



Daughters  
of  
Light

An Advent Study

Heart of Mary Women's Fellowship

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# About This Study

Heart of Mary Women's Fellowship is filled with JOY to bring you this bible study for the Advent 2015 season.

*We hope that you'll dive in, grow in the Lord, and share with others what beauty God reveals to you through it. If you are doing this study independently, know that we at HOM are here for you & that you also have a LARGE community of women through our website and social media that are participating too! You are truly never alone!*

*If you are completing this study in a group setting - we are excited that you have found a local community to grow with, on top of our online sisterhood. Please use this study journal for your reference, resource, and more during your meetings and the personal time leading up to it.*

*Looking for a group? Please visit [www.heartofmarywf.com/groups](http://www.heartofmarywf.com/groups) to find a meet up near you.*

*Are you already in one but not listed on our website? Looking to start one? Please contact us for more information about our "HOM Ambassador" program. We have team members available specifically to help you grow a local group and lead other women through community, prayer, and devotion. Their support is available at all times. We also want to help you grow! We will advertise your group on our website & social media! And we have free resources for you as well. Please email us at [heartofmarywf@aol.com](mailto:heartofmarywf@aol.com)*

*Note: All written content has been reviewed by a Catholic spiritual director to cross check that all statements align with the teachings and tenants of the Roman Catholic Church.*

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Today's Scripture

John 1: 1-3a  
3: 16  
Matthew 5: 48  
Mark 12: 30-31

Christmas Day is quickly approaching. Some of us are preparing to spend time with family or we are already with them. Celebrating holidays is often filled with joy, but for many it also brings anxiety and difficult relationships. For others it's somewhat of a lonely holiday as neither family nor friends seem to share the same understanding of what Christmas is truly about. I hope and pray Advent has already been fruitful for you, but these last few days are often even more difficult to continue focusing on Christ.

To begin this week, I want to share a quick story I heard recently about a man named Matthew Johnson from Ocean-side, CA. There was a woman at the grocery store who had a little baby with her, and she was checking out at the register late at night. A line started to form behind her as she realized her credit card wasn't working, and she couldn't find her debit card anywhere. Not having enough cash in her purse to pay for everything, she began to grow anxious and the people behind her became impatient. Matthew Johnson happened to see what was going on and said, "Here, let me take care of it." She tried to stop him, but he insisted.

"Please don't worry about it, I'll take care of it," he said as he handed the card to the cashier. The woman was so grateful and managed to get his name and place of work. The next day she called the fitness center at which he was an employee, and she asked to speak with Matthew Johnson. The man on the other end began to cry and said, "You didn't hear. Last night Matthew was killed in a car accident."

This powerful story struck me because of its simplicity. Matthew's small act of love, his small gesture of kindness and selflessness, became light to this woman's life. It also happened to be one of the last things he did before the

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**We can't truly know  
who we are as  
daughters without  
knowing who He is as  
our Father.**

Lord called him home. Even though it probably seemed so inconsequential at the time, it was worth it. In fact, there is never a time when our small acts of love are not worth it.

And that is where I would like to begin. It is fitting to focus on love for the last week of Advent, **“for God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son”**

Really, Christmas is all about the love God has for us.

The posts for this week will focus on love of the Father, love of self, love of the Spirit, love of Mary, and love of Jesus. I believe these themes will help us delve into what it means to be a daughter of light – the Light of the world being our Savior Jesus Christ – and how we can live that out through love. These reflections do not have to be done in order, so I encourage you to spend time on one or the other that sticks out to you and come back to another later. Also, the primary Bible verses for each post are taken from John 1:1-18 which is the Gospel reading for Christmas Day.

I decided to begin with love of God the Father because of John 1:1-3:

**“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 to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.”**

Nothing came to be without God. I cannot breathe, the world cannot spin, and you cannot be alive without him.

