



## ADVENT WEEK TWO: LOVE

What kind of “love” have you chased after the most?

For me, it’s been a number of “loves”. In my youth I had a definite pattern of chasing after what the Greeks called “Eros”. Merriam Webster defines this term in three senses, first as the Greek god of erotic love (comparable to the god “Cupid”). Second, as the sum of life-preserving instincts that are manifested as impulses to gratify basic needs, as sublimated impulses, and as impulses to protect and preserve the body and mind. Third, as love conceived by the philosopher Plato as a fundamental creative impulse having a sensual element. Ultimately, eros is “erotic love or desire”.<sup>1</sup>

I am convinced that from the age of twelve to the age of nineteen, I was a full on eros addict. It started as an addiction to musical epiphanies, porn, caffeinated soda, cigarettes, and “dip” (the kind of smokeless tobacco you shove in your lip to get a buzz). It moved on into marijuana, then pills, alcohol abuse, LSD, psilocybin mushrooms, MDMA, sex with girlfriends, designer hallucinogens, songwriting, recording, and even a little coke and meth a few times.

But Cupid really let me down man.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Eros>

I was looking for Cupid to fulfill me and make me happy. At one point, I thought that listening to Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon while tripping with the Wizard of Oz movie on and having sex was the epitome of fulfillment.

But I ended up having bad trips. Three of them to be exact. Two on mushrooms and one on LSD. They were horrible. Having a bad psychedelic experience makes you feel like you're insane, you're going to hell and you're never going to escape.

The weed ended up making me paranoid, lazy and stupid.

The drugs made my grades drop into the toilet. I barely made it through high school and dropped out of college.

Almost all the girlfriends I was with during the time cheated on me. I cheated on a few of them too.

Pink Floyd is still great.

I'm convinced that the emotional epiphanies in songwriting and music are a gateway into the presence of God. That's why worshipping God with music is so powerful!

But this pursuit of eros was a dead end, really. Because the feelings eventually turned into numbness. The tolerance level rose. The first great experience became a nasty dragon that I would perpetually chase after and never find again. There is no utopian orgasm to be found. There is no ultimate psychedelic oracle. There is no melody that can make one soar on the wings of heaven.

And maybe some of you can relate to my pursuit of Cupid. Maybe some of you have looked for love and fulfillment in other places. At the lid of a bank account. At the bottom of a bottle. At the edge of a blade. In the barrel of a gun. At the feel of fingertips touching yours. At the thrill of adrenaline bursting out of your nostrils. In a plethora of cyberspace attention. In a virtual version of reality. The anesthetized stare into a screen.

But there is good news. Love is more than that.

*7 Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 Love*

*consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and his love is made complete in us. 13 This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent his Son as the world's Savior. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God—God remains in him and he in God. 16 And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. (1 John 4:11-16)*

The coming of Jesus Christ provides a compelling portrait of God's love for us.<sup>2</sup> This messianic baby that was prophesied about for hundreds and thousands of years before His arrival on earth, who was announced by angels to His earth parents, who was born of a virgin in a dirty, feces laden manger. This Jesus is love embodied.

For John, the writer of this letter and the "one whom Jesus loved", an exhortation to obedience did not come with a threat. Instead, obedience was encouraged through inspiration. God's inspiring love, his generous affection, compels us to obey. If he has done this much for us, how can we do less? Genuine love cannot be exhibited in any community unless it reflects God's love, unless it is empowered by an experience of being loved.<sup>3</sup>

What is the litmus test for a disciple of Jesus Christ? Love. Genuine love. Not phony love. Not pie in the sky love. Not plastic love. Love.

Brennan Manning writes;

*While the impostor draws his identity from past achievements and the adulation of others, the true self claims identity in its belovedness. We encounter God in the ordinariness of life: not in the search for spiritual highs and extraordinary, mystical experiences, but in our simple presence in life.<sup>4</sup>*

The impostor in me wants attention, wants approval, wants success, wants to constantly feel good, wants to deny emotion, wants to stuff reality onto a shelf and press on through life without a care in the world.

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<sup>2</sup> NIV Application Commentary Copyright © 1996 Gary M. Burge.

<sup>3</sup> NIV Application Commentary Copyright © 1996 Gary M. Burge.

