

A stylized sunburst or starburst graphic composed of numerous thin, black, diagonal lines radiating outwards from behind the word 'advent'.

advent

J. D. GREER

Session 1: Emmanuel, God with Us

OPEN

What do you love most about Christmas? What holiday traditions do you get most excited about this time of year?

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Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus. It reminds us that God has entered our wintry darkness of sin to bring us light, love, joy, and peace. Jesus—also called Emmanuel, which means God with us—has come so that we might be with God now and into eternity.

Watch Session 1: Emmanuel, God with Us.
(11 Minutes)

DISCUSSION

J.D. talked a lot in the video about why it is important that God is with us. **In what ways is it good news that God is with you?**

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Read Matthew 1:18–25. Before Jesus was born, God told Joseph that he would give Joseph and Mary a son called Emmanuel, meaning “God with us.” **What was Joseph’s response to the angel? Why do you think he responded that way?**

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Joseph was unafraid and obedient when he heard God was with him. Many things can make us unsure or afraid, but if God is with us, we can be sure that everything around us happens for our good and his glory. Think of a time when you needed help from God in the past. **How did God answer your prayers?**

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Think about your current circumstances. **Is there anything that makes you afraid or unsure? In what ways do you need God’s help?**

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We know that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. If you have trusted Jesus, you can be confident God is with you. **What does it look like for you to trust God, knowing that he is with you?**

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In the darkness of winter, God has sent light into the world and given us the gift of his son, Jesus. Jesus took on our sin, rose from the grave so that we might be saved, and promises to be with us until he returns. Christmas is not just a sentimental holiday; it is the good news that for us a child is born—a son has been given—and his name is Emmanuel, God with us.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

You have an opportunity to be an encourager when the people around you are afraid and unsure. When you, your parents, your siblings, or your friends are afraid, remind them that they are not alone. If you know Jesus, then God is with you.

Have everyone write “Emmanuel—God is with you!” on a sticky note, a notecard, or in dry erase markers on their bathroom mirror. When you get up in the morning, brush your teeth before bed, or even if you can’t sleep at night, this note will remind you of the confidence you can have in Jesus.

You can also find a coloring page of the manger scene with this Family Guide. It is a great way for both kids and adults to slow down and meditate on what you have learned about Emmanuel before the next session of this study.

Session 2: Wonderful Counselor

OPEN

In what ways are the people in your family good helpers? Take a moment to let everyone in the family know what they are good at.

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We all need help from time to time. But when we ask for help, we don't always like the kind of help we receive. Sometimes, we don't want someone telling us what to do. When we look at Jesus, we find a Wonderful Counselor who is eager to help us. But we must be willing to do whatever he tells us, no matter what advice he gives to us.

Watch Session 2: Wonderful Counselor.
(10 Minutes)

DISCUSSION

When God's people were in danger, afraid, and needed his help, he promised to send them a savior, or Messiah. Read Isaiah 9:6, a verse that describes the Messiah. God calls Jesus, the Messiah, our Wonderful Counselor. In Hebrew—the original language Isaiah used—Wonderful Counselor roughly translates to “guide whose goodness goes beyond words.” In what situations in your life do you want help from a good guide?

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Read Hebrews 4:14–16. Jesus is God, but he also knows what it is like to be a person. He understands what it is like to be frustrated, scared, and even sad. These verses say he sympathizes with us. What does it mean to sympathize with somebody?

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God is not frustrated or annoyed with you. He is not bothered when you ask for help. Instead, he understands what you are going through and wants to help you. Anytime you need him, he is ready to give you mercy and grace. In what ways do you need Jesus's mercy and grace today?

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J.D. asked us, “Are you ready to do what Jesus says?” Jesus is our guide and he will lead us through his Word and his Spirit, but we must be willing to follow his guidance. What would it look like for you to trust and do what Jesus says?

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Jesus wants you to come to him with your problems, your joys, your questions, and your hopes. He is both willing and able to help and heal you. But we have to come to him in full honesty, be willing to change, and be ready to do what he says. In him, we have a guide better than words can describe.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Christmas can be a very difficult season for many people. It can remind them of loved ones that are no longer with us or even make people feel lonely. But even when life is hard, we can have hope because Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor.

Who do you know who could use some extra love during this season?

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What could you and your family do to love them this Christmas?

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Session 3: Everlasting Father

OPEN

What is your favorite memory of your father or someone who was a father figure to you?

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As great as our earthly fathers may be, they can't hold a candle to our Heavenly Father. He is perfect, loving, and always with us. No dad is perfect, but even the best dad needs to know our Heavenly Father.