As women, we may have different ideas or different relationships with God the Father from one another. Some of us never knew our human fathers, so we don't have any reference for what a father's love should look like. Some of us were deeply hurt or abandoned, so we are angry and can't forgive God the Father. Others of us have had beautiful relationships with our fathers and therefore flee to our Father in heaven with full faith and no inhibitions.

However you describe God the Father – judge, ruler, king, punishing, loving, merciful, just – it is important to remember that we are called to be **“perfect just as your heavenly father is perfect”**. In other words, we are called to imitate him. We are called to be lights in this world by showing God's justice and mercy. But we are also called to be his daughters, and we can't truly know who we are as daughters without knowing who he is as our Father. Our daughterhood comes from the fact that we have a father, each one inherently tied to the other.

It is only from understanding the Father's love for us and loving him with all our heart that we can begin to love ourselves and those around us (Mark 12:30-31).

- Emma Moran

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a blank space to write, draw, paint, stamp, or express yourself  
share on social media with #myfavoriteverse

*my favorite verse*

# *study questions:*

**Q: What does it mean to be a daughter?**

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**Q: How do I feel God the Father sees me in my “daughterness”?**

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**Q: How can my love for God the Father be a light to others this Christmas?**

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# Daughters of *Light*

## Day 20 // Love of Self

Today's Scripture

John 1: 1-3b

Reflecting back on the story about Matthew from yesterday, I can't help but thinking, if he didn't help that woman, then who?

I had to ask myself, "How many times have I been one of the other people in line? At the back complaining rather than being light to our fellow brothers and sisters?" The truth is there are many, many things about myself which I can find that are not perfect. Not even close.

So many words I wish I could take back. So many actions I wish I had left undone. So many looks I wish I had never created with my facial muscles. So many thoughts that I hope never escape through my mouth long after my social filter is gone. (Anyone with me?) Yet regardless of our temperaments, personalities, successes, failures, virtues, shortcomings, sins, and brokenness, we are called to love ourselves.

The other day I spent some time with a 10 year old girl who was very excited to show me her video app on her smartphone. (I didn't even know 10 year olds had smartphones these days.) It was actually pretty neat – you basically make short lip sync videos to popular songs and post them for friends to see. But what started out a neat phone app quickly became a reminder of the many struggles in our culture. I couldn't tell if this little girl was too in love with herself and these videos, or if they were ruining her self image. It was probably both. She made a quick example video for me to see, but promptly deleted it and made a new one after taking off her sweater. She said she didn't look good, but her lucky shirt was underneath. My heart broke as I realized a few minutes later that her "lucky shirt" meant that it was the one she was wearing when she posted a lip sync video that got several likes.

While we are not 10 years old struggling to fight against the trials of our technology-driven culture, we can't pretend like we would never judge our self worth in such a way. We may think ourselves more grounded or more mature, but what do we use to judge ourselves? A job? A relationship? How we think others view our spouse? Our kids



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**We don't have to  
have everything  
figured out.**

(or lack thereof)? Our political views? Our "Catholic-ness?" The way we educate our children?

We don't have to have everything in life figured out before we can be a light to other in this world. But we do need to know ourselves. We need to know ourselves as daughters and as women, and we need to love that.

So take time to love yourself. And if you find that incredibly difficult (as most of us do), be patient and keep learning how to love yourself better. The world changes for the better when we, as women, love who we are and are not ashamed. We have life through Jesus Christ, and we are his lights in the world.

- Emma Moran

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a blank space to write, draw, paint, stamp, or express yourself  
share on social media with #myfavoriteverse

*my favorite verse*

# *study questions:*

**Q: What do I love about myself?**

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**Q: What do I struggle loving in myself?**

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**Q: Why do I have a hard time loving myself in those areas?**

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# Daughters of *Light*

Day 21// Love of the Spirit

Today's Scripture

John 1: 5

14: 26-27

There is a lot of darkness in the world right now, and many are afraid. The news constantly shows violence. TV shows and movies are permeated with broken relationships, immorality, and twisted views of love and beauty. ISIS and other terrorists are attacking innocent people in countries around the world, including their own, in the name of their god. There are countless unknowns about the future – socially, economically, politically, etc.