<sup>4</sup> *Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging* Copyright 1994, 2002, 2015 by Brennan Manning. Navpress.

But Ben- the real Ben. The one created in the Imago Dei, is one that is complicatedly loved by the creator, while in actuality, struggling through the harsh realities of life and living.

And God isn't to be found in some grand cathedral, some transcendental musical worship experience, some explosive mountain-top epiphany, a perfectly delivered sermon, a perfect vacation, a perfect holiday, or an ideal relationship!

God is in the smile cracked in our mouth towards someone who needs to see it. God is in the pouring of a cup of hot chocolate for a cold kid on a cold day. God is in our imperfectly uttered, uneloquent prayers. God is in our friendships. God is in the compassion we show the outsider. God is there when we're dreary eyed and brushing our teeth in the morning. God is there when we wake up in the middle of the night to comfort our kid after a night terror. God is there while we scoop kitty crap out of a box. God is in the simple, the ordinary, the everyday stuff.

We're all looking for ultimate love. But we're not gonna suck in some ultimate love through a hole at the end of a joint. We're not gonna drink it in the form of red, bitter liquid. We're not going to taste it in a kiss. We're not going to feel it in a hug. We're not going to hear it in a song. We're not going to get closer to it because of the scriptures we've memorized. We're not going to experience it more from showing up at a Sunday gathering. We're not going to find the ultimate church. We're not going to find the ultimate human spiritual leader or pastor.

We're going to taste it in the ordinariness of life, through the power of Jesus Christ. The apostle John said it.

*9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.  
(1 John 4:9-10)*

Now if someone were to ask me, "what is the original bread"? I could get them a loaf of Wonder Bread. They'd say, "that's not it! That stuff went through a whole factory cycle of being loaded with preservatives, sliced, and packaged!"

If I got a loaf of fresh baked, five grain wheat bread, they could also say, "That's not it either! There were original ingredients that needed to come together to make bread!"

Then we could dig a little deeper and find out how to make bread, and find that Bread is the product of baking a mixture of flour, water, salt, yeast and other ingredients. The basic process involves mixing of ingredients until the flour is converted into a stiff paste or dough, followed by baking the dough into a loaf.<sup>5</sup>

But is flour, water, salt, yeast and “other ingredients” “original bread”? No it’s not! All those things come from other places too.

So if we looked up where flour came from, we’d find that flour is a natural product made from wheat. The milling process involves separating the three component parts of the wheat seed and milling them between rollers.<sup>6</sup>

And so it is with our chasing of Jesus! Jesus is the original wheat we’re looking for in the bread! He’s the source of the bread!

We start on bread with that packaged Wonder Bread of video sermons, Christian reels and devotional books. It gives us a little taste of the wheat.

But we want some more wheat. We go a little further and get fresh bread. We come into Church gatherings and hear live sermons, hang in discipleship groups, do studies, serve our communities...

We go a little further and figure out how to make that bread dough ourselves with some flour of regular scripture reading, some water of prayer, some salt of deep, koinonia, accountable fellowship with Christ followers, some yeast of evangelism, and “other ingredients” of mission, fasting, sacrifice, giving, generosity, and the deep pursuit of God!!!!!!

And what do we find at the end? What have we been looking for the whole time? The WHEAT! JESUS!!!!!!!!!!!!!! SAY HIS NAME!

When the apostle John writes that “God is love” (cf. v. 16), it is important to note what John is not saying. He is not saying that “God is loving” (though this is true). Nor is he saying that one of God’s activities is “to love” us (though this is true as well). John is saying that God is love, that “all of his activity is loving.” Love is the essence of his being.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bakeinfo.co.nz/facts/bread/science-of-bread-making>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ukflourmillers.org/flour>

<sup>7</sup> NIV Application Commentary Copyright © 1996 Gary M. Burge.

God is love.

That's the wheat behind all the bread pursuits that we're looking for.

God's very essence is love y'all.

This is why Paul could write with great assurance;

*1 If I speak human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give away all my possessions, and if I give over my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

*4 Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, 5 is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. 6 Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will come to an end. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put aside childish things. 12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known. 13 Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love—but the greatest of these is love. (1 Cor. 13:1-13)*

Do you really really really really know His love???