Watch Session 3: Everlasting Father.
(11 Minutes)

DISCUSSION

In the video, J.D. showed us that our relationship, or lack of a relationship, with our father influences our view of God, the Everlasting Father.

What is/was your earthly father like? In what ways do you want to be like your earthly father?

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Read Luke 15:11–32.

What do you like about the father in this story?

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God's love for us never runs out, even when we are sinful. Like the father in the story, he runs to us to give us a hug and a kiss when we go to him. **When do you feel like God is mad at you? What does this story tell you about how God actually feels about you?**

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God is not angry with you. He is ready to forgive you and welcome you home. **What can you do today to grow closer to God, our Everlasting Father?**

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God is not distant. He is not angry. He is not waiting for you to get your act together. God loves you more than you can imagine and wants you to be with him. When we trust in Jesus, God runs to us and all of heaven throws a party because you, his son or daughter, have come home.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

As a family, memorize Psalm 86:5, “For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.” Get creative—use hand motions or put the verse to song. Recite it together at dinner or before bed to remind each other to both seek God for forgiveness and forgive one another in the same way God has forgiven us.

Session 4: I AM

OPEN

How would you describe yourself? What names or descriptions do you think are true of you?

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In this series, we have looked at the different names of Jesus, what J.D. calls the names of salvation. In all of his names, we find new ways to celebrate and be thankful for Jesus. But in this final name, “I AM,” we find that God is the source of everything we could ever need.

Watch Session 4: I AM.
(9 Minutes)

DISCUSSION

J.D. showed us a few places in the Bible where God calls himself “I AM,” but it’s also used over 6,000 times in the Old Testament! Read Exodus 3:11–14, the first time God says he is I AM.

I AM seems like a strange name, but it teaches us that God is the one who takes care of us, helps us, forgives us, and promises to be with us for all eternity. He is the source and supply for our security, courage, strength, and salvation. **In what ways do you feel like you aren’t enough? What do you feel like you need to be happy?**

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When we pray, we can sometimes ask only for the things we think we need to solve our problems but forget to ask God to be our I AM. **In what ways can you ask God to help you with your problems and needs today?**

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J.D. finished this series with two questions, the first of which he directed towards Christians: If you know Jesus, have you given your whole life to him? God doesn’t want us to just serve him on Sunday mornings—he wants us to serve him every day. **What can you do right now to trust God more with your whole life?**

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The second question J.D. asked was directed to those who have not trusted Jesus: What does your heart call Jesus? **Who is Jesus to you? If you were to pray to Jesus, what “name” would you call him?**

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Think back on all that you have learned in this series. **What have you learned about Jesus? What is your favorite name for Jesus, and why?**