Yet Jesus constantly tells us to be not afraid. There are hundreds of times that peace is mentioned in the Bible, and we are familiar with several stories where he says, "Peace be with you."

But what happened after Jesus left? After the Ascension and he was no longer appearing to his disciples?

He sent his advocate, the Holy Spirit.

In John 14:26-27 at the Last Supper, Jesus says:

"The Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid."

I have learned that one of the greatest ways to show God's love to others and be a light in this world is to be peaceful, to not be afraid. I have also learned that this most often increases as we grow in our relationship with the Holy Spirit because Christ specifically sent him as his advocate to help us after he ascended. The Holy Spirit is the light in each situation that puts everything in perspective, showing us their true importance (or lack thereof) and giving us the grace to respond in love.

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**The Holy Spirit is the light in each situation that puts everything into perspective.**

Of course, courageous and calm people also tend to have peaceful disposition, but there is something distinctly different about those who have their foundation in the peace of God. It catches others off-guard as they realize suffering, death, and trials do not scare those people (even though they are still difficult).

Many people find this third person of the Trinity the most mysterious, the least tangible, and therefore the most unfamiliar. But I encourage you to develop a relationship with the Holy Spirit and ask him to help you grow in love for others, recognizing his gentle promptings throughout your day. Leading up to

Christmas and spending time with family will be a perfect time to practice listening and abiding in his peace.

Be not afraid. The darkness will never overcome the light.

- Emma Moran

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*my favorite verse*

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share on social media with #myfavoriteverse

# *study questions:*

**Q: What does my relationship with the Holy Spirit look like?**

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**Q: What is stopping me from realizing the work of the Spirit in my life?**

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**Q: How can I pay more attention and act in the Spirit throughout my day?**

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*personal reflection*

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# Daughters of Light

Day 22 // Love of Mary

*Photo by Cailin Valente*

Today's Scripture

John 1: 9

Tomorrow is the day. We have been waiting with expectant joy for so long to celebrate our Savior's birth. Yet really we have only waited a short few weeks – Mary, the mother of God, waited months, offering her body as a sacrifice for him. We have much to learn from her on this Christmas Eve, as she bore everything patiently and with thoughtfulness every time she is mentioned in the Bible. She is the best example to help us prepare the day and evening before Christ's birth.

A wise friend once said, "We are called to be like Mary, we are not called to be Mary."

"And praise God!" she continued. "The perfect human aside from Jesus already said yes and gave birth to the Savior. Praise God we are not expected to be her!" She then proceeded to talk about particular ways in which we can imitate Mary, which was inspiring, beautiful, and insightful. In fact, this same friend also helped me to love Mary, to start a relationship with her, many years ago.

You see, I always thought this Mary thing was just a "devotion," like we have to the saints or the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for example. Then I realized something profound – Mary is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. His spouse. Those two are inseparable. I began to realize, much to my dismay, that I couldn't avoid Mary even if I wanted to, purely on principle. I can't ignore the spouse of one of the persons of the Holy Trinity. God simply did not choose to design it otherwise.

I also realized that there were two huge things getting in my way of understanding and loving Mary: 1) difficult relationships with other women throughout my entire life, and 2) a strained relationship with my own mother that didn't begin until high school but which got progressively worse.

And thus began my (long) journey to a beautiful relationship with the Mother of God.



As I began to know and love Mary, and as I began to understand her role in my life as a woman and a mother, I healed from a lot. I grew in my understanding of true femininity, female friendships and sisterhood, daughterhood and motherhood, and of course Jesus Christ. My relationship with my mom began to improve ever so slowly but consistently, and every other relationship in my life improved as well.

