my cousin only got a silly velour shirt. The prices were comparable, I'm sure, but he still brings it up. I remember one year when a van from Little Rock pulled up in front of the house filled to the brim with toys and clothes and food for us. It was all the Christmas we got that year, but it was wonderful. And then there was the year I got a "Thingmaker" from the rich Aunt. It was so cool. We made our own rubber bugs with it.

The first Christmas after my sister died when I was 11 and she was 9 was pretty rough. It was my job to set the table before supper every night, and for months after she died in July, I'd forget and put down six place settings. Then I'd remember, and put the sixth setting back, and cry.

That Christmas, my parents went to a party and took my other younger sister and brother to a babysitter, but decided I was old enough to stay home alone. We had this really old, fragile, but authentic looking nativity scene that Daddy used to set up every year. Each piece was separately wrapped in toilet paper for protection. They would be very carefully unwrapped and arranged around the manger. Daddy made it seem like an art, or surgery.

That year, he decided I was old enough for that job. I was so excited and honored. So while they were at the party, I got to work on it. We had this fireplace-type mantle that was supposed to have a gas heater in the fireplace part, but didn't. I arranged the manger scene there, with all the thought and care that Daddy always put into it. Then I strung a string of lights around the mantle. And set out all the wrapped Christmas presents around the baby Jesus and the manger scene. Then, with Christmas hymns playing, I turned out the lights and read the Christmas story to myself, with no one in the house but me. And God.

God was there. For the first time in my life, it hit me what God had done -- what a miracle it was that he could reduce himself to a human baby -- and what a sacrifice it was. What awesome, undeserved, transforming, empowering love. We had very little money, no tree, few friends because we were new in town, my sister was dead, I was home alone. And my precious Jesus came down to me, and in to me, and wrapped me in his arms and loved me as warmly and as deeply as I have ever felt in my life. And I was transfigured. Maybe no one noticed but me. But that was my favorite Christmas.

“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:16

Have a family member light the "Love" candle and close in prayer

[Family Advent Celebration - Week 3](#)