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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. [1 John 4:10](#)

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## LOVE

Christmas is a time of gift-giving. We think of what we want and measure what we can afford. We hope our gift blesses another. With time, though, many gifts are broken, returned or replaced. We may outgrow and forget them. God gave us the gift of his son, Jesus, who lived a perfect life, was punished and died an undeserved sinners death. Why? Was God unjust or incapable of protecting his son? No. His life and death was a gift.

The Love icon shows a stake anchored on a mountain - to remind us of Calvary, where the Son laid down his life so many can receive forgiveness from a just and loving God. God provided a gift we most needed and could never own ourselves.

## DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

“The purpose and cause of the incarnation was that He Himself might illuminate the world by His wisdom and excite it to the love of Himself.” Peter Abelard

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### God is Love | eternal

Love. It is a word that is spoken quiet often. I love my dog! I love Friday! I love you! The word seems to be used fairly casual. But what defines love? A feeling, an idea, an action? We have one word that is used on a variety of objects, experiences, and people to communicate “love.” There are four ways in which the Bible presents the concept of love: love of friendship—side by side companionship; sensual love—experiencing enjoyment with another; love of familiarity—nostalgic and a sense of comfort from the routine or regular; and unconditional love—a love that is beyond mankind and is rooted in God, because God is love (1 John 4:8). This unconditional love is not natural to us. It is sourced in the Father, lived out in the Son, and poured out in the hearts of believers through the Holy Spirit. It endures anything and demands community—it calls for an object to bestow itself upon. The experience of unconditional, intentional, and sacrificial love makes it real (John 3:16).

### Objects of Love | internal

Jesus sums up the law in two great commandments in Matthew 22:37-38, “love the Lord your God...[and] love your neighbor as yourself.” We are able to love God, because he first loved us (1 John 4:19). We are secure in Him and His love is in us (1 John 4:15-16). Yet, we often love other things, more than God. We turn away from the love of God, because we aren’t satisfied with what we have, and turn toward something else. This is sin (Exodus 20:3). Sin reduces love in our hearts for God and for others. It makes our hearts waxed over and cold. We find that object after object, experience after experience and person after person fail to fill the vacuum that is left when unconditional love is absent. Why? Because this unconditional love is beyond us, and sourced in

God. When we turn away from searching for love, and turn to God, receiving His love, we are transformed.

### **Reflections of Love | external**

Those who live securely in the love of God can become ambassadors of love. They can risk genuinely giving sacrificial love to anyone. Out of their security in Jesus' love, they can love the unlovely people (1 John 4:7). They can smuggle the love of Jesus into their schools, workplaces and homes. Ambassadors of love act. They understand that love is not just words or emotions, but is demonstrated and experienced by actions (John 3:16). Love produces action (John 3:16). By loving others, we are obedient to Jesus' commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:38).

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“Love is a commitment of the will to the true good of another person.” J. Budziszewski

## RESPONSE

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. [John 15:13](#)

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### Reflection Questions

How does the Bible define love? Where in the scriptures does Jesus clearly represent his love for people and his Father?

Who/What do you turn to, other than Jesus, to find love? What lies are you believing that cause you to continue to turn to something other than Jesus?

What actions of love can you risk to take? What are aspects of your life that you can sacrifice to genuinely show another the love of Jesus?

### Family Table Talk

How does Jesus show love for the family of God?

How do you show love for your family?

Love is action and not emotion. How do you know when someone loves you? How do we show love to someone who needs love this holiday season? (Think outside your family)

### Advent Action

Have your family/community choose another family or individual to intentionally show the love of Jesus to. Make action steps on how you will demonstrate Christ's love and your love to them.

### Memory Verse

[1 John 4:10](#)

## MORE RESOURCES

“Things future, nor things that are now. Not all things below or above, can make His purpose forego, or sever my soul from His love.” Augustus Toplady

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### Articles & Blogs

[Love Is Not A Verb](#) - blog by John Bloom (*Desiring God*)

[The Four Loves](#) - PDF book by C.S. Lewis

[Speaking Truth In Love: Counsel in Community](#) - PDF book by David Powlison

### Sermons

[As I Have Loved You, Love One Another](#) - Sermon by John Piper

[The Initiating Love of God](#) - Sermon by Matt Chandler

### Hymns

[To Thee My Heart I Offer](#) - The Ramblers (Terra Nova Church)

[All Glory Be To Christ](#) - Kings Kaleidoscope (Mars Hill Church)

[Love Came Down At Christmas \(Live\)](#) - Terra Nova Church

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There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.

1 John 4:18