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**We are called to be  
*like* Mary, we are not  
called to *be* Mary.**

I often like to wonder what Our Lady would be like in our modern day world – what would she wear? How would she speak? What would she do? Sometimes I change the overused cliché, “What would Jesus do?” to “What would Mary do?” I find that it often rubs me the wrong way because I’m usually about to do the opposite... There is something about Mary that is so peaceful, poised, holy, and confident that I realize imitating Mary and understanding her heart is radically counter-cultural. (As is imitating Jesus, of course!)

So on this day before Christmas, let's pause to reflect as Mary so often did. Take a moment to ponder in your heart the coming of Christ tomorrow, and ask Mary to help you see what you may be missing in the busyness of everyday life. Ask for her to obtain for you the grace to spread the peace and love of Christ that truly brings light to the world.

- Emma Moran

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a blank space to write, draw, paint, stamp, or express yourself  
share on social media with #myfavoriteverse

*my favorite verse*

# *study questions:*

**Q: What does my relationship with Mary look like?**

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**Q: How would love for Mary help me love others?**

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**Q: What is one trait of Mary's that I could work on more?**

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# Daughters of *Light*

Day 23// Love of Jesus

*Photo by Cailin Valente*

Today's Scripture

John 1: 14

Merry Christmas everyone! What a day filled with love, joy, and peace! I hope you have enjoyed and are still enjoying your families and friends brought together through Christ.

Today we focus on love of Jesus, the Light of the World and Word made flesh. If you haven't noticed, each post this week has not just talked about each person of the Trinity, Mary, and ourselves – they have been about the relationships we are called to have with each. I think for most people, it easiest to build that relationship with Jesus because he is the Savior and walked this earth with us. He is the reason we are saved from our sins and have life!

Even still, I want to emphasize that just knowing about Jesus is not enough. Reading his parables and mindlessly going to Mass are not enough. We truly are called to a deep, intimate relationship with him.

I listened to a professor once who said that we cannot truly catechize until we evangelize. In other words, we cannot really teach someone the faith until we have first taught them how to have a relationship with Jesus. Obviously the two go hand-in-hand, but he has a point – how often does someone's faith actually take root and come alive until they've had a personal encounter with Jesus? Not very often, if at all. Lots of people know facts about the Ten Commandments and can rattle off a few prayers from memorization in catechism class, but much less people truly know how to pray. Much less people have a truly active and living faith life that guides them every day.

Perhaps you already have a wonderful relationship with Jesus, and perhaps not. Maybe Mary has always been more relatable to you than Jesus. Wherever we're at we can always grow in our love of Christ.

And we must. Because what ultimately sets us apart from everyone else, from every other religion? Jesus. Which religious figure teaches mercy, equality, and love of the poor unlike anyone else? Jesus. Whose tomb is empty? Jesus'.

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**To grow in love with Jesus ... we must receive Him in the Eucharist and immerse ourselves in Scripture.**

Which God actually became man and died out of *love* for humanity? Jesus.

Jesus is love. God is love. And he is the foundation of everything we are, everything we live for. We have no choice but to know Jesus more and love him more if we are to be lights in this world. And the good news is we encounter him constantly in one of two ways: 1) the Eucharist, and 2) the Word. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that we venerate the Word of God (the Bible) as we do the Eucharist, Jesus' flesh.

To grow in love of Jesus, to grow as Christians, we must receive him in the Eucharist and immerse ourselves in Scripture. We must imitate Our Lady and ponder them in our heart, integrating them into our lives.

Today we celebrate the birth of Christ. Let us also celebrate and commit to a new birth of Christ in our hearts, our souls – a renewed commitment to our baptism and life in him. And let us help those around us also give Christ a new beginning in their lives.

Again, merry Christmas and God bless!

- Emma Moran

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a blank space to write, draw, paint, stamp, or express yourself  
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*my favorite verse*

# *study questions:*

**Q: How have I experienced the love of Jesus in a personal way?**

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**Q: What can I do to be Christ's light in this world?**

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