

## Spiritual Growth Questions for December 20, 2020

Advent 2020: Come Lord Jesus Come  
Unconditional Love  
December 20, 2020  
Pastor John Lloyd

**Opener:** Share your favorite verse on God's love!

1. Carefully read **Psalm 139**. Spend time considering the glory of creation, God's love and our miraculous existence. Share what the Spirit brings to mind. Pray that God's love will reach the farthest regions of our hearts.
2. The first stage of God's love is a love of ourselves for our own sake. To get beyond this stage, we must see God as the one who created us and protects us. Spend some time this week reflecting on your birth. Note that we did not create ourselves. Also, reflect on how our life is a gift. Even our continued existence is not of our own doing,
3. Make a list of all the times God brought you through a trial. Use this list to move into a greater experience of God's love and grace for you.
4. **Read Matthew 22:39, I John 3:16-18**. This week make an effort to lighten the burden of those around you, beginning with those with whom you live. The invaluable gift of listening is a good way to start.
5. List two or three Scriptures used in this outline to help you grow in God's love. How can you master these verses so that they can be effective in your life?
6. What action step can you take this week to increase the presence of God's love in your daily life?

**Scripture:** Read the passage three times with an open heart and ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you.

**Observation:** Write down what you see in this passage. Make as many observations as you can.

**Application:** Write down how you will be different because of what you have just read. Look for lessons to be learned, examples to be followed and promises to be enjoyed. How is Jesus revealed?

**Prayer:** Write out a short prayer.

II. **Read the following scripture: I John 4:7-12, I John 4:13-19.** Choose one of the passages and apply the S.O.A.P. study method.

**Prayer: Personalize these verses:** So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

While celebrating advent together, we are grateful that the long awaited Savior of the world came over 2000 years ago to bring God's joy to all who call on His name. The relationship between God and humans was broken due to man's sin and rebellion. "The Old Testament of the Bible contains 127 Messianic predictions involving three thousand verses, with 574 referring to personal Messiah," J. Barton Payne. Advent captures the anticipation of our Savior Jesus. Today, we consider the incredible love of God! God created us and sent His son Jesus to bear our sins in his body. God desires for us to love Him above all created things. He wants us to be a vessel of love to a broken world. We love God because He first loved us! May this love flow to us and out of us this Christmas!

Matthew 22:37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before me.

John 3:16 For God so **loved** the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 15:13 Greater **love** has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

I John 4:10 In this is **love**, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to **love** one another.

I John 4:19 We **love** because he first loved us.

**Big Idea:** The more we receive God's **love**, the more we can give God's **love**. We **love** because He first **loved** us!

**Key Questions:** Why should God be loved? Why should we be loved? How can we be an avenue for God's love to be expressed to others?

I. God is most worthy of our \_\_\_\_\_ .

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I John 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

The shape of true love isn't a diamond. It's a cross. Alicia Bruxvoort

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Though our feeling come and go, God's love for us does not. C.S. Lewis

Psalms 139:13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

Romans 5:8 But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God is entitled to our love. Why? Because he gave himself for us despite the fact that we are undeserving. Bernard of Clairvaux

What have I done to deserve **love** like this? Lauren Daigle

**May each of us deeply receive God's love.  
We love because He first loved us!**

II. God is most worthy of our \_\_\_\_\_.

Matthew 22:37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. Exodus 20:3

"Worship is the proper response of all moral, sentient beings to God, ascribing all honor and worth to their Creator-God precisely because he is worthy, delightfully so." D.A. Carson

I John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

Worship is giving God the best that He has given you. Oswald Chambers  
It is impossible to worship God and remain unchanged. Henry Blackaby  
To love as I should, I must worship God as Creator. C.S. Lewis

**Worshiping God lays the foundation for loving others.  
We love because He first loved us!**

What are the four degrees of love? First, *we love ourselves for our own sake*; since we are unspiritual and of the flesh we cannot have an interest in anything that does not relate to ourselves. When we begin to see that we cannot subsist by ourselves, we begin to seek God for our own sakes.

*This is the second degree of love; we love God, but only for our own interests.* But if we begin to worship and come to God again and again by meditating, by reading, by prayer and by obedience, little by little God becomes known to us through experience. We enter into a sweet familiarity with God and tasting how sweet the Lord is we pass into the *third degree of love so that now we love God, not for our own sake, but for himself.* Blessed are we who experience the fourth degree of love *wherein we love ourselves for God's sake.* Such experiences are rare and come only for a moment. In a manner of speaking, we lose ourselves as though we did not exist, utterly unconscious of ourselves and emptied of ourselves. Bernard of Clairvaux "*On the Love of God.*"

III. God's love flows out of us to others to friends and \_\_\_\_\_.

Matthew 22:39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

I John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

I John 4:16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. (NIV)

Romans 5:5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

**Ten ways to love:** 1. Listen without interrupting, Proverbs 18. 2. Speak without accusing, James 1:19. 3. Give without sparing, Proverbs 21:26. 4. Pray without ceasing, Colossians.1:9. 5. Answer without arguing, Proverbs 15:1. 6. Share without pretending, Ephesians 4:15. 7. Enjoy without complaining, (Philippians 2:14). 8. Trust without wavering, (I Corinthians 13:7), 9. Forgive without punishing, (Colossians.3:13). 10. Promise without forgetting, (Proverbs 13:12)

Spend some time on the spiritual growth questions for ways to express God's love this Christmas season!

Matthew 5:44 But I say to you, **love** your enemies and pray for those who persecute you 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

I John 4:19 We **love** because he first loved us.

"As the Father has **loved** me so have I **loved** you!" Jesus Christ

**We love because He first loved us.  
May this love flow to us and out of us this Christmas!**