

**God's care for humanity was so great that he sent his unique Son among us, so that those who count on him might not lead a futile and failing existence, but have the undying life of God Himself.**

*John 3:16 - Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy, p. 1*

#### **Advent, Week Four - Love**

In the hurry and bustle of this Christmas week, take time to rejoice in God's love for you!

#### Scripture:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known. (From John 1)

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. (From I John 4)

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. (From Eph. 3)

#### Voice of wisdom: O Emmanuel by Malcolm Guite

O come, O come, and be our God-with-us,  
O long-sought with-ness for a world without,  
O secret seed, O hidden spring of light,  
Come to us Wisdom, come unspoken Name,  
Come Root, and Key, and King, and holy Flame,  
O quickened little wick so tightly curled,  
Be folded with us into time and place,

Unfold for us the mystery of grace  
And make a womb of all this wounded world.  
O heart of heaven beating in the earth,  
O tiny hope within our hopelessness,  
Come to be born, to bear us to our birth,  
To touch a dying world with new-made hands

## Study 4

And make these rags of time our swaddling bands.

### **Contemplation:**

What key words and ideas stand out to you? How do they help you take a deeper look at God's love for you?

“We need habitual reminders that the Christian life comes not by gritting our teeth but by falling in love.”

Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, p. 51

What would it look like for you to fall in love with this abundantly loving God?

### **Practices:**

Write down one or two of the key phrases that are important to you. Hold them (literally) before God and wait silently on him. Record any further thoughts he may give you.

In this season when we often have a heightened sense of God's love for us made evident in Christ's Incarnation, take a few moments one day to write a prayer of love to God. After all, you are his Beloved.

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©sharonracke These contemplative studies are the result of the thoughtful and transformative teaching I have received both at The Dwelling Place ([dwellingplaceindy.org](http://dwellingplaceindy.org)), and as a student of The Renovare Institute ([renovare.org](http://renovare.org)). I pray that as you use them, you will experience the presence and love of God, and learn more about living with Christ daily. Sharon Racke ([recess.racke@gmail.com](mailto:recess.racke@gmail.com))