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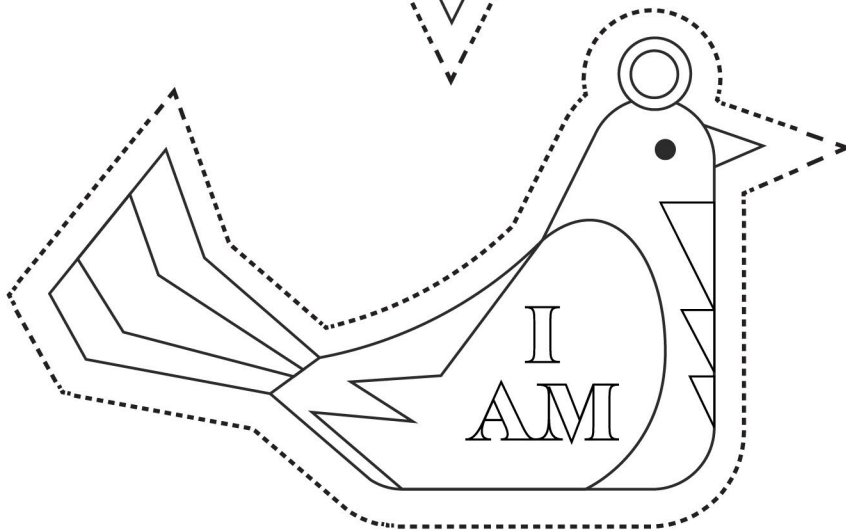
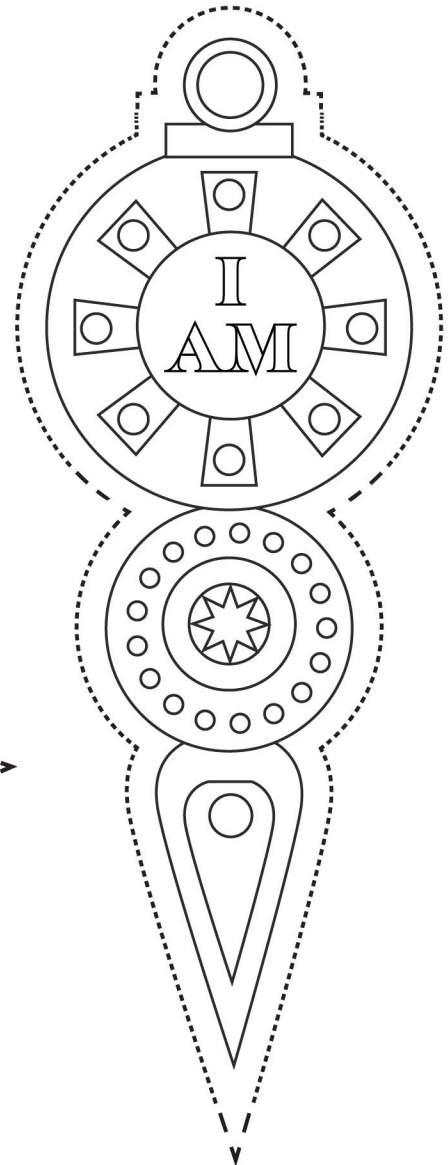
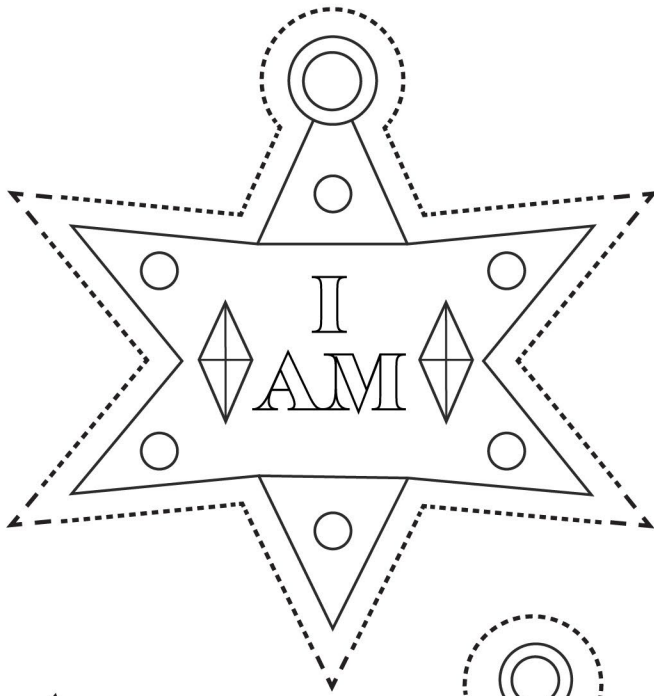
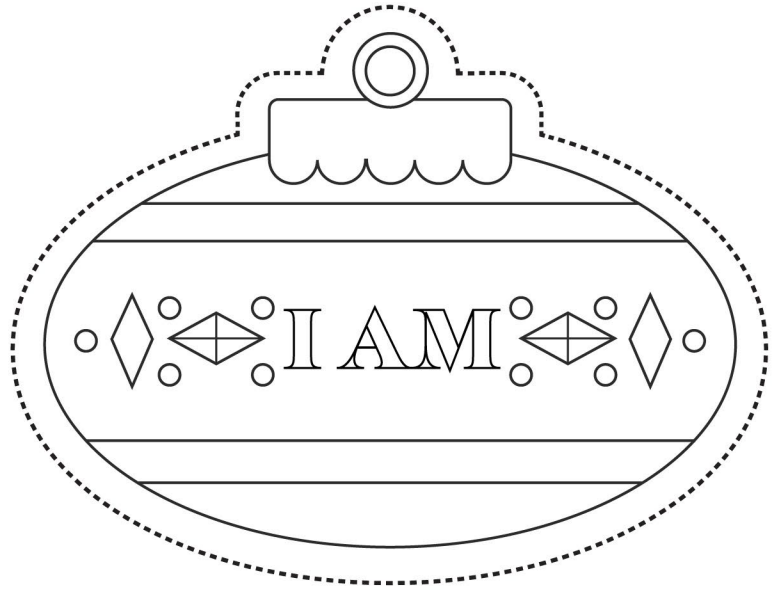
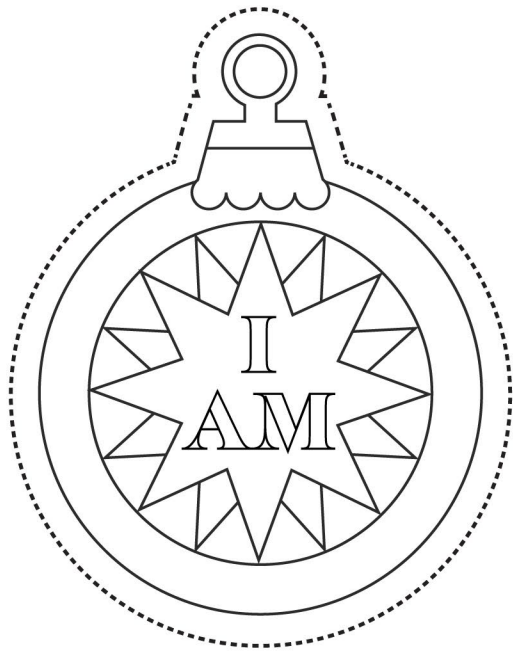
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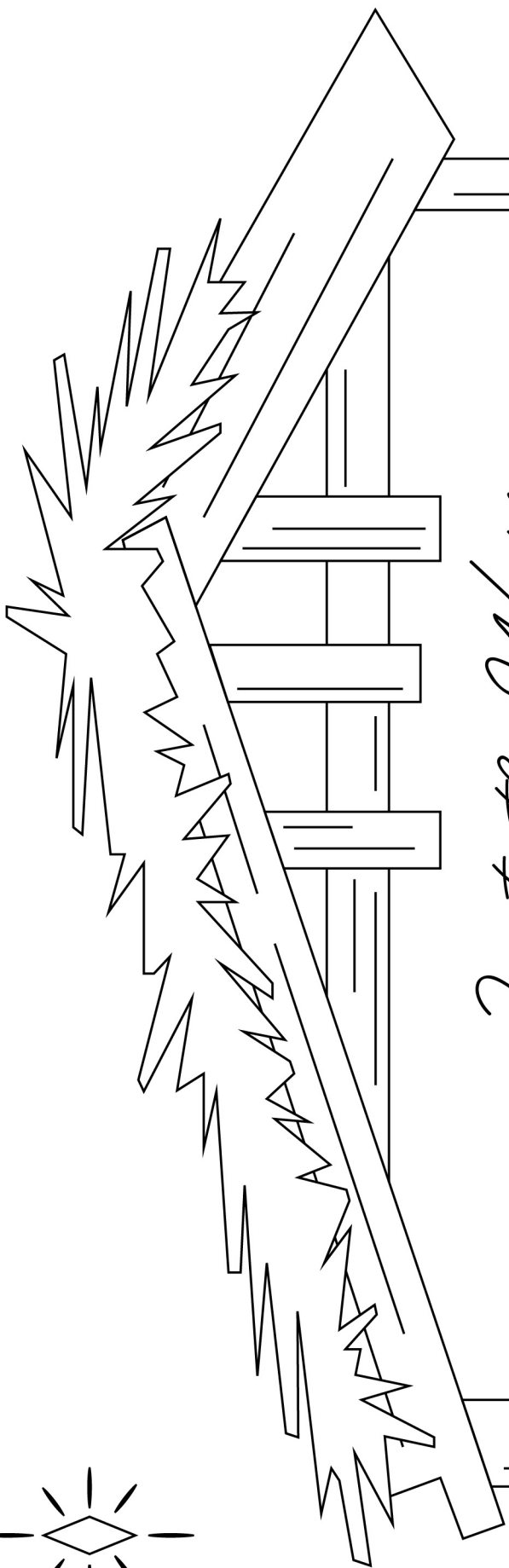
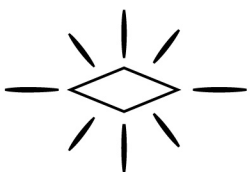
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The Advent season is a bright sign pointing to Jesus. He is Emmanuel, God with us, so we never have to be alone or afraid. He is our Wonderful Counselor, eager to guide, comfort, and heal us. He is our Everlasting Father who loves us more deeply than we can imagine and longs to be near to us. And he is our I AM. In our greatest deficiencies, brokenness, and darkness he is our way, our truth, and our life.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

You will find an I AM Christmas ornament print out with this study. Have everyone in your family decorate their I AM ornaments however they like while thinking about what I AM means to them. Before hanging your ornaments on the tree, ask each person to explain why they are thankful for Jesus. End the night with a time of prayer, thanking God for being our great I AM.





Joy to the World

